

Who Do I Say I Am

Exodus 3:1-14, Matthew 28:16-20

Turn to Exodus 3. This is called, “Who do I say I am.” In Matthew 16, Jesus asked the disciples: “who do people say that I am?” Then he asked the disciples, “who do you say that I am?” But Jesus has never openly answered his own question. But at the end of Matthew Jesus answers his own question. Jesus tells the disciples who he says he is.

“I am the new Yahweh. Yahweh, God of Israel, Maker of heaven and earth, has put his cloak on me. I am now in his place.” It is very bold. Jesus never says this in so many words; that has never been his way. He shows it by setting up a scene like God and Moses at the burning bush, and he speaks to the disciples as God spoke to Moses. So we’ll begin by reading Exodus 3:1-14.

Ex 3:1-14 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” And God said, “I am with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

Here's the basic parallel between Exodus 3 and the end of Matthew: In Exodus 3, Moses went to the mountain to see a remarkable sight. God was waiting there for Moses. That mountain was a place to worship God. God explained himself to Moses, and told Moses to go and do something. God explained his Name to Moses, and promised Moses that he would be with him.

In Matthew 28, eleven disciples went to the mountain to see a strange sight, Jesus risen from the dead. On the mountain they worshipped Jesus. Jesus explained himself to the eleven, and told them to go do something. Then Jesus told them the new name of God, and he promised that he would be with them. By this similarity, this echo, we see the cloak of Yahweh now on Jesus.

Matthew was written to Jewish believers, and they will have caught this. To us, God on the mountain is not a basic story to our faith, not the way the women at the tomb and the angel and the stone rolled away is basic to our faith. But to devout Jews, meeting God at the mountain in Exodus was a core story, and they will not have missed the parallel.

Three sentences in Matthew set up the final meeting with Jesus. We'll read these, and then we'll look at what happens on the mountain. Matthew sets up this meeting 3 times.

Set up #1. Matt 26:31-32 – After the Last Supper, *Jesus told them, “After I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”* Jesus set up a meeting afterward. *I will go ahead of you into Galilee.*

Let's talk about us. Jesus has things to say to us also in these frightening and stressful times. Imagine Jesus making an appointment with us. Wherever you and I are, he has come here ahead of us, and he's waiting for us to show up, because he has some things to show us and say to us. *After I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.* Now, to Matthew 28.

Set up #2 Matt 28:5-8 - *The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go **quickly** and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and **behold**, he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ **Behold** I have told you.”* ⁸ *So the women **hurried** away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and **ran** to tell his disciples.*

The angel urged the women; Go quickly and tell the disciples. Behold, he's going ahead. Behold, I have told you. “Behold” is like putting an exclamation mark at the beginning of a sentence. Jesus is going ahead. *Behold, I have told you.* “I've done my part, I came and told you women, now you do your part, go and tell them.”

Set up #3 Matt 28:9-10 - *Suddenly Jesus met them (the women). “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and **worshipped** him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my **brothers** to go to **Galilee**; there they will see me.”*

The women worshipped Jesus. This is a God thing, and it's right, it's right to give Jesus what only God receives. Then Jesus repeated what the angel said: tell the disciples about the meeting with Jesus in Galilee. And again, *there they will see me*.

Others see Jesus before the Galilee meeting, but not the disciples. In Luke and John, Jesus appeared to the disciples on that first Easter Sunday, the same day he rose. Matthew almost certainly knows about that, but ignores it, because he's teaching something different. Matthew teaches that meeting the risen Jesus means this Galilee meeting.

Matthew has a different emphasis here than the other Gospels. In Matthew, knowing that the tomb is empty and that Jesus rose is not enough. Matthew's empty tomb scene is not complete, it pushes us toward this other meeting. We do not grasp or understand the risen Jesus until we absorb what happened at this Galilee meeting.

In Matthew, this is important. Now the final meeting in Galilee, in seven parts.

Final Scene #1 28:16 *The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.* We learn here that the disciples will meet Jesus on a mountain. This comes as a surprise to us. So far, we have just been told "Galilee," but here we learn that Jesus had specified a particular mountain.

In the Old Testament, mountains are God places, and also in Matthew. The Sermon on the Mountain begins like this: "Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the mountain, then we have the Sermon, Matt 5-7, the core teaching of Jesus about kingdom life. After the Sermon we read, *when Jesus had come down from the mountain.* God gave his instructions on the mountain, and Jesus did the same. The Sermon on the Mountain is the first mountain event in Matthew.

Now at the end of Matthew, Jesus speaks again from the mountain, the third mountain event in Matthew. And in between we have the second mountain event, the mountain of transfiguration, where God speaks directly to the disciples. God tells them, "*This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!*" My Son is telling you what I want said, so listen to him.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

Meeting the risen Jesus is like Moses going to the mountain to meet YHWH.

Final Scene #2 28:17 *When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.* When they saw him, they worshipped him. The women also did this. In Scripture, one worships only God. Jesus understands what they are doing, and he accepts their worship, because he is God.

But some doubted. Can Jesus really be alive again? Doubt is an old problem. Sometimes it's hard to be sure we're actually with Jesus, isn't it? They worshipped, and some doubted, and Jesus can see who is doubting, but it did not slow him down. He treated the doubters as he treated the worshippers. Doubting is a hard way to follow God, but the Lord carries on with us.

When we come to the risen Jesus, we worship him, as Moses worshipped YHWH at Sinai.

Final scene #3 28:18 *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* Who has all authority in heaven and on earth? God does. But now Jesus has it. Jesus did not take God over, he did not fight for it, or win it. It was given to him. God, the One with this authority, gave it to Jesus. This why we call Jesus “Lord.”

Let’s think a minute on how Jesus begins and ends: *When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.... And surely I am with you all the days, to the end of the age.”*

Imagine that you are where you are right now because the Lord arranged it, and he’s been here waiting for you, because he wants to say this to you. We are in frightening times now, because this world wide virus is still growing. Maybe you’re a worshipper, and maybe you’re a doubter, and maybe some of both. *When they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted.*

What did Jesus do? He came closer. In Exodus, God told Moses not to come any closer. That changed. Jesus came closer. *When we saw him, we worshiped him; but some of us doubted. Then Jesus came close to us and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.... And I am certainly with you all the days, to the end of the age.”*

Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. We need not fear any dark spiritual power, and we need not fear any people or events on earth. He has them ALL in his pocket, and he is SURELY with us every day, to the end of the age.

“With us” means “helps us.” Moses did not want to go to Egypt. Moses said to God, “Who am I? I’m not enough for this.” God said to Moses, “I will be with you.” God being with him means God will guide him and help him and take care of him; God will see Moses through this. That is how Jesus talks to worshippers and to doubters, which means us.

It is sometimes hard to believe this. If he has all that authority, he can’t be with me; if he’s with me, then he can’t possibly have all that authority. That is called “doubt.” Jesus says the same to doubters as to worshippers: he guides, helps, strengthens, he sees us right through this.

Meeting the risen Jesus is like Moses going to the mountain to meet YHWH.

When we come to the risen Jesus, we worship him, as Moses worshipped YHWH.

When we come to the risen Jesus, we come to the Lord of heaven and earth.

Final scene #4 28:19a *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.* In Matthew 10, Jesus sent the 12 out, but his first words told them where NOT to go, “Do not go to the Gentiles, and do not go to the Samaritans, only to the lost sheep of Israel.” But now that’s changed. God told Moses to go do something, and Jesus told the Eleven to go do something.

All the nations should be doing what the eleven have already been doing, following Jesus, being his disciples, because Jesus now has all authority in heaven and on earth.

When we come to the risen Jesus, we come to the one who wants all nations as followers.

Final scene #5 28:19b *Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* Think about the *name* of God. When God called Moses at the burning bush, Exodus 3, Moses said to God, “*Suppose they ask me, ‘what is His name?’ What shall I tell them?*” And then God explains his *name*, Yahweh, to Moses.

So Jesus, on the mountain, meeting the eleven, who are the new version of Moses, and receiving worship from them, revises the *Name* of God. The God of the OT is now named *the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*.

And this happens in baptism. Baptism is how the nations are brought into the family of God, brought into Christ. “Bring the nations into my people,” we could paraphrase, “in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” That is God’s new name.

How does Yahweh fit into the deity of Jesus? Jesus revises the *name* of God: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. As it stands here, those three together are Yahweh, the revised Name.

Let us never fear that if we worship Jesus, we are ignoring the Father or ignoring the Holy Spirit. When we worship Jesus and obey him, we are doing just what the Father and Holy Spirit want. There is no such thing of ignoring the Father and the Holy Spirit, if we worship and obey the Lord Jesus.

The baptismal line is again about deity of Christ. 1, he met them on the mountain; 2, they worshiped him; 3, he is now Lord of heaven and earth; 4, all the nations should serve him; and 5, when they come to him they are coming to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christ’s exaltation and deity are in all of these.

When we come to the risen Jesus and are baptized, we have come to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Final scene #6 28:20a *And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

I was confused for years about the word “command” here. This is not how Jesus’ teachings are described in the Gospels, including Matthew. Jesus usually *teaches* people, not *commands* them. But think “Exodus,” and think “God on the mountain,” and think “Mt Sinai.”

All of a sudden “commands” makes more sense. In Exodus, God gave his people *commands* from the mountain. Now who gives *commands* to his people? Jesus does. And in Matthew, this has mostly to do with the Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5-7.

Moses taught Israel God's commands; the *eleven* will teach the *nations* Jesus' commands.

When we come to the risen Jesus, we come to One who commands, the One to obey.

Summary of 19–20 *Go and make disciples, baptizing in the Name, and teaching my commands.*

Some take this as evangelism, but that's not what it says. Jesus does not mention gospel, or preaching, but rather baptism, and teaching. The words emphasize church life not evangelism. The Name of God at baptism gets more detail than anything else. The Lord's emphasis is church rather than evangelism. Jesus spoke about evangelism in other places, but not here (Mt 9:37-38).

Make disciples by baptizing and teaching. That is actually what the church's elders do. The emphasis here is not on going, but on the name of God at baptism, and that baptized Gentiles are taught the commands of Jesus. If the Eleven go say just what Jesus told them to say, they will speak the new name of God, and they will teach the commands of Jesus. Sounds like church.

When we come to the risen Jesus, we come to one who sends his servants to lead his people.

Final scene #7 28:20b *And behold I am with you all the days, to the very end of the age.*” When God met Moses at the burning bush, Exodus 3, *Moses said, “Who am I, that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” And God said, “I am with you.”*

Who is it *now* that is with us? Jesus. The Lord of heaven and earth is *with us all the days, to the very end of the age*. That last line, *to the very end of the age*, shows that it's for all his disciples, right until he returns. The Lord of heaven and earth is now with each one of us every day.

Matthew does not record the Jesus returning to his Father. Earlier in Matthew, Jesus talks about leaving and returning, so we know it will happen. But it's not mentioned here. Matthew ends with the promise that the Lord of heaven and earth is with us every day. God is using Matthew to encourage and comfort us here, today. Matthew ends this way on purpose.

I am with you always. To the end of the age. He's with us to guide, help, strengthen, protect, to see us through it all. I myself often doubt this.

Here's what I think will happen. When I see the Lord Jesus, I will find out that the Lord of heaven and earth was with me all along, guiding helping and encouraging, to a degree I rarely if ever imagined. He never stopped doing that for me. I will say to him, “I didn't know you were always with me like that.” And he will say, “how else should I have said it?” And I will have no answer, he had said it all.

Let's all put ourselves in this: *When we saw him, we worshiped him; but some of us doubted. Then Jesus came to us all, and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.... And I am certainly with you all the days, to the end of the age.”*

In Exodus 3, Moses went to the mountain to see a remarkable sight. God was waiting there for Moses. That mountain was a place to worship God. God explained himself to Moses, and told Moses to go do something. God explained his Name to Moses, and God promised Moses that he would be with him.

In Matthew 28, eleven disciples went to the mountain to see a strange sight, Jesus risen from the dead. On the mountain they worshipped Jesus. Jesus explained himself to the eleven, and told them to go do something. Then Jesus told them the new name of God, and he promised that he would be with them.

Who does Jesus say that he is? He shows us that he's the new Yahweh. When we see this, we have seen and met the risen Jesus.

PRAYER:

Risen Jesus, we meet you on the mountain, where you wait for us, as Moses met the LORD, who waited for him on a mountain. We worship you today, now, as Moses worshipped the LORD. You have all the authority of the LORD over the heavens and the earth.

Risen Lord Jesus, it is right that all the nations follow and obey you.

Risen Lord Jesus, when we are baptized, you bring us to yourself with the new Name of God: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Risen Lord Jesus, as God commanded Moses, so you commanded us. We will teach your commands and we will obey them all.

Risen Lord Jesus, as God was with Moses, so you are with us every day, to guide and help and comfort and protect, to see us through to the end. And we give you praise and thanks that you have given us eyes to see this. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep; may that God equip us with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord has Risen! He has risen indeed! Go in God's peace, to love and serve the Lord.