

WHO
I AM
GOD'S SELF-REVELATION

REGULAR BAPTIST PRESS

The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

Alex Bauman, Editor

Who I AM: God's Self-Revelation

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Preface

Who is God?

Both Moses and Israel had a lot to learn about God. He first introduced Himself to Moses as the I AM. That name became more and more meaningful over the course of many years and many blessings and trials. God revealed Himself as He directed Moses to lead Israel from slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea, to Mount Sinai, into the wilderness, and finally to the doorstep of the Promised Land. God had crucial lessons for Israel to learn about His character and ways.

You have the privilege of coming alongside Moses and God's people to learn about the I AM. The lessons in this study will help you understand God as the Sovereign, Transcendent Helper, Promise Keeper, Redeemer, Leader, Provider, Instructor, Glorious God, Atoner, Gracious Giver, Powerful Proclaimer, Loving Lord, and Solid Rock. You will be challenged with a much deeper understanding of God. Pray you will grasp the lessons God so wisely wove through the narratives of His faithful leading of His people.

I AM Sovereign

► Scripture Focus

Gen. 12:1–3; 49:8–12; Exod. 1; 2:1–22; Gal. 3:8, 13–16

Theme

God sovereignly executes His plan despite both human attempts to deny it and human blunders that threaten to derail it.

Memory Verse

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Galatians 3:8).

GETTING STARTED

There are times as history unfolds that we have to scratch our heads and wonder where God is in all that is going on. We may even ask that same question as we face difficult circumstances in our own lives.

1. When have you questioned where God was as you surveyed what was going on in the world?
2. When, if ever, have you questioned whether God was sovereign in your life?

This study will show that God sovereignly executes His plan despite both human attempts to deny it, and human blunders that threaten to derail it.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

God Declared His Plan

Israel's history began with God's call of Abraham. God called him to leave his homeland for a land He would show him. He promised Abraham that he would become a great nation and that his descendants would live in a specific land. Out of that great nation would come a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:1–3).

Genesis 12–50 record the history of Abraham and his descendants. God passed the Abrahamic covenant down to Abraham's descendants. Abraham's son Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob, later called Israel, had twelve sons by his wives Rachel and Leah and by his wives' two maidservants (35:22–26). Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and consequently favored her older son, Joseph (37:3). Joseph was the second youngest among his twelve brothers. The ten older brothers hated Joseph because of Jacob's favoritism and because of Joseph's dreams of greatness (37:1–11). They seized on the opportunity to get rid of him by selling him into Egypt as a slave (37:12–36). In Egypt, Joseph rose to second in command when God allowed him to interpret Pharaoh's dream about seven years of bumper crops followed by seven years of severe famine (41).

Jacob and his family eventually moved to Egypt to escape the famine (46). Instead of seeking vengeance, Joseph proclaimed to his brothers, *Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life* (45:5). Eventually all of Joseph's family, including his brothers and their families and his father, came to live in prominence in Egypt (47:1–12).

Jacob's Blessing of Judah

Jacob lived in Egypt until his death. Before he died, he blessed each of his sons (49:1–28). The blessing he gave to Judah, his fourth oldest son, is of particular importance. It helps us understand what God meant when He promised that Abraham's seed would be a blessing to all nations (12:3).

3. Read Genesis 49:8, 10. What does this blessing reveal about a future descendant of Judah?

Judah was to rule his brothers in some way. That did not happen in Judah's lifetime. So the statement must refer to a yet-future fulfillment.

The blessing in verse 10 develops the profile of a victorious warrior king. *Sceptre* refers to the wand of kingship that extends to between the king's *feet*. *Shiloh* is a reference to the Messiah. The word *Shiloh* can mean *to whom it belongs*, indicating that the scepter belongs to Christ. The scepter, then, will remain with Judah until Christ comes to establish His rule over Israel and the *people*, a plural noun that refers to multiple people groups or nations. Christ's rule will be established on earth during His future millennial Kingdom. The concept of Christ ruling nations is an important theme in the Bible (Ps. 2:8; Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 5:5, 9). And it partially reveals how the *seed* (Gal. 3:16) of Abraham will be a blessing to all peoples (Gen. 12:3).

4. Read Galatians 3:8, 13–16. What is the primary way in which Christ is a blessing to the nations?

Genesis 49:11 and 12 describe Christ's future rule as a time of great prosperity. Grapevines will be strong enough to tie donkeys to without worry of the donkey breaking free. And juice from the grapes of those vines will be so plentiful that people could use it to wash their clothes.

5. Assume you don't know the rest of the story of Jacob's descendants. Based on the Genesis 49 blessing, what would you expect to happen next in the narrative surrounding this large family?

All seemed well when the book of Genesis closed. God's people were living in peace and in favor with Pharaoh in Egypt. God's plan seemed to

be perfectly acceptable as Abraham's descendants grew into a nation. But Exodus begins with a turnabout; life was no longer easy.

6. Read Genesis 15:13, 14. Why should the Israelites have known that life was not going to continue to be easy for them as a nation?

Jacob moved to Egypt with seventy people. By the time Exodus opens, his descendants had grown exceedingly; the land of Egypt was filled with Israelites (Exod. 1:1–7). God had been faithful to His promise to make of Abraham a great nation. Because the nation had grown, one might expect Israel to peacefully move out of Egypt and on to the Promised Land to claim what was theirs. But God had a much different plan in mind. He had much more to accomplish than simply getting His people to the Promised Land.

God Thwarted Pharaoh's Plans

A pharaoh arose who knew nothing of Joseph's contribution to Egypt (1:8). To him the exploding nation of Israel was a power threat (1:9, 10). He was concerned that the Hebrews might rebel if Egypt were attacked. Yet he needed the Hebrews to provide labor for his ambitious projects. So he came up with a plan for lowering the risk of a Hebrew rebellion.

7. Read Exodus 1:8–11. What was Pharaoh's plan A for lowering the risk of a Hebrew rebellion?

Pharaoh's ultimate goal was to prevent Israel from leaving the land. Eventually that goal would be shared by another pharaoh nearly a century later when Moses arrived back in Egypt as Israel's deliverer (cf. 5:1, 2). The first fourteen chapters of Exodus build to a climax as both God and the pharaohs seek to carry out their plans for Israel.

The pharaoh in charge when the book of Exodus opens liked having the Hebrews as slaves. Astutely he had them build him two cities that housed supplies and most likely armaments that would help Egypt defeat

any invading army. Notice that Pharaoh accounted for *human* enemies that might help the Hebrews but gave no thought about the Hebrews' God being a source of help. That the Hebrews were slaves in his land probably contributed to his low estimation of the Hebrews' God.

8. How do you think the Israelites felt about building cities that would solidify their state as slaves in Egypt?

9. Read Exodus 1:12. What became of Pharaoh's efforts to slow down Israel's growth as a nation?

The more Israel grew as a nation, the more worried Egypt became. The Egyptians began to become anxious about Israel's presence in their land.

Pharaoh responded to Israel's increase in strength and number by making the people work even harder. He made Israel work with *rigour*, meaning that the Egyptians treated the Hebrews harshly and drove them to work beyond reason (1:13, 14). Pharaoh's plan was to wear them out so that their desire to survive distracted them from the normal life of marrying and having children. Apparently Pharaoh's plan B didn't work. The Israelites continued to grow.

There is a sense in which the harder Pharaoh made the men of Israel work, the more they relished having a family to love and support them during the hours they were not being oppressed. Pharaoh's plan was in essence counterintuitive. Of course God's hand was also behind the scenes thwarting Pharaoh's plan B to keep the Israelites from growing as a nation.

10. When has a difficult circumstance helped you appreciate and grow closer to your family?

Still not seeing the results he wanted, Pharaoh tried plan C to deal with the population explosion at its source. He commanded the midwives to kill the Hebrew male babies as soon as they were born. Pharaoh wanted to destroy the future ranks of Hebrew soldiers. Perhaps he thought that at some point in the future he would let some Hebrew boys live to replenish his slaves that aged and were no longer able to work. For an ongoing policy of killing Hebrew boys would have eventually devastated Egypt's workforce.

11. Read Exodus 1:15–17. What kept the midwives from killing the Hebrew children?

Pharaoh soon realized that his plan C was not working. He called the midwives and asked them why they weren't obeying him. The midwives made up the excuse that the Hebrew women gave birth so quickly that they weren't even present to kill the baby boys. The midwives lied to Pharaoh and hid their reverence for God. Though God never condoned their lie, He did bless them because of their respect for Him in the matter of sparing the Hebrew boys.

Pharaoh became increasingly frustrated and desperate. So he enlisted all of the Egyptians to help him carry out his most cruel plan. He empowered every Egyptian to act as an executioner on his behalf. When the Egyptians saw a Hebrew baby boy, they were to execute the boy by throwing him into the Nile to drown.

12. Read Exodus 1:22. Describe what life would have been like for Hebrew families with Pharaoh's executioners lurking all around?

Chapter 1 ends with these awful circumstances in place. They became the new normal. It appears that Pharaoh had finally come up with a plan to keep Israel in Egypt. And we can safely assume that many of the Hebrews' boys were indeed drowned in the Nile.

13. What questions might you have been tempted to ask God if you had been living as a Hebrew slave in Egypt at that point in history?

What God did next to continue to carry out His plan for His people shows just how powerless Pharaoh was to keep God's people in Egypt.

God's Protective, Providential Hand

Perhaps Pharaoh thought that a death sentence for all Hebrew baby boys would deter the Hebrews from having any children at all. But that was not the case. A couple from the tribe of Levi married and had children. The couple is later identified as Amram and Jochebed. Their first-born boy was Aaron (see 6:20). Their second boy was later named Moses. Fearing Pharaoh's executioners, Moses' parents hid him for three months until it became impossible to do so safely (2:1, 2).

14. Was keeping Moses safe for the first three months of his life up to just Amram and Jochebed? Explain.

Jochebed made a watertight ark of bulrushes, put Moses in it, and nestled it in the reeds by the bank of the Nile. Moses' sister Miriam stood afar off to see what would become of her brother (2:3, 4).

One could argue that Jochebed was acting out of disbelief by taking Moses out of hiding. But she was doing what God wanted. Her plan, whether or not she realized it, was exactly what God wanted.

15. Read Exodus 2:5–9. What is your reaction when you read that God used Pharaoh's daughter to protect Moses?

Pharaoh's efforts to keep the Israelites in Egypt were all part of God's plan. God used the circumstances to allow Moses to safely return home. There he most certainly received instructions about God and the

importance of his national identity as a Hebrew. The word used for *grew* indicates Moses was at least well into boyhood when he left to live with Pharaoh's daughter. Later he identified himself as a Hebrew rather than an Egyptian, even after spending most of his life in Pharaoh's house (cf. Acts 7:23–25). That national connection would be crucial for his leadership of Israel decades later.

What Moses did while he was in Pharaoh's household and under the care of Pharaoh's daughter is not well documented. But there are some clues and some conclusions we could draw.

16. Read Acts 7:21, 22. What did Moses learn while he was in Pharaoh's house?

Moses received leadership training while in Egypt. Later on he would balk at God's call to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, claiming he could not speak eloquently (Exod. 4:10). One could conclude that the leadership training he received in Egypt did him no good. But imagine how ill prepared he would have felt without his time in the Egyptian schools. Moses was *mighty in words*, meaning he commanded the language well and knew what to say on just about any subject. Being *mighty in . . . deeds* meant he had a good grasp of business and perhaps even war.

When Moses was forty, he went to visit his people and noticed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew (Exod. 2:11). Moses made sure no one was looking and then killed the Egyptian, burying his body in the sand (2:12). When Moses went out a second day to see the burdens of his people, he intervened in a dispute between two Hebrews. They questioned whether he would kill one of them as he had killed the Egyptian (2:13, 14). Moses realized that his murder of the Egyptian must have been made known. Moses fled Egypt as the report came to Pharaoh (2:15). Pharaoh was probably not as concerned about the murder as he was about Moses siding with the Hebrew slaves.

17. On the surface, what did Moses' blunder in killing the Egyptian seem to do to his opportunity to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt?

Moses ended up in Midian on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Aqaba. There he sat down by a well (2:15). Before long Moses was again intervening to stop an injustice. This time it was on the behalf of seven daughters of a Midianite priest named Reuel. Moses kept shepherds from chasing the daughters from the well (2:15–17). As a result, Reuel gave Moses his daughter Zipporah as his wife (2:18–22).

Moses remained in Midian for forty years (Acts 7:30). His life as a shepherd was far different than his life in Egypt.

18. What lessons would Moses learn from caring for sheep in the wilderness?

God providentially directed Moses' life to prepare Moses to lead the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt. God had already proved that He sovereignly executes His plan despite both human attempts to deny it and human blunders that threaten to derail it. Next He would introduce Himself to Moses as I AM, the transcendent helper.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

19. What obstacles to God's will for your life have you considered too big to overcome?
20. How should God's introduction of Himself as the Sovereign affect how you view those obstacles? Consider what God was able to do despite Pharaoh's attempts to deny His will.
21. Have you concluded that God could not use you because you've committed a blunder that seemed to derail His will for you?

22. Deal with those blunders, confessing any outstanding sins and renewing your relationship with God. Pray that God would use you to accomplish His will for your life.