

Meditation #2: The Christ Before Christmas

What does it say? –

STUDY: Exodus 3:13-22

GOLDEN TEXT: Exodus 3:14 and 15: *God said to Moses, “I AM who I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: This is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations.’”*

What does it mean?

The first Christmas was not the beginning of Christ. During his ministry, the Lord Jesus said that “before Abraham was, I AM.” (John 8:58) He identified himself as the Lord who introduced himself and his name to Moses and then liberated the nation of Israel from slavery. The deep goodness of all creation is revealed in God’s name. The Hebrew base-word here is *ha-yah*, meaning “to breathe, to exist as life itself.” *Ha-yah* is a very natural word, since it is the very sound of breathing: We make the sound “*ha*” when we breathe in and “*yah*” when we breathe out. The “I AM who I AM” in Hebrew can also be translated “I breathe as I breathe.” What is more basic than breathing? At Christmas, the Lord became a living human baby who was destined to conquer death in his resurrection, *but he has always been the only LIVING God, the one Creator of life*. Only he gives enduring life and HOPE.

1. Biblical names are often intensely meaningful, especially the names God chooses for himself. Why, of all the names of God, did Jesus choose “I AM” to claim for him?
2. The name “I AM” is unique because it embraces no adjectives. It says that God is living being; God is *life, himself*, without limits. Can he become a human baby?
3. God is *life, himself*. Is this why there is always goodness in all he makes, since even to exist, *to be*, is to bear his name “I AM”? Can anything in God’s creation not be good at its very root—even if it becomes polluted or depleted?
4. When we look for the goodness of creation, could we start with its existence? Did it come from the “I AM”? What adjectives help describe creation’s splendor—“vibrant,” “beautiful,” “balanced”—even if it is also “damaged,” “neglected” and “polluted”?

What are we going to do about it?

5. Since Jesus represents the I AM in human form and is the ultimate essence of good—and the ultimate breath of life—is he always with us? Does he always enable us? Is he our HOPE?
6. Is caring for God’s creation an expression of our caring for Jesus himself, the I AM, the I BREATHE of creation? Could there be a better motivation for caring for creation?
7. How are we humans the images of the Lord, the I AM? Since God makes everything exist and we are his images, should not the protection of creation matter to all of us? Since God is the I BREATHE of all of life, in how many ways should we protect life?

Truth To Celebrate: *To celebrate Hope, we are called to honor the one God of Life, the one Living God who is life, the I AM (the I breathe) who transformed Moses.*

Advent-Action: *Make one of your favorite recipes for a meal or a dessert, and invite a neighbor who has never been in your home to enjoy this bit of the Living God’s creation.*

