



[Understanding the Christ](#)

Episode 22 - I Am That I Am: Discovering God as Love

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Scott Stanley examines Exodus 3:14 and Exodus 34 to argue that God's name, "I am that I am," is an idiom expressing God's character as love — merciful, long-suffering, and gracious. He compares this to Jesus' words in John 8 and the transformation after the flood, linking divine love to salvation lived out in obedience and mercy.

The episode explores the Hebrew verb haya, the spiritual meaning behind Jehovah's memorial, and how Christ's humanity and suffering perfected his role as the author of eternal salvation through living love.

Modified Transcript:

Scriptures are transcribed directly with notations. Refer to KJV for verbatim wording.

Hi, I'm Scott Stanley, and this is my video cast, Understanding the Christ. This is something I started because I'm not satisfied with what I'm hearing in the universal churches and the description of Jesus, the description of the Father, Holy Spirit... I struggle with it. I struggle swallowing what they're telling us, so I thought, well, let's just do a video cast, look up the words, and show people; then people can make a decision as to their salvation. We're talking about your eternal salvation.

Today, I want to key on Exodus 3:14, "*I am that I am.*" That is something that has always bothered me, because when I would read, "*I am that I am,*" and I'm thinking, "Well, how do you get the name Yahweh, or how do you get Jehovah out of that?" I started doing some investigating, and I was reminded of something about this that I want to share with you in this videocast. So let's just begin, let's turn to Exodus chapter 3, starting at verse 11.

Exo 3:11 Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

Exo 3:12 And he said, Well, certainly I'll be with you, and this shall be a token unto you, that I have sent you: When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.

Exo 3:13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, 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, Well, what's his name? What shall I say to them?

Exo 3:14 And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

Now, in order to understand this, we've got to read verse 15.

Exo 3:15 God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

So how do you say, well, his name is Jehovah, but he says I AM THAT I AM. What exactly is going on there? I want to compare this... before I explain that, I want you to turn with me to Exodus chapter 33 and 34. Exodus 33:18,

Exo 33:18 And he (Moses) said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

Exo 33:19 And he said, Well, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of Jehovah before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

Chapter 34, verse 5,

Exo 34:5 And Jehovah descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah.

Exo 34:6 Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed Jehovah, Jehovah God, is merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth,

Exo 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving (or lifting up) iniquity, rebellion and sin (transgression is rebellion), and will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.

And that *"will by no means clear the guilty"* is *"acquit the guilty."* Now, how does all of that fit together? How do we say, "Well, who shall I tell the children of Israel who you are? What's your name?" ... *"Well, I am that I am."* And Jehovah said, *"I'm Jehovah, and this is my memorial forever."* You turn to Exodus 34, and he actually spiritualizes the name of God. He makes it spiritual when he says, *"I'm gracious, I'm forgiving, I'm long-suffering, I lift up iniquity, rebellion, and sin. I will not acquit those who are guilty."*

What you're seeing in that verse can be described in one word: It's called "love." That is love: Long-suffering, patience, merciful... see all the things he describes, including *"I will not acquit those who are guilty,"* because that is expressed in Hebrews 6:4-6. In Hebrews 6, when somebody knows the truth, they've tasted of the heavenly gift, and they choose to do something else, they choose a lifestyle, and reject repentance... he says they are crucifying Christ afresh.

So here we have in Exodus 34 a description of the name of God by using adjectives that make it spiritual. His name is his character. So how does that play into *"I am that I am"*?

When you look up, *"I am that I am,"* I want to put on the screen what that means from the ancient Hebrew (Exo 3:14-Strong's [1961]).

(HYH) ac: Exist co: Breath ab: ?

V) - To exist or have breath. That which exists has breath.

In Hebrew thought, the breath is the character of someone or something.

Just as a man has character, so do objects.

[A generic verb with a wide application meaning to exist or be]

It's a verb, "I am," the first 'I am that I am'... "I am" the word, is pronounced hâyâh... hâyâh 'ăsher hâyâh. I am that I am, and "hâyâh" means to exist; it's a verb. To exist.

So what in the world is he talking about? To exist. What's your name? Well, to exist, that to exist. Now, that's the words, and it never made sense to me. So I'm told that what it means is "I'm self-existent," and that this is what Jehovah is. It's the self-existent one. So this is his memorial forever. He wants you to know he's self-existent. Well, how does that play into Exodus 34, where he is describing love?

Years ago, I remember reading in a Rotherham Bible. He has notes at the beginning of that Bible, and he does a whole chapter on the name of God, and he points out that hâyâh 'ăsher hâyâh is an idiom. Now, I remember reading that before, and thinking, "Well, how could that be?" It's an idiom.

Well, what's an idiom? An idiom is a group of words that, taken together, means something that if you looked up each word individually, you wouldn't see it. For instance, if I were in the theater, and I'm going to go on stage, somebody might say to me, "Break a leg." Break a leg is an idiom. What it means is good luck. But if you look up, break a leg, you'll never see good luck in that. It's an idiom. Good luck. There's another one: Bite the bullet, dodge a bullet. It's raining cats and dogs. These are idioms that mean something that it doesn't mean if you look up each word individually.

So if "*I AM THAT I AM*" is an idiom, what does it mean? What's it an idiom of? Well, if I say "I am that I am" or "I will be what I will be," and I connect that to Exodus 34... And again, I'm going to cover Exodus 34 just by saying love. Again, if he's long suffering and gracious and merciful, this is what love is. Let's just say love. For him to say, "I will be what I will be," what he is saying to you is, "I am going to be what I need to be for you in any given situation."

"Do you need forgiveness? Do you need me to be gracious? Do you need me to be patient with you? Do you need me to lift up iniquity, rebellion, and sin?" See, "What do you need from me? Love." *I am that I am* is an idiom for love, and that's why he says this is my memorial. It's to all generations. Now, if you want to believe it means "I'm the self-

existent one," I don't think God needs to proclaim that. In fact, I see God is more humble than that. When you say, "Well, what's your name?" ... "Oh, I'm self-existent." No. "What's your name?" ... "Love. I will meet you on any level in love. This is my memorial to all generations."

So, therefore, "I am that I am" is an idiom for love. How do I know? Because he tells you his name in Exodus 34, spiritually speaking, he tells you his character. God's character of love is his memorial to everybody on the planet. He wants you to see that he is love. Love is so important. To love God and love your neighbor as yourself are the two most important commandments, and I love God by loving my neighbor, but I can't love my neighbor unless I possess God's Spirit, which is portrayed on the cross.

I can believe what I see on the cross, what I hear Christ say, and I can receive the Spirit of God, and I can enter into the true meaning of his name. So for him to say, "Well, I'll be whatever I need to be. I am love. I am that I am," he's talking about love. That is who he is. Love is what that idiom "I am, that I am" stands for. Now, this is key, because this brings us to the gospel of John chapter 8, starting at verse 54.

Jhn 8:54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honors me; of whom you say, that he is your God.

Jhn 8:55 Yet you have not known him; but I know him; and if I should say, I don't know him, I would be a liar like you: but I do know him, and I keep his sayings.

Jhn 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

Jhn 8:57 Then said the Jews unto him, You're not yet fifty years old. How then have you seen Abraham?

Jhn 8:58 And Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

That's a pretty heavy statement. "*Before Abraham was, I am.*" But if you see that as an idiom, he is speaking, "*I am that I am. Before Abraham was, I am.*" I am what? "*I am love.*" And this is where it gets interesting. Why didn't he say before the flood, "I was love"? He says, "*Before Abraham was, I am. I am that idiom. I am love.*"

See, when you go back to Genesis, chapter 6, at the time of the flood, let's just turn back and look at what is spoken, starting at verse 5.

Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Gen 6:6 And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

Gen 6:7 And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have (filled) created, from the person of the earth; both man and beast, and creeping thing, and fowls of the air; for it repents me that I have made them.

That isn't the Father repenting, that's the Son. Why would he repent having filled up or created man? He did not do that in love. How do I know that? Because if he had acted in love, he would not be repenting. That is evidence that he was not acting in love. When he says in John, chapter 8, "*Before Abraham was, I am, I am that idiom,*" how did Jesus know that?

See, at one time in my life, I would have thought, "Well, he remembered that. He woke up and he remembered Abraham, and I am, he remembered." No, he got that from the Bible. He knew from reading the Bible who he was, where he was from, and where he was going, and he knew before Abraham came along, he was acting in love.

But before the flood, he repented for the way his actions were toward man. Why would he repent? Because he wasn't acting in love. After the flood, things changed. After the flood, the Son of God calls out Abraham and gives Abraham a promise: To Abraham and his seed... that seed was himself. It was Jesus. Now he's acting in love. "*Before Abraham, I am.*" Before Abraham, I'm in that idiom of love, but not before the flood, or he would have never repented.

So what does this mean? This means the Son of God was not made perfect until he became a man. Turn with me to Hebrews, chapter five, starting from verse 7.

Heb 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, and he was heard (by God) in that he feared (God).

Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience through the things which he suffered; (now remember, verse 7, in the flesh)

Heb 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all of them that obey him.

Son of God in the flesh was made perfect through his suffering, and he became the author of eternal salvation. What is salvation? Eternal salvation is how you're living your life. It's not where you spend eternity. Eternal salvation is being taught the truth of walking in love and letting God redeem you from doctrinal iniquity and personal iniquity. The Son of God was redeemed from doctrinal iniquity. He knew the truth of walking in love. He possessed the Holy Spirit. He lived it. In so doing, he perfected his faith. In so doing, he is the author of eternal salvation, eternal redemption.

The truths that he learned, you can't take them away from him. Again, he emptied himself and became a man (Php 2:6-8). As a man, he read the scriptures, and he understood truth over and above what everyone around him understood. It is exactly like the last generation church. To be redeemed from iniquity, to understand I'm supposed to walk in love, to possess the Holy Spirit, to make those choices, to suffer, instead of your anger, instead of your bitterness, instead of your iniquity... You make those choices.

In so doing, he perfected his faith. He lived what he believed and understood. He perfected his faith and authored eternal salvation. So as a man, he could read the Bible. Again, he knew who he was and where he was from; he knew where he was going. He knew that before Abraham came along, he was walking in love, after the flood. Before the flood, he repented of how he was toward man. There was repentance. After the flood, he walks in love. Again, he chooses Abraham, gives him a promise of himself and his seed. Abraham gives that to Isaac and Jacob, to the sons of Israel. And now you have a group of people living with a promise of Messiah that is going to redeem them from iniquity.

So I know for many people that they're going to turn to Genesis, chapters 1, 2, and 3, and here's a promise that the seed of the woman is going to crush the head of the serpent. Well, I'm telling you that Genesis 1, 2, and 3 are parables, and with God helping us, I can explain exactly what that is and show you that Genesis 1, 2, and 3 is a description of the creation of the church, not the universe... and the Son of God

repented, because he was not acting in love toward man. That did not happen until after the flood, but it was before Abraham.

For God to say, which was the Son of God, the Angel of the Lord, to say: *"I am that I am. This is my name. I am that I am; I will be what I will be,"* what is that? Love. I will be love for you. I will be every aspect of love for you. This is my memorial to all creation, to every generation. If you want to think all he means is, "I'm self-existent," you're losing and missing the point.

He describes his name. Exodus 34. This is the glory of God. This is what Paul is referring to when he says, "For everyone has sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23)." What is that glory? It's called love. It's defined, again, as graciousness, mercy, long-suffering, patience, lifting up iniquity, rebellion, and sin. He is all of that, which is something he wasn't before the flood.

I want you to consider, I know that this is maybe a difficult video cast. But I stand by it, and I know good and well that the Hebrew scholars will laugh at us, will laugh me to scorn. But I'm telling you, his memorial to all generations is love. It isn't, I'm self-existent. It's love. Love is the most important thing you can possess. And Jesus is giving that to us.