

“I am” in the Gospel of John – Part 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. As I have read the gospel of John over the past couple of years, one thing that struck me was how it often included the phrase “I am.”
 - A. Of course, most of us know the “I AM” statement where Jesus presented Himself as Jehovah/Yahweh (Jn. 8:58 – “Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”), which we have already considered in the “Names of God” lessons.
 - B. But that is only one of what seemed to be many, although I was unsure how many.
 - C. So, I searched for the phrase and found that it is somewhat common in the gospel.
 - i. It is found in Matthew **18** times, in Mark **10**, in Luke **23**, which seemed like a lot, but then I learned it is found in John **79** times!
 - ii. This, of course, had to be more than coincidental, with the vast majority (all but about 12) being stated by Jesus, generally in expression of who He is and what He means to the world.
2. I thought we should consider these “I am” statements that we might better know from Jesus’ words here on earth who He is and what He means to the world and our lives.
 - A. There are so many, over 60, covering so many subjects (so I thought I would be good talk about every one of them today! Just kidding!).
 - B. Instead, I have chosen to address only certain categories of these statements in hopes of coming to a greater knowledge and appreciation of **Jesus**, who is **the great “I AM.”**
 - C. I want us to think about this throughout the lesson.

BODY:

- **I. “I am He”**
 - A. This was proclaimed early in Jesus’ ministry because the world must know who Jesus is.
 - 1. Jesus said this to the woman at the well concerning the Messiah (Jn. 4:25-26 – “The woman said to Him, “I know that **Messiah** is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.”²⁶ Jesus said to her, “**I** who speak to you **am He**.”).
 - a. This was no empty claim, seeing Jesus had *miraculously* exposed her sin of adultery in having five husbands and now living with a man who was not her husband (4:16-19).
 - b. She was not driven away by exposing her sin, but went to tell and bring others to Him.
 - c. What an amazing truth for those who deeply feel the guilt and condemnation of their sins—that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of sinners!
 - 2. As Jesus taught and proof of Jesus’ Messiahship increased, the importance of this claim became clear, for in Jn. 8 amidst a great number of “I am” statements you find this (Jn. 8:24 – “Therefore I said to you that **you will die in your sins**; for unless you believe that **I am He**, you will **die in your sins**.”).
 - a. The “He” here is italicized in the NASB being *added*, as it was in 4:26. The word is “eimi,” first person singular present indicative, meaning “**to be**,” “**I am**,” or “**am**.”
 - b. What Jesus said was “unless you believe **I am**,” which is why the Jews asked in 8:25, “Who are you?”
 - c. The ultimate answer came in 8:58 where Jesus said, “before Abraham was, **I AM**.”
 - d. So, unless one believes Jesus to be the Savior and God, he/she cannot be saved.
 - B. This claim did not cease when it meant certain suffering and death for Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus acknowledged who he is when they came to arrest Him (Jn. 18:3-5 – “Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.⁴ So Jesus, **knowing all the things that were coming upon Him**, went forth and said to them, “Whom do you seek?”⁵ They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.” He said to them, “**I am He**.” [*eimi* – “I am”, rp] And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.”).
 - 2. Jesus did so that all might believe.
 - a. Accepting Judas’ betrayal was proof He is the Messiah (Jn. 13:18-19 – “I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘**He**

who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’¹⁹ From now on I am **telling you before it comes to pass**, so that when it does occur, **you may believe that I am He.**”).

- b. Accepting the crucifixion resulting from His claim would be proof (Jn. 8:28 – “So Jesus said, “When you **lift up the Son of Man**, then **you will know that I am He**, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”).
3. Belief that Jesus “is He,” the eternal God and Messiah, is fundamental to salvation, so much so that Jesus was willing to be betrayed and crucified that we might believe it.

• II. Jesus’ “I am” claims of origin and destination

• A. “I am from” statements:

- 1. Jesus proclaimed, “**I am from Him**,” or the Father (John 7:28-30 – “Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?²⁷ However, **we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from.**”²⁸ Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, “You both know Me and know **where I am from**; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, **whom you do not know.**”²⁹ I know Him, because **I am from Him, and He sent Me.**”³⁰ So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.”).
- 2. These Jews were rejecting Jesus because they **thought** they knew where he was from, while believing you could not know where the Messiah was from.
- 3. Jesus’ response: You **do not know** where I am from because you **do not know God!**
 - a. So, if they wanted a “mysterious Savior,” He was it.
 - b. Jesus claiming “I am from **Him**” was to claim that **He is God** (7:29).
 - i. Therefore, Jesus was saying if you **do not know Me**, you **do not know God!**
 - ii. This is why they tried to seize Him (7:30).

• B. “I am going” statements:

- 1. Jesus said He was **going away** and they could not follow (John 8:21-24 – “Then He said again to them, “**I go away**, and **you will seek Me**, and **will die in your sin**; where **I am going, you cannot come.**”²² So the Jews were saying, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’”²³ And He was saying to them, “You are from below, **I am from above**; you are of this world, **I am not of this world.**”²⁴ Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for **unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**”).
 - a. Though the Jews sought Jesus on earth, their unbelief meant they would die in their sins, being unable to **come to heaven** where Jesus was **going**.
 - b. Their failure to accept and submit to Jesus showed their worldly nature, or lack of true spirituality and godliness, and would mean their condemnation.
 - c. When we have heard the truth about Christ, putting off obedience exposes far more about ourselves that we may want—a worldly nature that will keep us separated from God!
- 2. But thanks be to God’s grace in Christ because through Jesus the way has been opened for us to follow (Jn. 13:33, 36 – “Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘**Where I am going**, you cannot come.’...³⁶ Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “**Where I go**, you cannot follow Me now; **but you will follow later.**”).
 - a. From Hebrews we know we can follow Jesus into the very presence of God.

• C. “Where I am” statements:

- 1. These statements are similar, even parallel, to the “**where I am going**” statements, referring to when Christ would go to the Father (Jn. 7:33-34 – “Therefore Jesus said, “For a little while longer I am with you, then **I go to Him who sent Me.**”³⁴ You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and **where I am, you cannot come.**”). Parallel: “I go to Him” with “where I am.”
- 2. Though the previous statements signaled eternal loss for the unbelieving, most of these give hope to the faithful.
 - a. It expressed Jesus’ desire for us to be with Him in heaven (Jn. 17:24 – “Father, I desire

that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me **where I am**, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”)

- b. By this Jesus encouraged all to take heart and courage, seeing He has prepared the way to heaven (Jn. 14:1-3 – “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for **I go to prepare a place for you**. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that **where I am**, there you may be also.”).
- c. By this Jesus promised that our service to Him will be eternally rewarded (Jn. 12:26 – “If anyone **serves Me, he must follow Me**; and **where I am**, there My servant **will be also**; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”).

• **III. The “I am” designations**

- A. The bread of life (Jn. 6:35 – “Jesus said to them, “**I am the bread of life**; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”).
 - 1. Here Jesus offers to all who will come true nourishment in abundance, resulting in our souls never again hungering or thirsting!
 - 2. For those who will come Jesus offers living bread that brings eternal life (Jn. 6:48-51 – “**I am the bread of life**. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one **may eat of it and not die**. ⁵¹ **I am the living bread** that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, **he will live forever**; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”).
- B. The light of the world (Jn. 8:12 – “Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “**I am the Light of the world**; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the **Light of life**.”).
 - 1. Jesus is the only light that will overcome your spiritual darkness and death.
 - a. By this claim Jesus showed that even the Jewish leaders were walking in darkness.
 - b. As long as they remained in unbelief, they would remain in darkness and death.
 - c. The same is true today—without Christ you are in darkness and death!
 - 2. Jesus intended, and intends, for His light to shine.
 - a. Jesus lived out His life here as the true light of the world (Jn. 9:5 – “While I am in the world, **I am the Light of the world**.”).
 - b. Jesus desires for this light He brought to continue to shine, for you and I are to...
 - i. Live in this light (Jn. 12:46 – “I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.”).
 - ii. Shine His light on the world (Matt. 5:14-16 – “**You are the light of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵ nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ **Let your light shine before men** in such a way **that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven**.”).
 - c. But to shine Christ’s light you must *choose* to leave the darkness, exposing your deeds to the light that you might live in it (Jn. 3:19-21 – “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”).
- CONCLUSION:
 - 1. We have considered many things Jesus said himself “to be,” or “I am.” Do you truly believe Him **to be** these things to you? Your answer to this question is eternally important, as Jesus said to Martha (Jn. 11:25-26 – “Jesus said to her, “**I am the resurrection** and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and **everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die**. Do you believe this?”).
 - 2. For Christ to be your Savior He must also be your king (Matt. 18:37 – “Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say correctly that **I am a king**. For this I have been

born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”).

- 3. So, what will you do, right now, with Jesus?
 - A. The choice is yours, and He is so many wonderful things...but only to those who believe and obey Him.
 - B. Will you humbly submit to Him in F-R-C-Bp?