



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# “IS GOD STILL SPEAKING TO US?”

John Galbreath  
Bible Study Series

Text: Exodus 3:1-15  
Date: September 14, 1975

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on September 14, 1975.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Exodus 3:1-15).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would "fill in" the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

The bulletin that week shows that the hymns were "Praise Ye The Lord, the Almighty," "The King of Love My Shepherd Is," and "O Holy Savior, Friend Unseen." The anthem was "Jesus, The Very Thought of Thee" by Dale Wood.

This note also appeared in the bulletin:

"The ordination and installation of Helen Cochrane will take place here in the Nave tonight at 7:30 p.m. This will be the first occasion for the ordination of a woman to the ministry of our church. To share the joy of this occasion with Mrs. Cochrane and with one another, the entire congregation is invited. A brief reception will follow. Helen will be serving as an assistant minister working part-time at Westminster as the coordinator of Senior High Program and as pastor for advisors, teachers, and students, assisting Rev. Marsh in his responsibility for youth. Helen is also serving with the Lutheran Service Society as Coordinator for Refugee Resettlement and as a Counselor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Family Life Center."

The congregation was participating in a 10-mile "Crop Walk" for the hungry that month. Youth from grades 7 and up walked as part of their fellowship program.

There is a handwritten note above the sermon outline that says: See also -- The Unpronounceable name of God

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Same scripture as last week.**

- 1. Moses, having murdered a task-master in Egypt became a fugitive in Sinai.**
- 2. Settled down to shepherding**
- 3. God appears in a burning bush.**
- 4. God reveals his name YHWH.**

### **B. The unpronounceable name of God.**

- 1. We don't know how it was pronounced, for they did not include the original vowels.**
- 2. When Jews came to that word, they felt it too holy to be uttered, so they substituted "The Lord."**
- 3. Ours is not a trivial God, and we need to be reminded that we are addressing the Creator, the King of Kings.**

### **C. If God is all that holy, where does this leave us?**

- 1. What business have you and I pretending we have access to him?**
  - a) *I couldn't even get a once-in-a-lifetime interview with Mr. Ford!***
- 2. Who do you have to be to rate access to the Almighty?**

## II. God Spoke to Moses

### A. Moses was a "nothing" type person.

1. The most common profession in the world -- shepherding.
2. Citizen of a "nothing" country -- the scraps left over after creation seem to have been dumped onto Sinai.
  - a) *Were you or I to parachute into it, we would never survive.*
3. Not a naturally gifted person -- by his own admission -- he did not speak well.
4. A criminal record.
  - a) *When my Dad could think of nothing else nice to say about a girl, he said she was "wholesome."*
  - b) *A capital offense -- a murderer.*
5. He was a poor prospect for an interview with the Creator.
6. From God's viewpoint, he was the perfect man for the job.
  - a) *Even these apparently empty years in the wilderness gave Moses the unique skills that made possible the survival of Israel in Sinai.*

### III. Is God Still on Speaking Terms with Humanity?

#### A. I find it easy to sense the awfulness of God.

1. But surely Moses was a special case -- is He really big enough to be aware of and concerned for me?

a) *It takes a mighty big man to run US Steel -- but no man is big enough to run the company, and name the men in the plants.*

#### B. The Psalms remind us that He not only is the God of covenant, but of persons.

1. "The Lord is my shepherd."

2. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

3. "Why is my soul cast down within me?"

4. The innermost depths of the human soul are plumbed with the light of God.

#### C. Jesus said

1. "When you pray, say 'Our Father...'"

2. "The hairs of your head are numbered..."

#### D. The Greatness of God is evidenced, not so much in his capacity to keep the universe on track -- but His capacity to be concerned for his most lowly creatures.

1. He notes the sparrow's fall.

#### IV. How, Then, Can We Come into Relationship With Him?

##### A. Moses was minding his business.

1. He was not out looking for burning bushes.
  - a) *He wasn't even seeking God.*
  - b) *Religion is not man's search for God -- but his response to God.*
  - c) *He was quietly fulfilling his responsibility as a citizen, as a husband.*
2. So also Peter, James, and John -- were minding their business when Jesus came.
3. "This is holy ground."
  - a) *What would seem like God-forsaken real estate became sacred with His presence.*
  - b) *Tomorrow at this hour, you will be on holy ground, if you are conscious of God's presence with you -- behind a desk -- at the Monday laundry tubs -- on a plane for Houston.*

##### B. Being open to his presence

1. Not a question of whether He is willing to be present with us -- but whether we are willing to be present to Him.
2. If we wait for burning bushes or tongues of flames, we will wait a long time.

##### C. Short cuts to God.

1. Transcendental meditation.
  - a) *This week K-Mart had a special in FM converters -- so I could hear good music again on radio.*
  - b) *What was the first I heard? More of the same clap-trap I had on AM!*
  - c) *The Lord may use the TM wave-length, but so does the devil.*
2. TM clears up the static.
3. Stay close to the Word of God which is Jesus Christ.

a) *Live obediently to the Word as you know it.*

#### D. Henry Sloane Coffin and David Suskind

1. Where is your final defense? "A mighty fortress is our God."

a) *Not our corporation, our neighbors, our family, our nation -- but God.*

b) *"Let goods and kindred go -- our mortal life also -- the body they may kill. God's truth abideth still."*

#### V. Conclusion

*God said, "I will be with you ..."*

*Jesus, as Risen Lord, "I will be with you, always, even to the end of the age."*

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## Study Questions -- Part I

*Bible Reading: Exodus 3:1-15*

Exodus 3:1-3 says: <sup>1</sup>Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. <sup>2</sup>And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

- How would you react if you saw this? Would you try to find a rational explanation? How might He appear today? On a computer screen?

Exodus 3:3 and 4 says: <sup>3</sup>And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. <sup>4</sup>And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

- What adjective would you use to describe your reaction to seeing this?

Exodus 3:5 and 6 says: <sup>5</sup>And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. <sup>6</sup>Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

- How do you think the New Testament God would introduce Himself?

Exodus 3:7 and 8 says: <sup>7</sup>And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; <sup>8</sup>And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

- Whose affliction do you think would most likely draw God to appear today?



Exodus 3: 9 through 13 says: <sup>9</sup>Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. <sup>11</sup>And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup>And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. <sup>13</sup>And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

- What questions would you ask God if He described a mission to you? Or would you just go without asking any questions?

Exodus 3:14 and 15 says: <sup>14</sup>And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. <sup>15</sup>And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

- Why do you think God mentions three patriarchs instead of just Abraham? And why does he speak of *all* generations rather than just three generations beyond?

## Study Questions -- Part II

*Sermon :*

- I.B. Why do you think the pronunciation of this most important name was never captured?
- I.B.2. Why do you think the Jewish tradition of omitting and not speaking the name of God disappeared in Christian tradition?
- I.C.1. Do you ever have moments when you feel you don't deserve access to God? What causes those moments? What do you do to get past them?
- I.C.2. If you were God, how would you prioritize access or determine who rates?
- II.A. Who do you think God might speak to today? Who wouldn't he speak to?
- II.A.6. How would you describe today's perfect person for such a task?
- III.A.1.a. Why do you think Dr. Galbreath made the comparison to a corporate CEO?
- III.B. The Bible speaks of generations. Does that make it harder or easier for you to see the personal in your relationship to God?
- III.C.1 & 2 What role does this personal focus play in your relationship to God?
- III.D.1. What would you like God to notice in your life? What do you wish He wouldn't see?
- IV.A. When have you been "minding your business" and felt God's presence?
- IV.B. What can you do to make yourself more open to the presence of God?
- IV.B.2. Where can you look for "God sightings?"
- IV.C. How can you tune out the static of life?
- V. How can you stay mindful of God's everlasting presence?