

I AM

MISSION ADVENTURES 2019 North American Theme Statement

In the beginning, the earth was a formless void; and darkness covered the face of the deep. Millenia later, our world has taken shape. Now it is scarred by wars, ruled by governments, influenced by cultures, societies, and media.

Today we face a world that is increasingly hopeless. We live where truth and the structures of our society are being shaken. Who can be trusted? Our minds and our devices are flooded with information, but sources are shady, and the truth is disguised. Families dissolve and we search for acceptance. We search but do not find. Who will save us? If there is a God, he remains hidden. The waters seem to have swallowed us up, and it feels like we are sinking to the depths.

But just when we think the darkness has overcome, the hidden God reaches out. He reveals himself that we may know, believe, and understand. He breathes into us, and in the deep waters we are not overcome. We walk through the fire and we are not burned. And he does all of this so that we may proclaim to those who are sinking, to those who are burned by the flames, that he is *I AM*, and we are his.

Who is this invisible God? He is the Lord our God. He is Elohim, Emmanuel, Adonai, Savior, Lord. He is creator, healer, redeemer. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is God, and there is no other. He is *I AM*. Despite the darkness, despite despair, he appears in the burning bush, the parting of the seas, the thunder and the rain, in whispers in the night, and even in Christ in the grave. He is resurrection. He is the dawn of a new day. He is doing a new thing; do you not perceive it?

Who are we? We are his. He says he has called us by name. We are precious and loved, ransomed and redeemed. He is the Holy One, but do not fear. Forget not that we have been redeemed. With repentance comes refreshing, and we are ushered into his holiness. He is with us, in the roaring fire and the raging seas. He says, "Do not be afraid... I will be with you." He was, and is, and is to come.

What do we do? We go, we proclaim. We are his witnesses. We are sent. We have been chosen to know, believe, and understand this invisible God. Yet is he so invisible? Do I hear his voice? Is that his presence that lingers? When I sink to the depths is it he who calls to me? That feeling in my gut, that stone in my soul, that calls out to something beyond me. Is it someone, is it something? Could it be this invisible God, *I AM*?

Without much to lose, dare I say it? This is the *I AM*. We are his. He is Holy, yet he is with us. And we are sent to bring his sons and daughters from afar: the rich and the poor, the blind and the lame, the marginalized peoples of our society, the lost and forgotten. We are sent to introduce them to *I AM*, and this is to truly know, believe, and understand that he is God.

But now, O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you.

O Israel, the one who formed you says, “Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you.

I have called you by name; you are mine.

When you go through deep waters, I will be with you.

When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown.

When you walk through the fire of oppression,

you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.

For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

I gave Egypt as a ransom for your freedom;

I gave Ethiopia[a] and Seba in your place.

Others were given in exchange for you.

I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me.

You are honored, and I love you.

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you.

I will gather you and your children from east and west.

I will say to the north and south,

‘Bring my sons and daughters back to Israel

from the distant corners of the earth. Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.”

Bring out the people who have eyes but are blind,

who have ears but are deaf.

Gather the nations together!

Assemble the peoples of the world!

Which of their idols has ever foretold such things?

Which can predict what will happen tomorrow?

Where are the witnesses of such predictions?

Who can verify that they spoke the truth?

“But you are my witnesses, O Israel!” says the Lord.

“You are my servant.

You have been chosen to know me, believe in me,

and understand that I alone am God.

There is no other God—

there never has been, and there never will be.

Alternate Versions of Verse 10

“People of Israel, you are my witnesses,” announces the Lord.

“I have chosen you to be my servant. I wanted you to know me and believe in me.

I wanted you to understand that I am the one and only God.

Before me, there was no other god at all.

And there will not be any god after me. (NIRV)

You are My witnesses; You are My proof.

You whom I chose for special purpose, My servant,

in order that you would know Me, trust Me, be faithful to Me,

Understand that I alone am God; no god was formed before Me,

and there will be no god after Me.

(VOICE)

“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord,

“and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.

Before me no god was formed,

nor will there be one after me.

(NIV)

Isaiah 43:1-10 (NLT)