

I AM THAT I AM Pt 2

Pastor Jose F. Maldonado

Hillburn Drive Grace Baptist Church

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“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. 15 And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations..” Exodus 3:14 & 15.

As we return to our study in Exodus 3:14 & 15, this evening I would like to speak on the subject of **I AM THAT I AM**. We kind of gave you an introduction to this text last time we spoke in Exodus. We sought and tried to explain the unexplainable. As a reminder I did say that there were 3 of the many attributes of God that came to mind when speaking on this subject. These attributes are non-communicable attributes which means you do not find these attributes on any of His created beings. The Eternity of God, the Immutability of God and the Aseity of God (self-existence), describes the essence of I AM. I know there are other attributes that can be added, like His Omni-presence or His Omniscience and others, but I feel that the first 3 really set forth the fundamental nature of the Great I AM.

- First, the ETERNITY of God.

The Eternity of God, God has always been, He was here long before we were created. He is an eternal God that cannot be measured by time or space. God is a continuous and infinite God without beginning or end. Stephen Charnock says, *“The eternity of God is nothing else but the duration of God and the duration of God is nothing else but his existence enduring.”* Another writer says, *“It is indeed a high and lofty mystery to contemplate that God existed before He created anything. Time dwells within God. He causes, affects and controls it, and yet does so without time exerting any control or hold on Him. Everything about God is ‘always’ and ‘I Am.’ No hour glass can be turned over for the Creator of time, for He is not subject to time!”* Charles Spurgeon says, *“God’s nature is without beginning and without end, free from all succession of time. God dwells in eternity. Eternity is not just “extended time” but rather is existence above and apart from time. God contains in Himself the cause of time! Time has no control over God and He does not have to work within the strictures of time unless He so pleases. Being eternal, He is free to bestow eternity on His creation in His good pleasure. All of God’s attributes bask in His eternity. Since eternity neither wears out nor runs out, neither do His attributes.”* There is a lot regarding the attribute of God’s eternity, but it is not my subject this evening.

- Secondly, the Immutability of God.

If God has always been and if He is eternal, then that means that He changes not. This is what we mean by the immutability of God, He changes not. Malachi 3:6, *“For I am the **LORD** (Yahweh, Jehovah God, the I Am that I Am), **I change not**; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”* Hebrews 6:13 – 18, *“For when God made promise*

to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise **the immutability of his counsel**, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by **two immutable things**, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” If God changes not, then He is the Great I Am, not I am that I was or I am that I will be, nay but, I AM THAT I AM! A millions past or a millions years future, HE is I AM, time makes no changes of who God is. There is no change in God in His nature or His Character; He is always in the present tense: I AM! A. W. Pink says, “God cannot change for the better, for He is perfect; and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse.”

S. Lewis Johnson says, “As omni-presence resulted from God’s immensity, because he is transcended over space, he is therefore everywhere in space, so immutability is a natural result, a natural issue of God’s eternity. Also, His eternity is a natural issue of His immutability and so these are very closely related. One of our theologians has said, “That which has no evolution and no succession is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He continues, “Now since he is infinite in his being, we have spoken of this, he cannot change. He cannot be something that he was not before. If he were able to be something that he was not before, then we could not have said that he was infinite then. And so he is, since he is infinite in his being, he cannot change. He cannot increase. He cannot decrease. He cannot self-evolve. He cannot develop. God’s essence is immutable. It is unchangeable. He cannot have any new attributes which would suggest change in his essential being. He is exalted above all becoming, if he were to become something, then he would be something he was not before. And so consequently God is immutable in his essence. He is immutable in his being. When we speak about immutability we are speaking about his being. He is immutable in his being.” One more by Mr. Lewis Johnson, “He is immutable in his plans and purposes. He does not, for example, purpose something today that he changes tomorrow. He does not change his mind. Furthermore, he does not have to sit and think now what shall I do? Shall I do this or shall I do that? Well I think today I’ll try this, or I think tomorrow I will try that. Because God is infinite in his wisdom, then there is no error in the conception of his plans. All of his plans are perfect, and he does not have to reason them out. He has within himself the power to know that which is the finest plan...I often hear theologians say God could have used several different plans, but that is not true of God. There is only one plan that is his plan, because there is one plan that represents the product of his infinite wisdom. And so he is infinite in his will. Since he is infinite in power there can be no failure in the accomplishment of his plans which fall out of his will either. So he always expresses himself or to us, but he always attempts to carry out, or carries out, the perfect plan, and he always carries it out perfectly, because he is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful. So he is immutable in his will.” Again, much can be said about this attribute of God’s immutability, but this is not my subject.

- Thirdly, the Aseity (from the Latin, a {from} + se {oneself}) or the Self-existence of God.

God has life in Himself. He existed long before He created us, John 5:26, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” God has always been, He has always existed and is not dependent on anyone or anything to exist. In real simple terms God exists independently of any cause. His self-existence is found in that solemn and holy by which He choose to reveal Himself to Moses, I Am that I AM!

God is the aspect and essence of life. J. I Packer says, *“God is self-existent, God has always been...Our Maker exists in an eternal, self-sustaining, necessary way, necessary, that is, in the sense that God does not have it in Him to go out of existence, just as we do not have it in us to live forever. We necessarily age and die, because it is our present nature to do that; God necessarily continues forever unchanged, because it is His eternal nature to do that.”* When we speak of the self-existence of God all we mean is that God is without origin, He has no beginning and He has no end. Therefore the only cause of His being is God Himself because there is nothing else before God. The self-existence of God is a deep subject, but we are speaking on the topic of I am that I am.

Moses asks God a question as to, *“...when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?”* When I am asked who sent me, or by whose name do I come, I don't think Moses was prepared for the answer he was about to receive. God dominates the answer for the rest of the chapter, because it is not until chapter 4 that Moses speaks again. Notice, verse 13 and the following verses to 22.

God answers Moses with that blessed Jehovahistic name, I AM that I AM! As a reminder Moses wrote the Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of the Bible and it is interesting to note that the first two names ascribed to God in the Bible are ELOHIM and JEHOVAH (YAHWEH). Elohim is God's name to emphasize His creative and sustaining omnipotent power. Jehovah is God's name to emphasize His self-existing being as the immutable, eternal covenant keeping God!

In Genesis 1 God is set forth as Elohim, then in chapters 2 & 3 of Genesis, beginning in Gen.2:4, the name Jehovah is first used, but it is used in combination with Elohim. As a matter of fact the name JEHOVAH/ELOHIM is used at least 20 times, to show that the creating omnipotent God is, self-existing, immutable and eternal.

Our interest again is in the name Jehovah/Yahweh, which basically means the self existing one which signifies the expression of who He is: **THE GREAT I AM!** This again is the glorious name of the covenant keeping God to which He was pleased to reveal Himself in Exodus 3 to Moses. In our last study we concluded with Isaiah 40, I'd like to read just one verse to you, 28, *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”* Then in Isaiah 42:8 it says, *“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”* Hemphill, says, *“Most Bible scholars would agree that the name Yahweh, or Jehovah, as it is sometimes translated, would be the proper name of God. The other names, including the compound names, provide further revelation of His character and His activity.”* He continues in saying, *“He is the One Who in Himself possesses life and permanent existence. He Alone! God is the uncaused cause. He is the first cause and before Him there was no other and after Him there will be no other. Life is found in Him.”* From the PRECEPT AUSTIN, web page, *“God within His own being possesses the **ESSENCE OF LIFE.** The **“IS-ness”** of God is expressive both of His presence and His existence. He is in a sense in which no other being is. He is, and the cause of His being is in Himself. He is because He is.”*

Now, the first time the name Jehovah/Yahweh is used by itself in the Bible is in Genesis 4:1, “*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.*” In order to make emphasis I counted how many times, from Gen.4:1 to Ex.3:14 Jehovah is used, that is, capital L-O-R-D, 157 times, this does not include the usage with Elohim, or capital L and small o-r-d, only LORD by itself. We make reference of this because of what is said again in chapter 6 and verse 3, “*And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.*” This is the first of 4 times that the word JEHOVAH is used in the Bible, the others, Psalms 83:18, “*That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.*” Isaiah 12:2, “*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.*” Isaiah 26:4, “*Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.*” Only once is the form used, “JAH,” in Psalms 68:4, “*Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.*”

Now, in Ex.6:3 it says again, “*And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.*” This does not mean that they did not know His name was JEHOVAH, they knew that glorious name, but, that, they did not know Him in the means or application of what that name signifies, the fulfiller of the covenant.

The patriarchs knew the name LORD or Jehovah but not in the fulfillment of His promises. These died not having seen the promises as we are told in Hebrews 11:13, “*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*” They did not know Him as the fulfiller of the promises, as the fulfiller of the covenant, but in faith they died having seen them afar off. They knew the name LORD but not in the fulfillment, but as the PROMISER.

But from this time forward, that is, from the burning bush experience of Moses in Exodus 3, they would know God as Jehovah/Yahweh, that is, LORD as the PROMISER and as the FULFILLER of those promises. From here on out He will be known by that MEMORIAL name (Ex.3:14 & 15) of I AM THAT I AM! As Jehovah God, as Yahweh, as LORD! This name I AM will continue into the New Testament as we will see next time.