

Wilmington School of the Bible

**The Seven Great “I AM” Statements of Jesus
Plus One**

BIBL 163 Survey of New Testament

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION -----	1
WHO IS JESUS CHRIST -----	3
I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE -----	6
I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD -----	11
I AM THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP -----	15
I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD -----	17
I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE -----	22
I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE -----	26
I AM THE TRUE VINE -----	29
I AM...I AM -----	32
CONCLUSION -----	36
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY -----	39

OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTION

II. WHO IS JESUS CHRIST

- A. Full Equality
- B. Old Testament Deity
 - 1. His covenant name
 - 2. The overtones
- C. Before Abraham He was
 - 1. Rejection
 - 2. He blasphemeth

III. I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

- A. A statement of Identity
 - 1. Hunger and thirst
 - a. Complete satisfaction
 - b. The right kind of food
 - 2. The food source
 - a. Eat the right bread
 - b. Drink from the right well
 - 3. Eat of His flesh
 - 4. Fully satisfied

IV. I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

- A. A lesson on light
- B. Let there be light
 - 1. Light changes everything
 - 2. Seasonal affective disorder
 - 3. Let it shine
- C. Blinded by the light
 - 1. The can sense the light
 - 2. Light is truth and answers

V. I AM THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP

- A. Go through the right door
- B. Don't be led astray
- C. Lie down in Green Pastures

VI. I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

- A. Follow the Shepherd
 - 1. Trouble seems to find sheep
 - 2. Perfectly compared to sheep
- B. Spiritually significant symbols
- C. Not your average Shepherd
- D. Picture the Shepherd's love
 - 1. Every sheep is important
 - 2. Standing guard
 - 3. We are His
- E. There was no other way

VII. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

- A. A special miracle
- B. Death has no sting
 - 1. Hold onto hope
 - 2. Do not fear the shadow of death
- C. Identity declared
- D. Believe and live
 - 1. Physical or spiritual
 - 2. Our price was paid

VIII. I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

- A. One way road (the way)
 - 1. The toll is paid
 - 2. No maps needed
- B. The truth
- C. The life

IX. I AM THE TRUE VINE

- A. A personal relationship
 - 1. Relational analogy
 - 2. For believers only
 - 3. Go forth and produce fruit
- B. It is a matter of the heart

X. I AM...I AM

- A. Bearing witness to deity
- B. God never changes
 - 1. Pre-existence
 - 2. An undeniable claim
- C. Confirmed deity
 - 1. Recognized too late
 - 2. John's proof

XI. CONCLUSION

- A. Claim number eight
- B. Review of seven greatest claims
- C. Revelation I Am's

XI. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Introduction

Jesus used the claim “I AM” to describe himself at least eight times in the Gospel of John. This paper will examine the actual words of Christ as they were told by John. With seven of those claims He was describing himself and they were accompanied by a sign or miracle to support his words. This paper will examine the seven claims of Christ as the Great I Am. These seven claims were surrounded by what some call the eighth “I AM”. The eighth “I AM” is actually the introductory “I AM”, “Before Abraham was, I Am”, John 8:58.¹

Remember the president saying “Read my lips”? The great Christological passages found in Philippians 2: 5-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3 and John 1:1-4 express the preexistent glory of Christ. Only in the Gospel of John, however, do we find this idea on the lips of Jesus Christ. It is almost as if Jesus originated the phrase, “Read my Lips”.

There are 154 “I Am” statements in the Old Testament and the final Old Testament “I Am” claim is found in Malachi 3: 6. In this passage God is reminding us all about Him, “I am the LORD, I change not.” He is the great “I Am.” It would be good for us to remind ourselves that our Lord and savior Jesus Christ has revealed to us that He is that same great “I Am” spoken of long ago.

In the Gospel of John are the seven great “I Am” statements spoken by Jesus. They follow signs and miracles and have major significance on His identity, deity and His death and resurrection.

The seven great “I AM” statements are as follows: “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35,48,51), “I am the light of the world”(John 8:12), “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7,9), “I am the good shepherd”(John

¹ The Holy Bible

10:11,14), “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25), “I am the way, the truth, and the life”(John 14:6), “I am the true vine”(John 15:1,5). These seven statements begin and end with the eighth statement, “I Am...I Am”.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey Matthew states, “The whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” (Matthew 21:10). Still today people often will ask, “Who is this?” in relation to Jesus Christ. The answer lies in the great “I AM” statements that Jesus made and the most identifying statement made is the title “I AM who I AM”. In the conclusion of this paper is referenced the eighth claim, “I Am... I Am”. There is much evidence this claim should be labeled as the very first “I Am”, therefore, the paper will begin and end with “I Am... I Am”.

The Seven Great “I AM” Statements of Jesus Plus One

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Full Equality

When the Bible is read in its entirety there is no doubt Jesus is claiming full equality with the other members of the Godhead. (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.) They are all equally God.

Barry Davis wrote, “This Jesus who identifies Himself as “I AM” is equal with God because He is God. “I AM” is eternal with God.”²

Old Testament Deity

The chosen topic of this paper is the eighth “I AM” saying or claim that Christ made. That saying is “I AM... I AM” which is an implication that He is the one and only God. That He is the self-existent one, identifying Himself with the Old Testament deity.

“I am the Jehovah of the Old Testament”.

His Covenant Name

Jesus used the “I AM” statement to His disciples when they needed help. As Elmer towns writes, “Jesus calmed the fears of His disciples by revealing to them His true identity in the midst of the storm.

² Barry L. Davis, *The Claims of Christ, What Jesus Had to Say About Himself*, Lincoln, Nebraska: Writers Club Press, 2001, page 4.

He said, “It is I, which is the Old Testament identification of Jehovah, “I AM”. Jehovah was the covenant name of God in the Old Testament. The one who would not fail or forsake. (John 1:5) ³

The Overtones

Leon Morris, in his book, *Jesus is the Christ* tells us that Jesus was using language that accords with deity. He writes “I AM” mostly represents the speech of the heavenly Father or of the Son. The overtones of deity that we find in its use in the Old Testament are not lost when we move to the New”. ⁴

Before Abraham He Was

One of the most powerful claims Jesus made during His life was “Before Abraham was I AM”. That statement relates back to the burning bush incident with Moses in Exodus 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, what [is] his name? What shall I say unto them?” What we see here is Moses asking God, “What is your name?” And then we see the answer in verse 14, “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.” So He tells Moses, I AM who I AM. God wants him to tell them His name is “I AM”. When Jesus used this name He used the name of the one and only God, the true sovereign Lord. Jesus was making it very clear. He was saying, “Let me be clear, I am the one and only I AM”. Jesus is naming Himself the very name of God and the Jew’s knew it.

Rejection

They recognized the language. When they heard it they rejected the claim and picked up rocks and they tried to stone Him. M.M. Ninan writes, “You see in those few words He said, “OK Folks, remember Moses out there in the Wilderness? Remember the burning bush? Remember that God?”

³ Elmer Towns. *John Believe and Live*, Chattanooga Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2002, page 61.

⁴ Leon Morris, *Jesus Is The Christ*, Studies in The Theology of John, Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989, page 109.

Remember the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Remember the God who brought you out of Egypt, out of slavery? Remember the God who gave you this land and destroyed all your enemies? Remember the God who said it is punishable by death to claim to be Him? Remember the God who created the entire universe as well as you? Remember the God who says He is the only God? Well, guess what? That is the God I am. That is the God I am claiming to be. No doubts, no questions, no confusion, I AM. So the Jews wanted to stone Him for blasphemy as we see in John 8:59, “Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”⁵

He Blasphemeth

Leviticus 24:16 says, “And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, [and] all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name [of the LORD], shall be put to death.” So once again we can make the point that this is why the Jews were picking up stones to take Jesus’ life. Jesus was claiming the name “I AM”. According to the understanding of the Jews this man named Jesus was committing blasphemy.

Ninan points out, “In the Old Testament, the title “I AM” is considered holy and unspeakable. I AM that I AM is equal to I am who I am which is equal to I am He who exists which is equal to the eternal who passes not away. It means first of all that God is a Personal, Independent, Self-existent being. He is without cause, but He is a person, the self-conscious being from the beginning.”⁶ As it says in Exodus 3:15, “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.”⁷

⁵ M.M. Ninan, “I AM”, Symbols Jesus Used to Explain Himself, San Jose, California: Global Publishers, 2005, page 9.

⁶ Ibid, page 19

⁷ Ibid, page 17

“I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE”

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst,” (John 6:35).

A Statement of Identity

Just after Jesus performed the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 the multitudes are gathering again and expecting to be fed. This is where He addresses them and indicates His identity as the “Bread of Life”. It is very interesting to find out the name Bethlehem which is where Jesus was born actually means “house of bread”. Can it be just a coincidence or is it the hand of God placing everything in order? Greg Matte describes this coincidence in this passage as Jesus reveals his identity to the crowd, “In John 6, Jesus makes a statement of identity. As the people gather on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus begins to tell them about who He is and how that changes who they are. (John 6:27) The next statement leaves them silent- (John 6:35). The one born in Bethlehem, which means “house of bread”, now declares, “I AM the Bread of Life”. No shock to God, just an unveiling and a connecting of the dots for us. The house of bread was the home of the Bread of Life.”⁸ Matte has made the case now that once we know who Jesus is then our identity changes as well.

Hunger and Thirst

Jesus in essence was saying, hey, you hungry? I have bread. Are you thirsty? I have drink. Have you ever been really hungry or really thirsty? If so you then know how powerful it would be for someone to offer you what you need to satisfy that need. Author Tim Marrow points out how Jesus transfers a physical need to the spiritual need. Marrow writes, “Hunger and thirst are the two most demanding

⁸ Gregg Matte, I AM Changes who I am, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973 Page Loc 1620.

physical needs. Jesus transfers them to the spiritual sphere, and promises the complete, abiding satisfaction of both.”⁹

Complete Satisfaction

Jesus Christ doesn't just want to feed us enough to keep us going until we can get some more. Jesus wants us to have complete satisfaction. Mr. Matte puts it this way, “The bread of life is for satisfaction. “The Lord desires so much more for us than we desire for ourselves. A full stomach only lasts for a little while. Before long, your body uses the energy of the last meal and you are hungry again. Satisfaction of the stomach is temporary. Jesus is interested in giving us so much more. He wants to satisfy our souls.”¹⁰

The Right kind of Food

Jesus wants us to eat the right food and drink the right drink. He isn't talking about bread and water. He speaks of a more important kind of food and drink as Dr. Jaerock Lee explains, “In John 6:26-29 Jesus said to the people who crossed the sea to Capernaum, “You seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.” Here, “food which perishes” refers to food for the flesh which we intake and digest. At times, people are so focused on food for the flesh, and the things that fulfill the short physical life here on earth, that they end up going towards eternal death. What an unwise thing to do! Of course this does not mean we should not work to earn food for the flesh- it simply means we should put a higher priority on acquiring spiritual food. Jesus promised to give them this spiritual food. Since Jesus told the people not to work for food that perishes, they became troubled. The only reason why they asked, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” was not because they had faith in Jesus, but because they

⁹ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, page 9.

¹⁰ Gregg Matte, *I AM Changes who I am*, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1041.

were astonished by the sign He performed. (Feeding 5,000) Knowing their hearts, Jesus answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”¹¹

The Food Source

The food He wants us to take comes from God. Jesus makes it very clear that heaven is where it comes from. Mr. Marrow writes, “Jesus says, “I, and no other, am the bread of life” (J6:35a). How is this bread received? The assurance we have is that God Supplies the Bread of Life. Jesus confirmed, “For the bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (6:33). Seven times in this sermon Jesus referred to His “coming down from heaven” (6:33, 38, 41, 50, 51, and 58). The “real bread from heaven” is a gift from the loving God who supplies because of His grace. There is not one thing that is good within us to receive this bread. The possibility of the bread of life coming to dwell in you is free. His invitation is to all. The bread of life is yours for the taking and the only way to that new relationship is through Jesus Christ. You will not find the “real (true) bread” apart from God in Christ Jesus.”¹²

Eat the right bread

It was hard for the crowd to get that great feeding of the 5,000 out of their minds and how they might get some more of that free food. Jesus went on to try and get them to understand it wasn't the bread and fish they need. Dr. Lee explains it well in this paragraph, “I am the Bread of Life John 6: 34-37, Even though Jesus used bread to illustrate eternal life, the people's minds were still on the bread that they ate heartily the day before. Not understanding the spiritual meaning behind Jesus' Words, they insisted that Jesus give them the bread that they could eat as Moses had given manna to their ancestors. At this time Jesus makes an unexpected reply. “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he

¹¹ Dr. Jaerock Lee, *Footsteps of the Lord*, Volume 1, Seoul, Korea: Published by Urim Books, 2012, Page Loc 1620.

¹² Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 9.

who believes in Me will never thirst.” When the Scripture says to come to Jesus who is the bread of life, it means to come into the truth (John 14; 6). Only when we seek to live in the truth, can we go before the Lord, and have all things in Him. To those who come before the Lord and put everything in His hands while praying and living in the truth, God will protect and bless their families, their workplaces, and all things, both spiritually and physically. Also, as they receive power from above, they can do things that go beyond their limitations, and most importantly, because they have eternal life, their spirit will never go hungry or thirsty again.”¹³

Drink from the right well

Jack Kelly points out very well what kind of water Christ wanted the multitude to drink and what kind of water he wants is to drink. He also indicates where to get it. Kelly says, “As for our thirst, remember how Jesus told the woman at the well that the water He offered would cure her thirst forever. Pointing to Jacob’s well, before which they were standing, He said, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4: 13-14)”¹⁴

Eat of His Flesh (The Bread of Life)

Jesus says that anyone who eats of His flesh will not die and will live eternally. How do we eat of His flesh? Mr. Lee explains it here, “The Israelites who came out of Egypt ate the manna sent by God, but with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, they all died in the desert. This is because despite the fact that they saw numerous signs and wonders, whenever they faced hardship, they were resentful and complaining, instead of showing their faith. Although they ate the manna sent by God from heaven, because they did not act in faith, they couldn’t gain true life. But Jesus says He is the bread of life, and

¹³ Dr. Jaerock Lee, *Footsteps of the Lord*, Volume 1, Seoul, Korea: Published by Urim Books, 2012, Page Loc 1668.

¹⁴ Kelly, Jack. *The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study* by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, page 1.

that anyone who eats of His flesh will not die, but live eternally. So how can we eat the flesh of someone who was here two thousand years ago? This scripture does not mean we have to actually eat Jesus flesh. Just as we eat food to maintain our physical bodies, we need to eat the bread that the Lord gives us, or His ‘flesh’, in order to live eternally. And the Lord’s ‘flesh’ is symbolic of God’s Word. A person who listens to god’s Word and lives according to it, will in the end, resurrect and live eternally; and this is why Jesus called Himself ‘the bread of life’.”¹⁵

Tim Marrow adds the following, “Jesus said at the end of His sermon; “just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (6:57). The Son lives in the Father who sent Him; those who are in communion with the Son shall live “by” (through, because) of Him. In contrast to bread that sustains only physical life, Christ is the heavenly Bread who both gives and sustains spiritual life forever.”¹⁶

Fully Satisfied! (Hunger and thirst no more)

Jack Kelly adds a note about the song “As The Deer” which is a song I love dearly. He makes a nice point that our search comes to an end when we find Christ. He writes, “The Psalmist wrote, as the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. (Psalm 42:1) In Jesus our spiritual hunger is satisfied and our spiritual thirst is quenched. Once we have the Holy Spirit, our search for spiritual fulfillment comes to an end, and we never need any other sustenance. The God shaped hole in our heart is finally filled.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Dr. Jaerock Lee, *Footsteps of the Lord*, Volume 1, Seoul, Korea: Published by Urim Books, 2012, Page Loc 1748.

¹⁶ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 10.

¹⁷ Kelly, Jack. *The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study* by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, Page 1.

“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”, (John 8: 12).

A Lesson on Light

Near the end of the Feast of the Tabernacles Jesus is ready to show that his time has come and he makes a point of teaching a lesson on Light and He points out the world needs light. Tim Marrow writes, “At the end of the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Feast of Lights the lamps were extinguished. Could it be that Jesus seized upon this act to teach another lesson and make His claim as the “Light of the world?” Everyone knew the lamps would be extinguished, but Jesus indicated that His light would be eternal. Since “light” is one of John’s major themes, several assumptions arise from the claim of Christ. One is that the world needs light, something John has already told us in John 1. There are conditions for seeing and knowing the light – following Jesus.”¹⁸

Gregg Matte points out how Jesus is making a very weighty statement which will have massive implications. He says, “As the celebrated glow of remembrance was being extinguished until next year, Jesus made a bold claim that He is the Light of the World. To declare such a statement at the Feast of the Tabernacles is to say, “I am the fulfillment of the Old Testament exodus and Promised land. I am your protection and leadership.” We read in 2 Corinthians 1: 20, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are Yes in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken.” The timing of His “I AM” is as weighty as the statement itself. Jesus is the fulfillment and culmination of the lights described through

¹⁸ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 18.

generations of Judaism. This along with the other six “I AM” statements in John is massive in proportion.”¹⁹

Let there be Light

Light was introduced in the early pages of God’s word and was repeatedly used as a symbol of His holiness. Ellen White wrote the following, “In the manifestation of God to His people, light had ever been a symbol of his presence. At the creative word in the beginning, light had shown out of darkness. Light had been enshrouded in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, leading the vast armies of Israel. Light blazed with awful grandeur about the Lord on Mount Sinai. Light rested over the mercy seat in the tabernacle. Light filled the temple of Solomon at its dedication. Light shone on the hills of Bethlehem when the angels brought the message of redemption to the watching shepherds. God is light; and in the words, “I am the light of the world,” Christ declared His oneness with god, and His relation to the whole human family. It was He who at the beginning had caused “the light to shine out of darkness.” 2 Corinthians 4:6. As the sunbeams penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, so does the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon every soul.”²⁰

Light changes everything

Evil always lurks in the darkness and light exposes the evil. Evil has no chance in the light. Mr. Matte says, “When we consider the effect of light on darkness we can begin to understand what Jesus meant by this bold assertion. If light changes everything, so does Jesus. Darkness does not stand a chance. If light exposes everything, so does Jesus. Nothing is hidden from His sight.”²¹

Seasonal Affective Disorder

¹⁹ Gregg Matte, I AM Changes who I am, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1153 .

²⁰ Ellen G. White, The desire of The Ages, Stationers Hall, London, Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1898, Page 418.

²¹ Gregg Matte, I AM Changes who I am, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1151.

My wife has told me I have seasonal affective disorder because I tend to get a little blue in the winter months when it is cloudy for days on end with no sunshine. She even went out and purchased for me some special lamps that are supposed to replicate the sun's rays. Mr. Marrow brings this issue up and has something interesting to add here, "I read recently about a disorder known as S.A.D. (Seasonal Affective Disorder). Scientists have found that people who live in places where the days are short and the winter months are overcast with clouds that the result can lead to this disorder which can lead to severe depression. The disorder is one of a small handful of conditions scientists believe is caused by a lack of sun exposure. The principle of light and growth is the same in the spiritual realm. John said, "In Him (Christ) was life, and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Without proper exposure to the Light of the world, there can be no spiritual life. Without constant nourishment from the source of life there can be no significant spiritual growth. The Psalmist said that "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105).²²

Let It Shine

You may know the song "Let it shine, let it shine" we all sung as children in Sunday school. Once we know Christ and have the light we need to let it shine, Gregg Matte says, "We desperately need light. Our world is filled with darkness and evil, and it is easy to feel downtrodden about the godlessness of our culture. The challenge is to remember that Christ's light has already been victorious. We live in victory over darkness and with the light of God in us. Believers must be bold enough to shine the light of Christ."²³

²² Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 27.

²³ Gregg Matte, *I AM Changes who I am*, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1256.

Blinded by the Light

Bruce Springsteen has a hit called “Blinded by the Light”. The expression may be appropriate in places like this. I cannot for the life of me understand how the Jews could and can continuously reject Christ as the true Messiah. White says, “Many reject the truth. The fact that although they could find no sin in Christ the Jews would not receive Him proved that they themselves had no connection with God. They did not recognize His voice in the message of His Son. They thought themselves as passing judgment on Christ; but in rejecting Him they were pronouncing sentence upon themselves. “He that is of God,” said Jesus, “Heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” Many a man, who delights to quibble, to criticize, seeking for something to question in the word of God, thinks that he is thereby giving evidence of independence of thought, and mental acuteness. He supposes that he is sitting in judgment on the Bible, when in truth he is judging himself. He makes it manifest that he is incapable of appreciating truths that originate in heaven, and that compass eternity. In presence of the great mountain of God’s righteousness, his spirit is not awed. He busies himself with hunting for sticks and straws, and in this betrays a narrow and earthly nature, a heart that is fast losing its capacity to appreciate God. He whose heart has responded to the divine touch will refine and elevate the character. As a flower turns to the sun, that the bright rays may touch it with tints of beauty, so will the soul turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven’s light may beautify the character with the graces of the character of Christ.”²⁴

You can sense the Light

God gifted us with amazing senses of sight, hearing, feeling and other internal senses. Mr. Lee makes a great point as he writes, “Light also signifies the aroma of Christ, As much as one leaves the dark and lives more in the Light, that is how much more they can lead other people to the Light and truth (Matthew

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *The desire of The Ages*, Stationers Hall, London, Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1898, Page 423.

5:14-15). Just like butterflies smell the aroma of the flowers and gather around flowers, people who love and seek the truth will gather around the Light.”²⁵

Light is Truth and answers

Speaking of the Light of the world, we are supposed to be just that. I always think about the unsaved and how we have such a huge audience. They are all watching us and they are watching us closely. If you are a child of God, try your best to be a good witness for Jesus. Kelly says, “Literally this means that those who join Jesus as one of His disciples will not be ignorant of spiritual matters but will have the power of understanding especially of the spiritual truth that brings eternal life. When we take the time to learn and apply these truths in faith we discover that the old adage is true. Whatever the spiritual question, Jesus is the answer.”²⁶

“I AM THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP”

“Then said Jesus unto them again, verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”,

(John 10:7, 9).

Go through the right door

Many have said that when one door closes another door of opportunity opens. We have choice though and often there is more than one way to choose. If we are not in fellowship with Christ it will be hard to follow His will for our life and be able to go through the right door. Tim Marrow says, “People go

²⁵ Dr. Jaerock Lee, *Footsteps of the Lord*, Volume 1, Seoul, Korea: Published by Urim Books, 2012, Page Loc 2300.

²⁶ Kelly, Jack. *The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study* by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, Page 1.

through the wrong doors seeking the meaning and significance of life where their endless pursuits end in frustration. Jesus said, “I am the door: If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). Jesus claims to be the access into genuine life, personhood and being.”²⁷

Don’t be led astray

A friend of mine named “Little Toby Walker”, a professional musician and a blues performer wrote a song called “Weak willed and Easily Led”. He sings about lots of mistakes made with heavy consequences and the lament always follows in hindsight that he was weak willed and easily led. That song comes to mind when I think of Jesus comparing us to sheep going astray. Mr. Matte puts it this way, “As believers, we bear more similarity to sheep than we’d like to admit. So often, the enemy and his ploys hold us hostage. We are led astray by the things that Satan offers with the same kind of convincing argument he used on Eve. And yet, the powerful voice of our Shepherd speaks. We desperately need to hear from the Shepherd, for His voice calls us out of captivity and into a relationship with Him.”²⁸

He continues, “Jesus’ third claim as the “Gate for the sheep” is significant, directly preceding His declaration to be the Good Shepherd. The Gate ramps us up and tunes our listening ear to hear his voice. Unless we are in the sheep pen, we don’t belong to Him. Our understanding of who Jesus is takes a momentous turn when He claims to be the Gate, preparing us to follow Him as our Shepherd. The gate changes things because we know there is something on the inside and something totally different on the outside. Life is vastly different on the other side of the gate.”²⁹

²⁷ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 32.

²⁸ Gregg Matte, *I AM Changes who I am*, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1486.

²⁹ *Ibid*, Page Loc 1625.

Lie down in green pastures

Think of those sheep out on the hills in those pastures. Tim Marrow adds a nice analogy here, “Nothing could better illustrate the thought of going “in and out and finding abundant pasture” than thinking of Psalm 23. “He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters” (Psalm 23:2). It is the door that satisfies and sustains.”³⁰

The picture of the sheep on the hillside lying in green pastures does indeed lead us to look at the 23rd Psalm. Jack Kelly writes, “This is a reference to the Kingdom and recalls the words of the 23rd Psalm, “He makes me lie down in green pasture.” Salvation is found through Jesus, He is the gate to the Kingdom. Having entered through Him we will have the freedom to come and go as we please, dwelling in a state of peace in the midst of plenty. Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”³¹

“I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD”

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my [sheep], and am known of mine”, (John 10: 11-14)

Follow the Shepherd

The good Shepherd of Life! There are two ways to enter a sheepfold. You can get in by climbing over the fence or the sheep barrier, by sneaking in or forcibly breaking in, or you can enter through the gate. The thieves and robbers will break in but the one entering through the gate is the Good Shepherd. Read what Mr. Marrow says about the Good Shepherd and his function, “John 10:1-14 provides the most

³⁰ Dr. Tim Marrow, Before Abraham... I Am!, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 40.

³¹ Kelly, Jack. The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, Page 1.

detailed statement concerning our Lord as shepherd. He gave a beautiful description of His work as a shepherd and referred to Himself by several terms which relate to the function of the first-century Palestinian shepherd. In John 10:1-5 Jesus used an analogy that was accurate in its details of the function of the shepherd. (“I assure you: Anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the door but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The doorkeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don’t recognize the voice of strangers.”³²

Trouble seems to find sheep

Have you ever thought that you were having so many negative things happen that trouble simply seems to find you? It is that way with us sheep. That is why we need the Good Shepherd to protect us. Gregg Matte puts it this way, “Sheep don’t go looking for trouble, but they have a predisposition to find it. To be compared to sheep hardly sounds like a compliment. It is a humbling comparison. Yet it best describes us and the beauty of it is we have the opportunity to have a unique relationship with the Shepherd of our souls.”³³

Perfectly compared to sheep

Rebellious and disobedient we are. Just like sheep. “As humans and believers in Christ, we are perfectly compared to sheep. For us, peace comes in obeying God, but we try to roll out of His will and

³² Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 47.

³³ Gregg Matte, *I AM Changes who I am*, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1700.

go into other pens. The Lord, our Shepherd, has our best interest at heart. And yet we try to roll in a different direction, hopeful that we will find excitement elsewhere.”³⁴

Spiritually Significant Symbols

The way God organizes things is amazing. So often we see this organization in the Bible. He is a very organized God with a perfect plan. Dr. Lee puts it this way, “The sheep, the Shepherd, the pen, the door, the thief, and the robber symbolize something that is spiritually significant. First, the “sheep” symbolizes God’s children. A new believer who has just accepted Jesus, or a believer of many years, a believer with big faith, a believer with little faith—any person who received salvation is considered a “sheep”. The “sheep pen” symbolizes a place where the sheep gather to rest; in other words, the “pen” is the church where God’s children can gather to receive true Sabbath and peace. Just as Jesus said in John 10:7, “I am the door of the sheep,” the door symbolizes Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is both the “Great Shepherd” and the “Chief Shepherd.” Lastly, who then are the “thief and robbers”? Anyone who leads the believers astray by calling himself god or the resurrects Christ; the antichrist, who denies that Jesus Christ came into this world in the flesh; and any heretical cult that denies the Lord who ransomed us by paying the penalty of our sins is the “thief” and the “robber” (2 Peter 2:1).³⁵

Not Your Average Shepherd

The way Jesus the Good Shepherd takes count and watch over His sheep is perfect. Calling all His sheep by name and knowing each one along with their whereabouts. The care in which He takes as He leads them to green pastures is second to none. Marrow writes, “Jesus doesn’t say, “I am a shepherd;” He claims, “I am the Good Shepherd.” He differs from other shepherds. In Him there is more than efficiency, there is value and truth and beauty. The phrase in John 10:3 testifies to a personal, caring

³⁴ Ibid, Page Loc 1701.

³⁵ Dr. Jaerock Lee, *Footsteps of the Lord*, Volume 1, Seoul, Korea: Published by Urim Books, 2012, Page Loc 2889.

relationship that existed between the shepherd and the sheep. He knew every one of his sheep by name.

Let me tell you something even better: Jesus knows your name.”³⁶

Picture the Shepherd’s Love

A good shepherd protects and builds up but a poor shepherd takes away from us. Jesus is the ultimate shepherd in the love he shows as we see in what Mr. Matte writes, “Jesus sets up His claim as the Good Shepherd in an incredible way. He begins to paint a picture of what a shepherd’s love looks like. The Lord’s love for us is extravagant, much better than anything else someone could offer. This side of heaven, we will face the temptations and the real and powerful work of Satan. And yet it does not compare with the power and finality of the work of the Lord. The thief’s plan stands in a stark contrast to the Shepherds plan: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’ (John 10:10). Jesus offers life and Satan offers death, which is sometimes cleverly disguised as life.”³⁷

Every Sheep is Important

What Jesus is talking about in the Parable of the lost sheep are the lost sinners. He could also be referring to the backsliders, the ones that went astray. When a sheep wanders out of the fold evil is lurking close by to gobble them up and destroy them. Jesus is pointing out how important each one is. Marrow says, “In Jesus’ parable in Luke 15 we see that every sheep is important to the shepherd. Every person is important to Jesus. Whatever your situation in life, however bad you are, Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, “lays down His life for you.” He says, “Take My hand.” If you will turn your life over to Jesus

³⁶ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 49.

³⁷ Gregg Matte, *I AM Changes who I am*, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1733.

Christ He will give you pardon, peace, purpose, power, and a permanent relationship with God. He also will give you strength.”³⁸

Standing Guard

Jesus says in Like 15:10, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of god over one sinner that repenteth.” Each one is so very important to the Good Shepherd that He guards with His life and with no fear. Matte writes, “The Good Shepherd does not run from peril. In fact, He does the exact opposite: Compelled by love, He runs toward His peoples’ trouble. God does not run from our sin. He runs toward it, cleansing us and offering new life. Neither does He run from danger. He does not shrink from adversity but faces it head-on. As the Good Shepherd, the Lord stands guard.”³⁹

We are His

As members of the Kingdom our life experiences teach us that Jesus Christ is as close to us as we want Him to be. When you think things are so horrible and you do not deserve His love and when you think you are so bad he has left you all you need do is say Lord, Lord and he reaches out those loving arms and takes you in. It is because once we believe and follow in faith we belong to Him. As Mr. Marrow puts it, “The Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, loves us because we are His. If you put your life in the hands of the Good and Great Shepherd of the Sheep, no matter what happens, you will be where you are right now... in the hands of the Almighty God. Nothing can snatch us out of His hand.”⁴⁰

There was no other way

Over the years we have heard people say they get to Heaven by doing good works or they get to heaven some other way. Some even say everyone goes to Heaven when they die. The true answer is that

³⁸ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 54.

³⁹ Gregg Matte, *I AM Changes who I am*, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1748.

⁴⁰ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 57.

there is only one way to get to the Kingdom. Jack Kelly points out, “No one expects sheep to be responsible for themselves. Owners hire shepherds for that purpose. A Shepherd’s job is to accept responsibility for the safety and well- being of his flock. Most shepherds only take that to the point where it would threaten their personal safety, rightly deciding that their life is worth more than that of the sheep. A few would be willing to risk their lives to protect their sheep, but our Shepherd knowingly and willingly died to save us, because there was no other way.”⁴¹

“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE”

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”, (John 11:25)

A Special Miracle

This follows the death and resurrection of Lazarus. Lazarus was a good friend of Jesus and this was the second of only two places in the Bible where we find Jesus weeping. This marks the shortest verse in the Bible and it was a profound one. “Jesus wept!” Marrow points out the importance of this, “Of the thirty-five miracles of Jesus in the Gospels, none perhaps is a startling and suggestive, or as special as the one in John 11. There were two other raisings of the dead in the Gospels: the son of the widow at Nain recounted in Luke 7:11-17 and the daughter of Jairus told in Mark 5:21-43. But John 11:17 says that Jesus’ friend Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.”⁴²

Death has no sting

⁴¹ Kelly, Jack. The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, page 2.

⁴² Dr. Tim Marrow, Before Abraham... I Am!, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 62.

This incident actually leads to the death of Jesus and His paying the price for us. We have hope because of what He did for us as Gregg Matte tells us, “The story of Lazarus gives us parameters for how to think about death in light of Jesus. Jesus is showing us His mastery over death and also the life that He offers for those who are seeking. In a world where our culture tells us to deny the existence of death, Jesus invites us to consider a life full of purpose because of the assurance we have in Him. As a result of our sinful nature, there is separation from God. Death shows what we deserve to receive because of our sin. In John 11, however, Lazarus’s death gives us great hope in revealing that Jesus has defeated death as the last enemy. It no longer has mastery over us. The bee no longer has a stinger- it has been lodged in Christ. Jesus has come and death has lost its grip.”⁴³

Holding onto Hope

Jesus had a reason for waiting four days before coming to the aid of His friends. The reason more than likely was to remove any doubt by the Jews that it would be Him raising Lazarus and not some other fluke due to the three day body experience the Jews believed in. Here Tim Marrow tells us about the hope to hold onto, “Our Lord had special friends; three of these were Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Mary was known to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen. Martha was known to be busy, always doing something. Jesus received word while on his way to Jerusalem, that his friend, Lazarus was sick. He did not go immediately to Bethany, but “He stayed two more days in the place where he was” (John 11:6). When Jesus arrives four days after Lazarus had been buried, Martha stays true to her personality and remains seated in the house. Martha exemplifies great faith and somewhat of a rebuke in her Lord saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Yet even now I know (a thorough knowledge) that whatever You ask from God, God will give to you” (John 11:21-22). In grief and despair she still holds on to her hope as well as her faith in Christ. Jesus always responds to great faith and He promises Martha that her brother would rise again. (John 11:23). In the next verse (John 11:24) we hear

⁴³ Gregg Matte, *I AM Changes who I am*, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 1962.

Martha as she interpreted the words of Jesus to mean the future resurrection on the last day (John 5:28-29).”⁴⁴

Do not fear the shadow of death

Fear thou not, fear thou not. Mr. Marrow writes, “Jesus replied to Martha with the 5th “I AM” claim. He did not deny what Martha said about the future resurrection. As Wiersbe says, “in His great I AM statement, our Lord completely transformed the doctrine of the resurrection and, in so doing, brought great comfort to Martha’s heart. He transformed the resurrection- He takes it out of a book and puts it into Himself. We thank God for what the Bible teaches (all Martha had was the Old Testament) and realize that we are saved by Jesus Christ and not by a doctrine written in a book. When you know Him by faith and trust, you do not fear the shadow of death. In Him, every teaching is personal.”⁴⁵

Identity Declared

Jesus Christ the pool of living waters. His identity is reassuring to us as Gregg Matte points out, “Jesus’ words to Martha- “I AM the resurrection and the life”- changed everything for her. In a moment she was reminded that life wasn’t over for her brother. This statement of identity changes life and death for us as well. That gives us freedom to live life with a purpose and know that because of Jesus, death does not have the last say. Jesus’ declaration is our foundation.”⁴⁶

Believe and Live

The Gospel of John is all about this. It says in John 3:16, “Whosoever believes on Him will have everlasting life”. Believe and live is pointed out again by Marrow, “Jesus says, “The one (you & me) who believes in Me...everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die- ever.” The word “life” is

⁴⁴ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 63.

⁴⁵ Ibid, Page 64,66.

⁴⁶ Gregg Matte, *I AM Changes who I am*, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 2009.

used thirty-six times in John's gospel, but the word "believe" or "trust" is used ninety times in this gospel. John 20:31 is the key verse that says, but these are written that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name." You do not trust doctrine; you trust and believe in a person. When Jesus makes his great claim He asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" Will you trust and believe in Me today? Martha had been in an atmosphere of death, but now she realized she was in the presence of life."⁴⁷

Physical or Spiritual?

How much thought have you given to the moment in the future when your body will begin to drop to room temperature? Mr. Thompson has some words about this subject of, "I am the resurrection and the life", (John 11: 25). "The Lord Jesus told us whoever lives and believes in Him will never die. Does He mean spiritually or physically? I believe he means both. We are to be in communion with Christ at all times. Whenever we are tempted to do something that we do not believe is of Christ, and we pray and gain the strength to refuse to do it, then we are fed in the spirit realm with the body and blood of Christ. The body and blood of Christ are our wisdom and our strength. They also are our resurrection. The Apostle Paul referred to this way of living as attaining to the resurrection. We always are to be speaking to Christ, thinking about Christ, looking to Christ for wisdom, asking Him to enable us to solve the problems that come before us. In this manner we practice His Presence and become more aware of Him. Now, still thinking about the spiritual part, when we die we will not die. Why is that? Think about it. If we are living in and by the Life of the Lord Jesus, how can we die? If our thoughts are His thoughts, how can we cease to think? If our words are coming from Him, how can they cease? If our actions are being directed by Him, why should they not continue after we die? By learning to live as part of Christ, we have entered eternal spiritual life. We will not be in some kind of hazy spiritual existence when we die and enter the spiritual world. We will still be the same person. We will just keep on living by and with

⁴⁷ Dr. Tim Marrow, Before Abraham... I Am!, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 69.

the Lord Jesus, as part of Him. Let us now think of the physical aspect. Of course we will die physically, if we are living and believing in Jesus, because our body is dead because of sin. But we will not “perish,” that is, our body shall not cease to be.”⁴⁸

Our price was paid

If the Rapture comes before we who are His die a physical death we will not need to make that pit stop in the cemetery. Jack Kelly writes, “This is an Amazing statement. The Lord had already said that whoever believes in Him would not perish but would have eternal life. (John 3:16) Here he provided more detail, saying that even though a believer experiences physical death, he will still have life. He was referring to the resurrection of those who die in faith. And then He said there would be some that would never die but would pass from this life directly into the next one. If we didn’t already know about the rapture, we wouldn’t see this, but since we do we can understand that He was talking about that one generation who will be alive when He comes for the Church, and will receive eternal life without dying first. And once again the Lord confirmed that the single qualification for eternal life is to believe that His death paid the entire price for our sins.”⁴⁹

“I AM THE WAY THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE”

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”,
(John 14:6)

One way road (The way)

⁴⁸ Robert B. Thompson, I Am The Resurrection and The Life, International Bible Society E-Book: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1973, Page Loc 96.

⁴⁹ Kelly, Jack. The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, page 2.

It was mentioned earlier that we have heard many different thoughts on how folks might get to heaven. Mr. Marrow says, “For several years there have been three perspectives of God and what a person has to do to get to heaven. Universalism teaches that everyone is going to heaven and sooner or later God will eventually save every person. Pluralism teaches that humans may be saved or go to heaven through numerous religious traditions and saviors. A pluralist looks at each religious system according to its “goodness” or the “goodness” of its leader or leaders. Inclusivism seeks to capture the tolerance of pluralism while affirming the redemptive work of Christ Jesus. Inclusivism teaches that Christ is the only way, but also acknowledges that others may come to Christ in their own religions. The biblical view of exclusivism says that Jesus Christ is the only Savior and faith and trust in Christ is necessary for salvation.”⁵⁰

The Toll is paid

There is a song we sing at church often and it is called “Only by Grace, authored by Graham Kendrick. The words go like this: Only by grace can we enter, Only by grace can we stand, Not by our human endeavor, But by the blood of the Lamb; Into your presence You call us, You call us to come, Into your presence You draw us, And now by your grace we come; Lord if You make our transgressions, Who could stand, Thanks to Your grace we are cleansed, By the blood of the Lamb. It is such a beautiful song and one of my favorites that stays with me for days each time. The words are true and the words are special. Only by His grace are we saved writes Gregg Matte, “By unflinchingly claiming to be the Way to the father, Jesus is saying He is our payment. We have sinned against the eternal God; therefore we have eternal consequences. Not only is God eternal, but He is also holy, which we are not. So how will sinful humans satisfy a holy and eternal God? The holy and eternal Christ paid the debt for us. For

⁵⁰ Dr. Tim Marrow, *Before Abraham... I Am!*, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 76.

humans covered in the filth of sin, there is only one way to be cleansed. And that is through Jesus. It can't be through good deeds, it must be by grace. He is the Way, the only Way.”⁵¹

No map needed

Another song comes to mind now with this thought called, “He Leadeth Me”, and I can remember the chorus easily. It goes: He leadeth me, He leadeth me, By His own hand He leadeth me; His faithful follower I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me. “Jesus shows us the way. He does not only give words of instruction and direction, He takes us by the hand and leads us. He strengthens, sustains and guides us personally.”⁵²

The Truth

The truth will set you free. Here Mr. Marrow writes about the truth, “Christ gave the Holy Spirit two specific names: “Counselor” and “the Spirit of truth”. (John 14:16; 15:26) As the Spirit of truth, “the Holy Spirit is related to Jesus, the Truth, and God’s Word, which of itself is truth. Since He is the “Spirit of truth”, the Holy Spirit cannot lie or be associated with lies. He never leads us to do anything contrary to god’s Word. As Jesus prayed the night before His death, His third request for His disciples was to “Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth” (John 17:7). The disciples dedication and consecration was to be done “by the truth” contained in God’s Word. The Word of God is not only true; it is the very essence of truth.”⁵³

The Life

Jesus always preached about love and His love gives us life. Even before we leave this earthly body and have eternal life with Him we are filled with life now through His love. “Since Christ has “life in

⁵¹ Gregg Matte, I AM Changes who I am, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 2101.

⁵² Dr. Tim Marrow, Before Abraham... I Am!, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 78.

⁵³ Ibid, Page 80.

Himself” (John 5:26), He has the power and authority to “give life to whomever he wishes” John 5:21). Jesus claim as the “resurrection and the life” and raising Lazarus from the grave authenticates His claim to be the life. Jesus gives life and life to the full. He gives more than the breath which animates our body. He makes the existence worthwhile. He fills life with meaning.⁵⁴

Jack Kelly mentions again the only way to have eternal life, “There is no other way into the presence of God than by accepting the Lord’s death as payment in full for our sins. As Peter said, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) Jesus is the only remedy God has provided for man’s sin problem. He is the only way to eternal life. This is the truth of God’s Word.”⁵⁵

“I AM THE TRUE VINE”

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing”, (John 15: 1, 5).

A Personal Relationship

Jesus Christ offers us a personal relationship with Him. No need to go through any other mediator. Just dial Him up. Gregg Matte writes, “Now Jesus says, “I AM THE TRUE VINE,” meaning that he is

⁵⁴ Ibid, Page 81.

⁵⁵ Kelly, Jack. The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, page 2.

the replacement of Israel, which was symbolized in the Old Testament by a vine (see Isa. 5:1-7).

Relationship with God is no longer found through a nation, but through a Person.”⁵⁶

The Relationship Analogy

It is all about abiding. Abiding in Christ is mandatory so that we can go forth and produce fruit. We produce fruit when we are being good disciples and mentoring others in living for Christ. Tim Marrow puts it this way, “Christ draws upon the familiar imagery of the vine and the branches to illustrate a new truth in His seventh claim as the great “I am.” We are not left to our imaginations to decide what the vine represents in John 15:1-11, for Jesus Himself tells us, “I am the true vine, and My father is the vineyard keeper” (John 15:1). Note again the familiar phrase of deity, “I am,” and the contrast between the true of genuine vine and other vines. The “true vine” represents the Lord Jesus and the vineyard keeper (literally “farmer” or “cultivator”) represents God the Father. The other element in this analogy given by Christ is the “branches”. In John 15:5, Jesus told His disciples, “I am the vine; you are the branches.” While Jesus is addressing these words to His own disciples, it becomes apparent in the analogy that He is instructing them concerning all disciples- both the committed and those who only appear to be committed. John shows us five keys. Christ spells out that the first key is “producing fruit”. The word ‘fruit’ is found eight times, once in every other verse, in John 15:1-17. The key to producing fruit is “abiding: or remaining in Christ. The key to “abiding” in Christ is “obeying” Him and the key to “obeying” Him is “loving” Him and the key to “loving’ Him is to “know: Him. Jesus says, “I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will

⁵⁶ Gregg Matte, I AM Changes who I am, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 2101.

give you” (John 15; 16). Jesus gives His disciples keys that will enable them to be effective in their walk even after He has ascended to heaven.”⁵⁷

For believers only

The first step is to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and believing on Him let Him know you are putting your faith in Him and want to live your life through Him. After that you must learn God’s ways and grow by reading scripture and living as it is written. Then the fruit-bearing comes into the picture as Jack Kelly points out, “It is important to understand that salvation is not a fruit bearing event, so in this statement Jesus was talking about our life after we’re saved. Of course a non-believer cannot bear fruit, and even after we receive salvation believers are not automatically fruitful. But if we yield our life to Him, (Romans 12: 1-2) and respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit He sent to guide us (John 14: 26) we can bear much fruit. If not our lives will be unfruitful, because without Him we can do nothing of spiritual value. We’ll still be saved, but we’ll be of no more use to the work of the Kingdom than the unfruitful branches the gardener discards at pruning time. Paul confirmed this in 1 Cor. 3: 12-15. The unfruitful believer will be saved, but as one escaping through the flames.”⁵⁸

Go forth and produce fruit

Matte continues on the issue of bearing fruit, “In this last I AM statement, Jesus is sending us out to live the Christian life. This seventh I AM vineyard illustration presents the diagram of a life in love with the Son, not just undertaking Christian activities for Him. We are all simply branches. Billions of branches have come before us and billions more will come after. We aren’t called to produce the grapes

⁵⁷ Dr. Tim Marrow, Before Abraham... I Am!, The claims of Christ from the Gospel of John, Cross Books, 2010, Page 89.

⁵⁸ Kelly, Jack. The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, page 2.

but to abide in the Vine. If we abide deeply, we will achieve eternally. The heartbeat of the Savior will pulse through us.”⁵⁹

It is a matter of the heart

Jesus knows your heart, He knows your thoughts and He knows all. It is important to have your motives and intent right because he will know. Jack Kelly writes, “This is not a matter of success or failure from a worldly standpoint. It’s a matter of motive. Many of us will see some of our greatest accomplishments burn in the fires of judgment because we achieved them with wrong motives, like self-satisfaction, or recognition from others, or even a desire to “make points” with God. Only those things that are prompted by the Holy Spirit and where our only motive is gratitude for all we’ve been given will survive. “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God”, (1 Cor. 4:5)”⁶⁰

“I AM...I AM”

Bearing witness to Deity

Another verse in the Bible that shows this style of deity is John 8:18, “I AM one that bears witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.”

I want to be sure to point out the relationship to this particular saying and the deity of Christ. It is clearly showing Christ’s deity and that he is the one God. Leon Morris says, “John’s use of the

⁵⁹ Gregg Matte, I AM Changes who I am, Ventura, California, Published by Regal, 1973, Page Loc 2101.

⁶⁰ Kelly, Jack. The Seven “I AM” Statements In John: A bible Study by Jack Kelly. <http://gracethrufaith.com/selah/spiritual-life/the-seven-i-am-statements-in-john/>, accessed 08/01/2012, page 2.

expression is distinctive. We get nothing like it anywhere else in the New Testament (except for a handful of passages in the Synoptics); thus we must recognize that John is using the hallowed expression to bring out the truth that his Master was one with a special relationship to the Heavenly Father, a relationship in which he must be thought of as partaking in the nature of deity, and a relationship which does not compromise the truth that there is but one God.”⁶¹

God Never Changes

God is the same today and always. He is never changing. He is, He was and He always will be. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. We can know Him but we cannot understand Him. God is infinite but we are finite. When people ask us prove that God exists we cannot. Have you been asked to do that? I have. We simply cannot. We can give examples that justify His existence but we cannot prove His existence.

Warren Wiersbe says, “Jesus doesn’t say “I WAS”, He is alive this very moment and offers us a satisfying spiritual life in the present tense. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8) Past history, present reality and future certainty all unite today in Jesus Christ, the great “I AM”.⁶²

Pre-existence

Ninan says, “So in the statement “I AM that I AM”, God refuses to give an explanation of himself, simply because God is beyond reason.”⁶³

⁶¹ Leon Morris, *Jesus Is The Christ, Studies in The Theology of John*, Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1989, page 125.

⁶² Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus In the Present Tense, the I AM statements of Christ*, Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C Cook, 2011, page 11.

⁶³ M.M. Ninan, “I AM”, *Symbols Jesus Used to Explain Himself*, San Jose, California: Global Publishers, 2005, page 11.

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

This verse emphasizes the pre-existence of Jesus.

Philippians 2:6 says, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

This verse shows that Jesus possessed all the attributes of God which includes pre-existence.

Colossians 2:9 says, "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." So in Him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.

John 10:30 says, "I and [my] Father are one."

John 17:5 says, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Therefore, He had glory with the Father before the world began.

An Undeniable Claim

Barry Davis writes, "Jesus undeniably claimed to have existed eternally in the same way that God the Father has. If He did not exist as He said, then the rest of the Bible becomes meaningless. Jesus death, burial, and resurrection are invalidated as far as our redemption is concerned, if Christ is not an eternal being. The whole point of the cross is that God became man and lived a sinless life and died in our place. If Jesus did not exist forever then it wasn't God who died in our place, it was simply a man like us. If Jesus were a created being like we are then He could not be God. Thank God He is not created, but has existed eternally, and has come to earth for our benefit. The great "I AM" is Jesus Christ and is essential for life, specifically for life eternal. During Jesus ministry many asked, "Who is the man?" Many today are asking the same question, "who is Jesus, who did He claim to be? The answer from the word of God

is this: He is the great “I AM”. He is fully God in every respect. Jesus is equal with God; He is eternal with God; He is essential with God; He is God! He is everything.”⁶⁴

Deity Confirmed

The deity of Christ is confirmed. Warren Wiersbe wrote, “Some students of John’s Gospel believe that our Lord’s words in John 4; 26 and 8:24, 28, 58, as well as 13:19 and 18:5-6 are all “theologically loaded”, and affirm His deity as the great “I AM”.⁶⁵

Recognized too late

What about the claim that was rejected by the Jews and made them want to stone Jesus? What about the claim they denied that eventually sent Jesus to the cross? Well, eventually the world did recognize Christ as the “I AM” even though it came too late. As Towns writes, “Darby notes that Christ constantly uses the title “Son of Man” with reference to the cross. Here Christ says that it is the cross that will finally cause the world to recognize Him as the “I AM” and agree with His claim that He did the will of the Father.”⁶⁶

John’s proof

Warren Wiersbe points out that John was writing as both a theologian and an evangelist. He writes, “The Holy Spirit selected John to write about the “I AM” statements because John wrote his gospel to prove that Jesus Christ is the “I AM”, the very Son of God. John wrote as a Theologian to prove the deity

⁶⁴ Barry L. Davis, *The Claims of Christ, What Jesus Had to Say About Himself*, Lincoln, Nebraska, Writers Club Press, 2001, page 58

⁶⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus In the Present Tense, the I AM statements of Christ*, Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C Cook, 2011, page 11

⁶⁶ Elmer Towns, *John Believe and Live*, Chattanooga Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2002, page 64

of Jesus Christ, but he also wrote as an evangelist urging his readers to put their faith in Jesus and receive eternal life.”⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

Jesus had a favorite way of referring to Himself. It was the “Son of Man”. That is what He preferred, however, when He wanted to be clear that He was the same as God the Father and the Holy Spirit he used a different term so as to demonstrate His deity. “I AM...I AM”.

Claim number Eight (The Plus One)

I will conclude by referencing Elmer Towns words, “An eighth claim Christ makes it an even greater statement about Himself. Jesus simply says, “I AM”. Even though it is counted as an eighth claim, it occurs several times (4:26; 8:24; 28, 58; 13; 13, 19; 18:5-6, 8). This is a statement of identification with the Old Testament deity. Christ is implying, “I AM...I AM”, the self-existent One. He is claiming to be their God.”⁶⁸

And He is claiming to be your God...The great **“I AM...I AM.**

Review of the seven great claims

1. “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35,48,51)
2. “I am the light of the world”(John 8:12)
3. “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7,9)
4. “I am the good shepherd”(John 10:11,14)

⁶⁷ Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus In the Present Tense, the I AM statements of Christ*, Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C Cook, 2011, page 72.

⁶⁸ Elmer Towns, *John Believe and Live*, Chattanooga Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 2002, page xiv.

5. "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25)
6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life"(John 14:6)
7. "I am the true vine"(John 15:1,5)

These seven statements begin and end with the eighth statement, "I Am...I Am".

The Revelation I Am's

This paper will close with these words from Henry Morris about the end times, "There are also seven great "I am" statements in the Book of Revelation, and one of the key verses of this set has to do with His resurrection.

"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18). "Believest thou this?" "He would ask today, just as He asked Martha long ago as she was grieving over the death of her brother, Lazarus (John 11:26). How could anyone doubt the overwhelming evidence of Christ's victory over death (the evidence of the empty tomb, the many post resurrection appearances, the transformation of the disciples, the testimony of 2000 years of hosts of lives also transformed through faith in Him)? Many have believed, of course, but there are multitudes who have not, and for them there is the dread prospect awaiting them of an eternity without God. "If ye believe not that I am He [but "He" is not in the original; Jesus just said, 'I am'], ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). It is significant that the other six I am's in Revelation also stress His eternal existence from eternity to eternity.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" (Revelation 1:8).

"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (Revelation 1:11).

“Fear not; I am the first and the last” (Revelation 1:17).

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 21:6).

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Revelation 22:13).

“I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16).

Our glorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom we have trusted our eternal souls, is more than just a great religious teacher who was martyred for His faith long ago. He is alive on His throne in heaven, having defeated death forever.

He was our great Creator, our sin-bearing Savior and will be our eternal Lord and King.”⁶⁹

The great “**I AM...I AM**”

One God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:6.)

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

(John 14:6)

⁶⁹ Morris, Henry M. The I Am's of Christ, Article, 2003, Institute For Creation Research, PO Box 2667, El Cajon, CA 92021, downloaded from website (www.icr.org), accessed 08/01/2012.

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