

**Sermon File # 646**

**Scripture Text: Exodus 3:13-22**

**Sermon Title: *The Name above Every Name***

**Manuscript written by Roger Roberts and sermon preached**

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**Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.**

**Sources cited in this manuscript are listed at the end.**

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### ***The Name above Every Name***

#### **Introduction:**

Open your Bibles with me as we resume our sermons from Exodus, continuing where we left off two weeks ago in Chapter 3, verse 13. God has seen the suffering of his people, the Israelites, in the bondage of slavery under the cruel dictatorship of the Egyptian Pharaoh. He spared baby Moses from the edict of infanticide against all male Hebrew babies through the intervention of Pharaoh's daughter, who rescued Moses and reared him within the royal household. At age 40, Moses murdered an Egyptian in an attempt to rescue a fellow Israelite, and then escaped his death sentence by fleeing to far off Midian. There he was taken in by pagan priest Jethro, who gave Moses one of his daughters in marriage, who then bore Moses a son. We last saw Moses in the first 12 verses of Exodus 3 when God called him from the miraculously burning bush and gave him an overwhelming assignment to return to Egypt, as an now unknown 80-year old fugitive from the law, to be the deliverer of God's chosen people.

We noted how that Moses demurred and began excusing himself from this assignment, with his protests that continue into Chapter 4. Today we'll consider Moses' question about the name of God, which he says the Israelites will want to know as evidence of Moses' authority as their leader from bondage.

Follow as I read the text in which God gives his name:

#### **Exodus 3:13-22.**

Biblical names are important, often describing the characteristics of the individual. In some cases, names of the Patriarchs, for example, were changed to reflect transformation in their spiritual condition or role in the Kingdom of God. In Genesis, Abram (exalted father) became Abraham

(father of many) in 17:5. Jacob (he deceives) in 27:36 becomes Israel (he struggles with God) after he wrestles with the angel of God in 32:28.

In my American culture, names are often chosen to honor relatives, important people or close friends. But in many cases they are chosen simply because they sound good. I really don't know why my name was chosen, especially since it has caused so much confusion. I've been called "Robert Rogers" about as often as I've been called by my actual name (For example, 2 days ago I received an e-mail politely and typically addressed to Pastor Robert Rogers). Once I spent a day with a missionary who took me all over the area surrounding Kisumu, Kenya and introduced me in Swahili to everyone in his mission field. At the end of the day, as he was leaving me at my room, he finally asked, "Tell me, do most people call you Robert or Bob?" I answered, "I think most people call me Roger, but you can call me Robert or Bob. A lot of people do."

If I were from Ghana, chances are most people, if they knew I was born on a Tuesday, and were in doubt about which is my first or last name, would call me Kobina (something I recently discovered). My difficulties with my name would have made me a good study for Swiss physician and Christian pastoral counselor, Paul Tournier (1898-1986), who had profound insights into the effect names have upon personal identity and development.

Moses needed to know more than just another name for God. He and the Israelites already knew the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses wanted to know the significance of the name and the authority that would come from knowing the personal and unique name of God. To know someone's real and personal name means to have a relationship with that person and to have some access to the authority of that person. Moses was being asked by God to return to Egypt as a "wanted man" and to lead a nation of people on a march to freedom and to the Promised Land (Enns, 101). And to be able to use the name of a person of authority, meant to share that authority; and to know and use the name of God would mean that Moses would carry the authority of the living God to Egypt as his called and authorized representative.

For us today, there can be nothing more important than to know and be able to call upon and live in the authority of the name of God. Amazing thing is, we don't know how to pronounce this name God gave to Moses! The Hebrew text has only consonants and no vowels, and the ancient Hebrews were so fearful of misusing this name that they refrained from speaking it! (Tolar).. It's a name based on the verb "to be," and is probably pronounced "Yahweh," and not the English Jehovah, which is an "artificial" rendering of the name (Oswalt, *NLT*, 131). Most English translations use the word "Lord," spelled with small capital letters, for this name for God, or "Yahweh" as it appears throughout the Old Testament. But our text will show us the significance and importance of this name and how it became known to us now as the name that is above every other name.

Let's note that God's name is important because it...

### **Identifies God**

Whatever the reason behind our names, they are useful and even necessary for our identification. Moses wanted to identify God to his fellow Israelites.

Names also identify us with our character and personal attributes and reputation. We often speak about someone "making a name for herself," and may remark that a person of good character "has a

good name in the community” (Oswalt, *CBC*, 310). In response to Moses’ request God gave the name “Yahweh,” that identifies God...

#### *As the Eternal One*

God gave to Moses the name that essentially says, “I Am Who I Am,” and repeated the name “I Am,” which as one has noted underscores the eternal nature and presence, the “is-ness” of God (Durham, 39). This name expresses the eternal pre-existence of God, who has always been and always shall be. God is the transcendent One, who is above and before all else and sufficient in himself, simply in his own being. There was a “time,” if I may use that word, when there was nothing but God, and that was prior to his creation of time and matter, that which is not eternal.

As Moses wrote in a Psalm attributed to him,

“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (Psalm 90:2).

Time and matter are God’s creation, so, “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Peter 3:8).

God’s name also identifies him...

#### *As the Active One*

This name that God gives, being based on the verb “to be,” speaks of his “active presence as a living force,” vital and personal and being “the key active ingredient in every situation” (Motyer, 69). The name God gave could mean “the One who acts and who causes things to happen.”

God is the omnipresent One who is always everywhere, but his presence is particular evident when he chooses to reveal himself. Moses needed the assurance of God’s active presence with him for him to carry out his humanly impossible mission. He needed the presence of “the Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (15). Just as God was active in fulfilling his promises to the Patriarchs, so he would be faithful to actively work through Moses to enable him to fulfill his mission.

The God who gave his name to Moses is the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who identifies himself...

#### *As the Almighty One*

God identified himself to Moses as the great I Am. Only one other has ever so identified himself, and that was God the Son, the living, incarnate Word that God sent to us. Before his religious critics and opponents, Jesus of Nazareth dared to say the words that brought the charge of blasphemy against him:

“I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, “I am!’ At this, they picked up stones to stone him....” (John 8:58).

And throughout his ministry, illustrating his claims with sign miracles, Jesus gave seven great “I Am” sayings: “I am the Bread of life” (John 6:35); “I am the Light of the World” (8:12;9:5); “I am the Gate

for the Sheep” (10:7); “*I am* the Good Shepherd” (10:11); “*I am* the Resurrection and the Life” (11:25); “*I am* the Way and the Truth and the Life” (14:6); and “*I am* the True Vine” (15:1).

The Apostle John heard the voice of the risen, glorified Christ say, “I am the Alpha and the Omega...who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He is one with God and we can even say is the one who made himself known to Moses at the burning bush. The Apostles, Gospel writers and all of the earliest followers of Jesus dared to call him Lord, acknowledging that he is the same Lord who led the Israelites out of Egypt and accompanied and sustained them all the way to the Promised land (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). God the eternal Son, the living Word, became flesh for us in order to perfectly show us the character and love of God and through his death on the cross, to bring us to God (John 1:1-18; 1 Peter 3:18).

The name of the Son of God, given to the Virgin Mary and to Joseph is Jesus, the Old Testament name “Joshua,” meaning Savior, the one who came to “save his people from their sins” (Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21). Through faith in Jesus and the new life he gives we know God as our Father and Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Isaiah prophesied hundreds of years before his birth that “the child born to us” will be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6).

Jesus is the eternal God, the Alpha and the Omega, is the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). Not only is he the eternal One, and the Co-Creator, but in him the fullness of deity resides (Colossians 1:19). He holds all things together (Colossians 1:17) and he sustains all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3).

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Triune God, is Yahweh, the Lord God Almighty. We call him Father and also we call him Jesus, our Savior and Lord. God’s name identifies God, as he identified himself to Moses. But also his name...

### **Invites God**

The main issue in Moses’ mind in asking the name of God was that of authority. He needed to know the name of God in order to call upon him to do what he promised (Durham, 38). Moses knew that the people wouldn’t listen to him, much less follow him, unless he came to them with some authority, in the name of one who had the power and authority to deliver them from bondage.

The passport you carry with you when you do international travel has something like a seal and signature from your passport country and government official that grants you the right of passage to another country and the right of protection as a citizen visiting another land. Moses needed to take a “passport,” a proof of authorization to allow the people a guarantee of safe passage.

God gave Moses his name and has given us his name that carries the highest authority, in fact lends us “all authority in heaven and on earth” which was given to our crucified and risen Lord Jesus (Matthew 28:18). The name of God invites him, calls upon him...

*For his saving grace*

Although Moses was being called to be the human deliverer of his people, he knew he was inadequate in himself, that he and they needed a great Savior, who alone could bring about their exodus from bondage in Egypt.

The Lord God has given us the name we too may call upon for our deliverance and our eternal salvation. The eternal Word became flesh and lived among us and revealed to us all we need to know for our eternal salvation. Christ the eternal Word and Jesus in his earthly flesh was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). His death for us accomplished our deliverance from the condemnation of sin and the judgment of our guilt before Holy God.

Now the Christ has come to us and word is near us and in our mouth and heart so that all we need to do is call upon the name of the Lord to be saved (Romans 10:5-13). To call upon his name as Lord means that we believe that he exists as the Savior and that he is worthy to be our Lord. To call upon the Lord in repentance and faith is to invite God’s saving grace. The name of the Lord Jesus is our “passport” to God.

When we invite God to come into our lives with his saving grace we not only discover who God is through a personal relationship with him. We also discover for the first time who we truly are as his creation and now his new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). When Moses asked God his name he asked “the fundamental question,” because when we discover who God is we find out for the first time who we are (Ryken, 91).

One of my seminary Old Testament professors, the late Page Kelley, told us a story about a group of shell-shocked French soldiers, who after the Second World War, were taken by train to a retreat in the French Alps for treatment for various neurological, psychological and emotional disorders. On the way the train stopped at a small village and one of the soldiers de-boarded and began to walk off by himself into the village. An attendant followed him as he seemingly recognized his surroundings and began to walk down a street as though he knew where he was going. The soldier walked up to the door of a small cottage and after he knocked, an elderly man opened the door, and exclaimed, “Son, I’m glad you’re home!” The soldier, with new recognition in his face said, “Dad, I’m glad to see you! Now I know who I am!” (Kelley)

When we call upon the Lord Jesus Christ we receive him into a personal, life-changing relationship and begin to follow him as Lord and master. For the first time, now that we know God personally, we know who we are. Better than that—we know *whose* we are, as the children of God, those who are chosen and loved by the heavenly Father (1 John 3:1). We then are baptized into Christ as our Lord, demonstrating that we are submerged into Christ and that he is living in us to give us a new life (Romans 6:1-4). This is what it means to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). We are cleansed and converted by his authority and united with him in his death and his resurrection.

The name of God, the name that God has given us in his Son, is the only name that gives us the authority of God to save us from our sins. As Peter and John said, in this exclusive and offensive-to-pluralists claim, “There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, *NLT*).

His name invites him...

### *For his sustaining grace*

The Lord reminded Moses that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one who was faithful in the past and would be in the present and future (15). He also told Moses that he was to assemble his people and tell them his plans to deliver them from their cruel bondage and also to provide for their journey through the gifts of the Egyptians, who “would not only allow the Hebrews to leave, they would pay them to do so” (Oswalt, *NLT*, 131 on verses 21f).

As God’s beloved children, we are privileged and even urged to call upon him for his sustaining grace, to come with confidence before his throne of grace, “so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Jesus, the name of our Lord and Savior, taught us to pray using the name of “our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). Jesus himself used the Aramaic “Abba,” a term of intimacy, meaning something like “my dear, loving Father” (Mark 14:36). (“Daddy” is a bit too familiar, somewhat bedimming the balanced view that he is also our glorious Father in the heavens) Paul told us this is the way the Spirit teaches us to address the Father in prayer (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). Jesus encourages us to live in the spirit of total dependence on the Father, who deeply loves and cares for us (Matthew 6:25-34), just as he cared about and provided for the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 2:25; 3:21f).

Jesus teaches us to call upon the Father in prayer and allows us to pray with the authority of his name. When Jesus promises he will do whatever we ask in his name he means that our requests have the authority of his will and the assurance of his promise (John 14:13f). Praying in the name of Jesus is to ask what he himself desires to do for us or to give to us and what will bring honor to his name, i.e. his reputation. When we abide in Jesus as the True Vine, then we are likely to ask according to his will, i.e. in his name (John 15:16).

When God gave his name to Moses, he gave a name that expresses his eternal, unchanging nature and his active presence and involvement in our lives. His name as the great I AM expresses the “divine sufficiency” and means to us today that “we live under the ‘umbrella’ of the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8; Motyer, 71).

The name of the Lord God was given to the Israelites to assure them of his presence and sufficiency but also his name would be to invite God...

### *For his shared mission*

The Lord told Moses that in the name of the living Lord God, the great I AM, the Israelites would join God in his act of deliverance and would become his pilgrim people moving toward the Promised Land. God would reveal himself by mighty acts of power and through his people would bring glory to his name (16-20).

The mission of God is to make his name gloriously known in all the earth (Isaiah 63:14). To make his name known is to make known his word, and to tell the message of the Living Word, Jesus. When God’s anger broke out against the children of Israel after the sin of the golden calf and he threatened to destroy them, Moses urgently interceded because of his zeal for God’s reputation, his “name,” as the Deliverer of his people (Exodus 32:9-14).

Our mission is to spread the name of God and to honor his name through our life and faithful witness, which is certain to bring us suffering for the cause of his name. The earliest disciples, upon being beaten for speaking in the name of Jesus, “left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41). The risen Christ commended the church in Philadelphia because they had kept the word of Christ and had not denied his name” (Revelation 3:8), no doubt in the face of persecution. God is glorified when his people refuse to deny his name and are on mission with him to make his name known, whatever the price.

This past week I read the following news release from Barnabas Fund, a ministry we know that supports the persecuted church, about Said Musa:

Afghan convert to Christianity [Said Musa](#) has been released from prison, where he was under threat of execution for apostasy, after months of vigorous campaigning.

[Barnabas](#) Fund has been engaged with others in high-level international diplomacy on Said's behalf, and earlier this month [launched a public campaign](#) to intensify pressure for his release. Over 8,000 people signed our online petition.

Yesterday (24 February 2011), (they) received reports that Said was released from prison last week and is now safely out of Afghanistan. Before his freedom was finally secured Said had reportedly refused an offer of release if he would write a statement regretting his conversion to Christianity. He said:

*I laughed and replied, "I can't deny my Saviour's name". Because my life is just service to Jesus Christ and my death is going to heaven [where] Jesus Christ is. I am a hundred percent ready to die. They pushed me much and much. I refused their demands.*

Said was arrested last May as part of a crackdown on Afghan converts to Christianity. He was tortured and abused in prison but remained steadfast in his faith.

<http://barnabasfund.org/?m=Search&quicksearch=Afghan+convert+Said+Musa+is+free!>

When we join God in his mission, we go in the strong name of Jesus to make him known and to bring glory to his name.

### **Conclusion:**

My name's not important. You can call me Robert, Bob, or my given name Roger. The only important name I have is “Child of God” (1 John 3:1). But God's name is important.

Jesus taught us to call on God as our dear Father in heaven. But before he is our Father we must come to him through the Son, who introduces us to him and graciously brings us into a love relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.

What a privilege, to call upon the name of the Lord, to receive his gracious forgiving love and to be made a child of God! The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is as Paul says, “the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9).

And he continues to write “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10f).

What joy it will be to praise the name of Jesus before his glorious throne on that Day when we stand and bow before him as our Savior and Lord!

But *every* knee will bow and *every* tongue will confess Jesus is Lord. Does that mean even those who don't acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior and those who live in denial of him and are ashamed to confess his name? Yes, *every* knee will bow and *every* tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But tragically he will not be their Lord and Savior but instead be their fearsome Judge. Yet they will be forced to admit, to their everlasting regret, that the Jesus they spurned and whose invitation they ignored and finally rejected, is indeed the Lord, the great I Am. Too late they will finally confess that Jesus is the Alpha, the Beginning of Creation and the consummation, the Omega, the End of history. And then the last words they will hear him say will be, "Depart from me. I never knew you. Away from me!" (Matthew 25:41; 7:23).

Yet, what a joyful privilege to be called the children of God! (1 John 3:1). We are given his name, and are members of his family (Mark 3:31-34). And in a few moments we'll celebrate communion, the Supper the Lord Jesus gave us to express our union with him and with one another. I invite all of us who have called upon the name of the Lord to prepare our hearts, to examine the quality of our communion with God and with each other, as we share this Supper together.

**Thoughts and questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:**

1. How important are given names in your culture? Do you know why you were given your name and what it means?
2. Why do you think Moses asked God for his name?
3. What do you think might be included in the meaning of God's name, "I Am that I Am"?
4. Read Jesus' statement in John 8:58. Why do you think his enemies tried to stone him?
5. Read Romans 10:5-13. What does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord and what is the promised result?
6. Read John 14:14 and 15:7 & 16. What is Jesus' promising about praying in his name?
7. Think for a few moments about the risen Christ's commendation of the Philadelphia church (Revelation 3:8) and the disciples' rejoicing over the privilege of suffering for Jesus' name's sake (Acts 5:41). What occasion have you had to suffer for confessing Jesus' name?
8. Ask God to enable you to faithfully confess the name of Jesus as your Lord and Savior, whatever it might cost you.

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