

The Great I AM

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Text: *John 8:46-59*

Throughout history people made bold claims about themselves.

In 1966 **John Lennon** of the Beatles made the bold statement, "*Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink... We're more popular than Jesus now ...*"

Four years after that remark, The Beatles disbanded and in 1980 at the age of 40 John Lennon was assassinated and died.

Friedrich Nietzsche, an atheist said, "*God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him...*"

Nietzsche is dead and gone but God is alive and well.

Mohamed Ali, the boxer, was fond of saying, "*I am the greatest!*" If he was claiming to be the greatest boxer, for a very short period of time, that may have been true. But if he was claiming to be the greatest person who ever lived, in all contexts, we know that was a delusion.

Our Lord when He walked on earth made some bold claims.

Without me you can do nothing...

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

I and my Father are one.

And here in our text we read another bold claim that Jesus is making ...

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

This is a bold claim. It is an outrageous claim, so outrageous that the Jews wanted to stone Him to death.

59: Then took they up stones to cast at him ...

There are many occasions where we read Jesus Christ making bold claims. John records eight clear and in details claims by Jesus.

The Seven "I am" statements of Jesus in the gospel of John

1. *I am the Bread of life (John 6: 35, 48, 51)*
2. *I am the Light of the world (John 8: 12, 9:5)*
3. *I am the Door (John 10:7, 9)*
4. *I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14)*
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 are very specific and clear statements that our Lord made about Himself. Jesus does not just claim to know these things, or explain these things; He boldly claims that He is these things.

1. A Claim to Deity

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

There are those who say that the Lord Jesus Christ is a great teacher and a great man but nothing more and nothing less. They say that Jesus never really claimed to be God.

But if you read our text carefully you will see that the assertion that Jesus never claimed deity has no valid grounds. Because we read in ...

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

Then, when they questioned that assertion,

John 8:57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

He went on to insist that ...

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

The Jews had asked our Lord, "Who are you?" He did not say, "*Before Abraham was, I was.*"

But He said, "*Before Abraham was, **I am.***" He was giving His name. "*This is who I am, my name is I AM!*"

To understand how outrageous that statement was, you have to go back to the Old Testament when God spoke to Moses at the burning bush. When Moses asked God what His name was. God had answered that His name was "I AM" (*Exodus 3:14*) - that is, He is the God who is eternally self-existent, transcendent to time as well as to space and matter.

And that was who Jesus was claiming to be! I AM THAT I AM. I am the great I AM. I AM—Jehovah is My name! I am the eternal God standing before you in the flesh.

Our Lord Jesus Christ existed long before He was born into the world. Before Abraham existed, He existed. Before Abraham was born, He was there. Before man was created, He was there. These words clearly teach us that the Lord Jesus was not a mere man like Abraham, Moses or David. He is the eternal Son of God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and whose goings forth were from everlasting to everlasting.

This is a clear bold claim to deity, which the Jews understood. In verse 59, we read, "*Then took they up stones to cast at him...*"

Why? **Because He made Himself God by using the same name as God.** They considered this bold claim, blasphemy. The legal penalty of blasphemy or claiming to be God was death by stoning (*Leviticus 24:11,16*). At least twice in the book of John they tried to stone Him, and each time it was connected with making Himself God by His claims, teachings, or miracles.

John 10:30 I and my Father are one. 31: Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32: Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those

works do ye stone me? 33: The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

They knew all too well that He was claiming to be God. They later brought before Pilate the accusation, "...By our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." (John 19:7)

2. A Claim to Sufficiency

There is another implication to this name "I AM" and a very precious one. This statement of Jesus seems to be incomplete because there is no predicate. I am...what? But really, this is the most important **I am** statement of our Lord. **All other "I am" statement of our Lord rests on this statement, I am.**

Not only does this name points to the **deity of Christ** but also it points to **sufficiency of Christ**. He is our everything. He is all you and I need. That's why He is called the Great I AM. I am whatever you need. I am all you need.

He is the only One who can meet man's greatest needs in life.

I AM the bread of life, (Jn 6:35). "I AM the light of the world" (Jn 8:12;9:5). "I AM the door" (Jn 10:7). "I AM the good shepherd" (Jn 10: 11, 14). "I AM the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). "I AM the way, truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). "I AM the true vine" (Jn 15:1)

Salvation, Forgiveness, Comfort, Strength, Refuge, Fortress, Rock, Exceeding Joy, Guide, Friend, Father, Supplier, Protector, Deliverer, etc.

I am whatever you need. I am all you need.

What must be our response?

Not that of the Jews, for they took up stones to cast at Him. But our response must be of faith and trust and love and wonder and worship. For that very God who is the great I AM loved me and gave Himself for me on the cross.

As we go through this life we must constantly remind ourselves that our name is not I AM.

My name is not I AM. I am not the I AM. I am not Jehovah. I am not the LORD. I am not God. I am not the center of the universe. The world does not revolve around me. I am not the self-sufficient One. I am not the self-existent, unchanging, constant, unending, always present God. I am not I AM THAT I AM.

There is only One whose name is I AM and that's none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. **But we are prone to forget that.** That's why there many instances where the Lord would remind His people that He is the I AM and we are not.

Exodus 20:2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3: Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

*Isaiah 42:8 **I am the LORD: that is my name:** and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*

*Isaiah 43:11 **I, even I, am the LORD;** and beside me there is no saviour.*

*Isaiah 45:5 **I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me:** I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: 6: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, **that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.***

*Isaiah 45:18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: **I am the LORD; and there is none else.** 19: I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. 20: Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. 21: Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? **have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.** 22: Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: **for I am God, and there is none else.***

*Jeremiah 32:27 Behold, **I am the LORD, the God of all flesh:** is there any thing too hard for me?*

*Hosea 13:4 Yet **I am the LORD thy God** from the land of Egypt, and **thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.***

*Joel 2:27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that **I am the LORD your God, and none else:** and my people shall never be ashamed.*

Why is it important to know who we are and to know who God is?

The sooner we come to this realization the better; because this will save you and me and the people around us from many frustrations and disappointments, from heartaches and headaches.

1. This truth will help us receive forgiveness and salvation.

We are not our own Saviour, Jesus is.

I am not the master of my fate, and the captain of my soul.

Jesus said ...

*John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.***

2. This truth will help us in our sanctification

Colossians 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8: Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the

tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. 9: For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10: And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

3. This truth will help us in our service

When God told Moses that He is sending him to Pharaoh to let His people go, Moses replied who am I?

Confused and overwhelmed, Moses said ...

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

I like the way God responded to Moses' question, "Who am I." in

*Exodus 3:12 And he said, **Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.***

God answers Moses' "Who am I?" question with five reassuring and life-changing words, "*I will be with you.*" In effect God is saying to Moses – Moses it is not important who you are. What is more important is who I am. I AM THAT I AM. I am the Great I AM. I am Jehovah. I am the Creator of the Universe. I AM is sending you and not only that, I AM is going with you. You are not going alone. I am going with you. I will be with you.

When God calls us into a task too overwhelming for us to carry out, His affirmation and assurance is that the I AM will be with us. May God help us to get a hold of this truth!