

It is good to see how *monumental a reference to the sin of unbelief* we find in Jude 1:5 – and also to see how the Lord Jesus must destroy such unbelief, though He patiently bore with it all through Israel's wilderness wanderings. In those years of unbelief, Israel was tempted not only to question God, but even to level accusations of evil intent against Him. Just a few months after the Exodus, they want to “drag God into court” to accuse Him of abusing His people. Their accusations climax in Exodus 17:7, where they dare to utter the question, “*Is the LORD among us or not?*” What an insult to the Red Sea Deliverer, who saved Israel from slavery! But the LORD is up to the task of graciously responding to such ingratitude. May His name “LORD” and the mercy that this name stands for shine brightly against the backdrop of Israel's rebellion as we consider these things.

Mon/Tues: Read Exodus 3:14-15; 17:1-7 and Matthew 22:23-33

Ever Living, Ever Merciful

The slur which Israel casts against God's loving presence among His people is refuted by the definition of the name “LORD,” which is capitalized for emphasis in most of our English versions. Moses defines it in Exodus 3:14, emphasizing its utter reliability. God declares Himself to be the “I AM,” a name translated throughout the Old Testament as “The LORD.” Another translation could be “I AM WHO I AM.”

Think of it! There has never been any other being who could speak of himself as perpetually, unchangeably the same, *from all eternity to all eternity!* This reveals God as in a category all by Himself: self-existent, eternal, and alone the giver of all life. Every other being must speak about past (I was), present (I am) and future (I will be). But the LORD simply IS.

What does such an unchanging character mean for us? Since God IS, He never changes in His covenant relationship to His people. The God who told Abraham, “I AM your God” continues to be Abraham's God and actually gives Abraham resurrection life so that it can be eternally said, “I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, - STILL!” This is Jesus' point when He quotes the LORD's description of His relationship to the long-since dead Abraham: “I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.... He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” Because God doesn't change, we as His people are kept in continual relationship with the LORD, whether we live or die!

Meditate and Pray: Thank you, LORD, that you are able to identify yourself in relation to your covenant people in whatever trials they face – even death itself. As Jesus says about the unchangeable nature of His Father: “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive.” Give us courage through this name to dwell securely and without fear as aliens in this hostile world. May we be persuaded that the very same God who preserved the faith of our fathers and mothers will also carry us through life, and even through death, as our “I AM” God! Amen.

Wednesday: Read Exodus 3:14-15 and 17:1-2**A Reputation for Faithfulness**

Exodus 17 opens with Israel literally, “contending or bringing a case against Moses.” Moses objects: “Why do you bring a case against me and test the LORD?” With great hostility and a desire to punish God, Israel puts the “LORD” in the dock, blaming Him for all their ills. This is all the more remarkable when we remember for a moment what this name “LORD” means. Rooted in the present continuous tense of the Hebrew verb “to be,” it is a name which commands us to rest on God’s unchanging faithfulness. He will not deceive us; when we call on His name, He is always close by and will perform for us all that His name has promised! He has staked His reputation on being unchangeably true and trustworthy, especially when it comes to saving and preserving the lives of His own. This is why the name “LORD” could be translated as “I will be who I will be.” He is always the same, unchangeable Savior of His people.

Meditate and Pray: Thank you LORD, that your name encompasses our steady relationship with You. You refuse to abandon us to death, and instead raise us from the dead, so that you can keep your name as I AM, and so you can say of us, “I AM your God...” Thank you that you care about every word of Scripture, even every verb tense! Thank you that your name as Savior in our lives is unchangeably eternal. Forgive us for questioning your name and place in our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who is the same “yesterday, today and forever.” Amen.

Thursday: Read Exodus 17:1-7 and 33:13-19**God Explains Himself**

Though Israel scorns God’s name and refuses to trust God’s unchanging character, Moses treasures this name “LORD” and wants to learn more. We see Moses ask for an expanded view of this name, where he asks God to “show him His glory.” God indicates in Exodus 33:19 that He will grant this request by revealing His name as full of compassion and mercy. In this way His Name “LORD” will be proclaimed in Moses’ very presence in full meaning.

Notice especially how intimate the LORD is with Moses in verse 19, literally translated: “I will cause all my goodness to pass **before your face**, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, **before your face**. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Nothing could be more direct: Moses’ “**face**” is going to directly encounter God as God gives him a revelation of Himself in a life-giving and personal way: *Not*, as the LORD says in verse 20, with a deadly view of the white hot holiness of God, but with a view full of God’s compassion and mercy.

Meditate and Pray: Give the LORD the joyful thanks of your heart as you see Him magnify His goodness directly revealed to sinners such as Moses and we ourselves, using *Trinity Hymnal* # 82:

*Great God of wonders! All Thy ways
Are matchless, Godlike and divine;
But the fair glories of Thy grace
More Godlike and unrivaled shine,
More Godlike and unrivaled shine.*

*Crimes of such horror to forgive,
Such guilty, daring worms to spare;
This is Thy grand prerogative,
And none shall in the honor share,
And none shall in the honor share.*

*Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?
Or who has grace so rich and free?*

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Ex. 33:19-20 and 34:5-8

The Father's Loving Heart

If someone asked you to name two of your most dominant personal characteristics, what would you say. Now, if you had perfect knowledge of your yourself, as God does, and you were perfectly honest in all situations, as God is, would your answer change? When Moses asks to see the glory of the LORD, the Lord calls attention to twin attributes: "I will cause all my goodness to pass before your face, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, before your face. I will have **mercy** on whom I will have **mercy**, and I will have **compassion** on whom I will have **compassion**."

Each of these words highlight the deep, loving character of God. The first word, "mercy," is the undeserved favor of a superior to a lowly, afflicted, humbled soul. Moses, as the "meekest man on the face of the earth at that time" (Numbers 12:3), has in our passage already pleaded for this "favor" to continue with him and with wicked Israel in Exodus 13:13: "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." What astounding faith from the Spirit of God to prompt Moses to pray for this "favor" to be shown to Israel after the golden calf!

"Compassion," the second word for God's goodness in verse 19, comes from the idea of tenderness, or softness, and is used of the tender affection of a mother or father for their child. It comes from the word for a mother's womb. This is how God the Father shows that He is continually mindful of the plight of His own. With His compassionate eye upon us, even when we sin, He is ready at any moment to mercifully cover over our sins as His promise of compassion moves us to confess them. Proverbs 28:13 says, "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Let us thank God for the way His love for us endures as long and unchangeably as His name: There is a limitless depth of Divine compassion coming from the springs of of the LORD's tenderest heart affections! Sing about such deep compassion from Psalm 103:13, found in *Trinity Hymnal* # 131:

*Children of the heav'nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in Heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.*

*God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish;
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.*

*Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.*

*Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy.*