



THE EXHORTER

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 1678

Exodus 3:14 *"God said to Moses, 'I AM who I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

Our verse, from a conversation between God and Moses, finds Moses asking God what His name is. Moses was concerned what he would tell Israel when they asked, "What is his name?" In reply, God referred to Himself as, "I AM."

1. God has a name. Multiple times in Scriptures He is called Jehovah. He is not "the big guy in the sky." He has a name. Does it matter what I call Him? Does it matter what people call you? Do you like for people to call you by another name than what is yours? At a wedding, if a bride is marrying Mr. Smith, will she want to be known as Mrs. Jones, a different name?

I AM. Present tense. Now. Today. Not, I used to be. I once was. Nor, I will be. I could be. I might be. I AM. I AM here. I AM God. I AM.

2. Don't confuse I AM with other make believe or false gods. Allah, the god for the Muslim is not the same as I AM. Allah doesn't act like I AM. Allah does not have the character of goodness like I AM. They are not the same. I AM is not the same as the cosmic energy that the Hindu believes is in all of us. That energy we are told is eternal and moves from lower and higher levels of consciousness. It moves in and out of a person. This theory of energy is not the same as I AM. When people say, "We all mean the same thing, we just use different words," that's not completely true. I AM is defined in Scriptures. He is the creator and sustainer of life. He is not Allah. He is not a cosmic energy force.

3. God's name is special. In the Ten Commandments, Israel was told not to take the name of the Lord in vain. When teaching about prayer, Jesus said, 'Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name...' Hallowed or holy is God's name. God's name is not to be used when we don't know what else to say. It is not to be used to express surprise or anger. One hears the name "God" all the time, but rarely is it used in reference to I AM. People just say it because they have a limited vocabulary, are used to hearing it misused on TV, and they don't think when they speak. Is that plain enough? While we are on this, the OMG, is not kind, glorifying nor honoring G-O-D. Don't be liking that on Facebook. Don't be liking the misuse of God's name. I'm a pretty nice guy and I get along with just about anyone and everyone. I've had folks toss verbal mud my direction. That doesn't bother me. Start trashing my wife, kids or now my grandkids, look out. I won't sit back for that. Shouldn't it be the same for our God? His name is special. His name is holy.

(OVER)

His name is to be treasured and honored. Bless be the name of the Lord. Treat it that way. Be careful how you use God's name. Don't laugh at taking God's name in vain. Be offended. Blush. Be upset. Stand up for God.

4. God's name is equivalent to God's authority. Those early disciples were told to baptize in the NAME of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Colossians were told that whatever they did, to do it in the NAME of the Lord Jesus. What do those expressions mean? It's more than verbally saying God's name. We hear the preacher saying out loud at a baptism, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Was this nothing more than something to have the preacher say? Of course, there is more. In the NAME of, means by the permission or the authority of God. Baptizing in the NAME of, means, by the authority of God. What we are doing is authorized and found in the Bible. This is Biblical, not because we say those words, but because we are following the word of God. In the name of God means to be God approved. It means that one is sticking with and following what God has said in the Scriptures. There is a lot of stuff going on in the religious community that is not in the NAME of God. Certainly, they will claim that it is. They will stick the word "ministry" behind what they are doing but you can't find what they are doing in the Scriptures. Having a Bar-B-Que ministry sounds like a wonderful idea, especially around lunch time. But having a church sell food to non-needy people is a business and was never done in the Bible. Calling such things a work of God or we are doing this in God's name, illustrates that the person doesn't fully understand the expression "NAME of God." To be in God's name, God has to approve of it. Sticking a label on it because we like it or we want it, doesn't mean that God does. Just because we perceive some good being accomplished doesn't mean that the end justifies the means. How you get there is just as important as getting there. Whatever you do, the Colossians were told, do all in the NAME of the Lord Jesus. If it is not found in the Bible, how can it be in God's name?

5. We carry God's name. The word "Christian," used only three times in the Scriptures and only of believers, means, "belonging to Christ." We belong to Christ. We are His. God's name becomes part of us, because we are with Him. Today, the word "Christian" is used to describe bookstores, colleges, camps, publications, radio stations, types of music and even a nation. This is a Christian nation, folks once said. Few say it today. The name Christian belongs to people not things. The name Christian belongs to those who belong to Him. What an honor to be viewed not as an outsider, but as one of God's sons or daughters. Adopted. Loved. Accepted. Wanted. Included. Honored. That's what comes with belonging to Christ. Once understood and once appreciated, how can anyone ever walk away from that? How can someone stop?

One of the best scenes from the movie, Toy Story, is when the toy cowboy Woody, looks at the bottom of his boot, and sees the name ANDY. Andy was the boy that played with Woody, loved Woody and owned Woody. He was Andy's toy. He belonged to Andy. On our hearts is written God's name. We belong to Him. We are His.

God's name. I expect you'll hear it often today. Sadly, most times, won't be in a good way. Be different. Try to honor God by honoring His name. Love Him. Follow Him. Glorify Him.

He is the I AM. That's what you need today, I AM.

Roger Shouse