

Knowing Jesus: The “I Am” Sayings of Christ – part 1

In Mark chapter 8, Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” He gets varied answers at first – “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah or one of the prophets.” Finally, Peter gives his famous Christological confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

While this is an instance where Jesus asked what *others* said about Him, we’re going to ask the question, “who does *Jesus* say that He is?” We see in the Gospel of John eight major sayings where Jesus identifies Himself. In each of these instances He uses the term, “I Am,” which in the original Greek literally reads “I am, I am,” The apostle John purposely uses this construction to make his case that Jesus is much more than just a good teacher or an extraordinary man. He is, in fact, God in the flesh.

In Philippians 3:7-10, the Apostle Paul said these words:

⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him...

Paul was an apostle. And that means he received first-hand revelation of Jesus Christ. And yet, he had an insatiable hunger to know Him more. That’s the mark of someone who loves Jesus. They just want to know Him more and more. To commune with Him, to walk with Him, to please Him, to be changed by Him. If we want to know Him – if we want to know Christ – we need to take a look at the times when Jesus reveals to us who He is. It’s in these eight “I AM” sayings that we get a picture of our precious Lord and Savior.

This week and next we will be taking a look at these “I AM” sayings – four today and four next Sunday. It is my prayer that as we look at these together, we will begin to see Jesus for who He is, and that we won’t just gain head knowledge of him, but that we will cherish Him, who He is as well as all His works, and that this will inform and inspire our worship of Him in our daily lives.

- I. The first “I AM” that we will be looking at this morning is found in John chapter 6, verses 25-51, “I AM the bread of life.” Please turn with me to John chapter 6. In the pew Bibles it is on page 891:

To set the scene, Jesus had just miraculously fed the five thousand and now it’s the next day and those people went looking for Jesus because He fed them.

²⁵ *When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”* ²⁶ *Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you*

saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” ²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” ³⁰ So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” ³² Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

⁴¹ So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” ⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— ⁴⁶ not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The crowd wasn’t thinking with their hearts. They were thinking with their stomachs. Jesus knew that they were seeking after temporal things to satisfy physical desires. He says as much in verse 26: ²⁶ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. But rather than give them more bread, Jesus identified their real need—the bread of life that would bring them salvation.¹ He told them in verse 27, as He also tells us now, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” This shows us that it is possible to seek Christ for all the wrong reasons.

¹ J.V. Fesko. *Who Is Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2016), 11.

How often do we forget about our spiritual needs and the joy and satisfaction of simply knowing Christ and instead get entangled with the temporal world only? In Matthew 5:6, Jesus tells us that “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

You see, Jesus points us to the question of what truly satisfies us. Not just a temporal satisfaction that will need to be satisfied again and again. But an eternal satisfaction spiritually. We were all created to be satisfied in God, to find our ultimate fulfillment in Him. But our sin causes us to seek fulfillment in other things – temporal things. Even good things. But these things all fall short of the eternal satisfaction we can only find in Christ.

Jesus is saying in our passage, I come from heaven, from God, I come to give you the heavenly bread that you need for eternal life, and I AM that heavenly bread! There is no other source of this bread other than Christ alone! There is nothing else that can truly satisfy you.

Will you seek Christ for the eternal provisions that truly satisfy your soul? Or will you focus on poor substitutes, pursuing Christ for temporal reasons that fall short of the kingdom of God, such as financial reasons, material reasons, or personal gain?

What Jesus reveals about Himself: Jesus Christ is God’s provision for eternal life, and the satisfaction for the hunger of our souls.

- II. The second “I AM” saying that we’re going to look at today is found in John 8:12 and it is “I AM the light of the world.”

By way of background for this passage, it was the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Jewish literature indicates that on the evening of the last day of the feast, the temple officials lit four large lamps in the temple courts. People celebrated and men danced throughout the night, holding burning torches in their hands while singing praises to the Lord. Early sources say that the light from the temple would illuminate the city which would otherwise be enveloped in darkness.

Many in the crowd would have thought back to the Old Testament when Israel journeyed through the wilderness. They would recall the Scriptures telling about the pillar of fire that illuminated the night sky, leading Israel out of Egypt as they followed the pillar through the wilderness.²

It’s in the midst of this celebration that Jesus makes a declaration to all the people in verse 12:

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Now don’t miss the context of this ceremony. It refers back to the Exodus when God led his people out of slavery. This of course corresponds to Christ, the new and perfect Moses who is

² Fesko, 27.

the one who leads God's people out of their slavery of sin into eternal life. And that is exactly what Jesus is revealing. He IS the light that leads them out of their slavery to sin.

Light reveals and illuminates. It reveals, first of all, our sinful condition. Like a good physician who reveals the source of the sickness so that he can treat it, so Christ's light reveals the source of our spiritual malady so that He can Himself become the remedy. And that is the second thing the light reveals. Not only does it reveal our sinful condition, but it reveals God's gracious remedy which is Christ. It reveals the gospel.

John 1:1-5 – John says that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, is the light of men.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

It says, "The light shines in the darkness" which is the moral darkness of this world as well as the spiritual darkness that is within our own hearts.

This is a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that we find in Isaiah 9:2 –

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.*

Jesus said in our passage, "*Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*"

Notice, Jesus didn't say that He merely *brings* light to the world. He said He is the light of the world! Jesus isn't just saying He is some kind of moral guide through the darkness of this world like some religious guru. Remember what it says back in John 1:5 –

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

This light doesn't just guide. It *dispels* the darkness in our soul. It makes our lives new! Light here is a metaphor for the truth of the gospel, the coming of salvation, the truth about who Jesus is. It is revelation from God. Only this kind of revelation doesn't just bring information, it brings *transformation*! A whole new life. And this can only be found in Christ.

But what does this mean for us? How do we apply this truth to our lives?

We find out in chapter 9 of John's Gospel when Jesus heals a man born blind. Jesus uses this miracle to make a spiritual application to his teaching. We know this is so because He says specifically when He healed the man, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

The application actually comes at the end of chapter 9. The man who was healed of his blindness gets cast out of the synagogue by the Pharisees, which basically means he was kicked out of fellowship. It was a pretty big deal. So let's see what Jesus does about this.

Starting in verse 35 –

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

What this is saying, and what Jesus is showing us through this miracle, is that spiritually, we must realize our need. We can’t be like the Pharisees who were self-righteous and think that we’ve got it all together. We can’t say, “we see and don’t need anyone to open our eyes.”

What Jesus reveals about Himself: Jesus Christ is God’s revelation for eternal life, the true light which opens our eyes to see our need of Him.

- III. The third and fourth “I AM” sayings are found in John 10 and John 14, respectively. I’m coupling these two together because they both have the same message. We’ll take them in turn. First we see that Jesus says, “I AM the door of the sheep.” Look with me at John 10, starting in verse 1:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

When Jesus says, “I AM the door,” Jesus is saying that He himself is the means by which the sheep enter life. Notice also He says “the” door, not “a” door. He’s saying something very exclusive about the door to the sheepfold. The normal sheepfold at that time had only one door, and Jesus is saying that the way into life is through Him and Him alone. He is *the* door.

When He repeats this thought in verse 9 He adds, “*If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*” When John writes “saved” here, we should understand it as entering in to the sheepfold, or, more specifically, entering in to eternal life. This is seen in verse 10 when Jesus states, “*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*” We also see this reflected in chapter 3 verses 16-17 where the same language is used.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

So there is that correlation between eternal life and salvation here. And thus we once again encounter the thought of an exclusive salvation. It is exclusive in the sense that it can be entered only through one door, Jesus Christ.³

This means, as Jesus stated in this passage, that to try to enter in another way is illegitimate. God only provided one entrance, one door, and that is Christ.

What Jesus reveals about Himself: Jesus Christ is the one and only entrance to eternal life, and all other means are false.

As I stated previously, this isn't the only time Jesus makes the exclusive statement that He is the only way to eternal life. Turn with me over to John chapter 14 and we will see the fourth “I AM” statement that we will be looking at today which is, “I AM the way, and the truth, and the life.”

This passage takes place in the upper room as Jesus was teaching His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion. Jesus, in chapter 13, had disclosed to them that where He is going they cannot come right away. This brought his disciples much sadness and prompted Peter to ask where He is going, and then to declare that he would follow him anywhere, even to the death. Jesus responds to him that the rooster would not crow until Peter had denied him three times.

John chapter 14 verses 1-7 is Jesus' response. Read with me starting in verse 1:

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Jesus comforts his disciples by giving them assurance that the reason He is going away is to prepare a place for them in His Father's house. He promises them that He will come again and that eventually they will, indeed, go where He is going. Then He states, almost cryptically as if to lead them to ask another question, that they know the way to where He is going.

This time it's Thomas that speaks up and says, basically, “we don't even know *where* You're going. How can we know the way?”

³ Leon Morris. *Jesus is the Christ*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 114.

Jesus answers both questions at once. *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* In this statement Jesus told them where He was going – to the Father – and the way to get there – through Him alone.

But what does that mean? What does it mean that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life?

Well, I believe verse 7 gives us the answer: *“If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”*

What is this saying? He’s saying that Jesus alone perfectly reveals the Father, and that through His work, He provides the way to the Father. He’s saying that Jesus alone reveals the Father’s mercy and goodness and His plan of redemption and that Jesus is, in fact, the very means given by the Father through which this redemption would be accomplished. It says that God has ordained that only through Jesus Christ alone and His work of redemption can we find salvation for our sins.

But look at His disciples in this passage. We see a definite anxiety in them because Jesus has revealed that he is going away. And they can only see themselves as lost without Him. After all, they left everything to follow Him.

That’s why there is a definite undertone of “trust” that Jesus is trying to get through to His disciples. It’s as if He is saying, don’t worry, just put your trust in me, and I will make sure you get to the right place.”

What Jesus reveals about Himself: Jesus Christ is the one and only way to the Father, and He calls on us to trust Him.

There was a very wealthy man who, along with his son, shared a passion for art collecting. They traveled around the world together, adding only the finest paintings to their collection. Included among them were works by Picasso, Van Gogh, and Monet. The old man was a widower, but his son filled up the void in his life, and this was their common bond.

But war erupted, and the young son enlisted and was sent overseas. Day after day, the father prayed, held his breath, and waited for news. One autumn day near Thanksgiving the dreaded telegram came. The young man had died bravely in combat, trying to evacuate those caught under fire. Distraught and lonely, the old man faced the upcoming holidays with anguish and sorrow. On Christmas morning, a knock sounded at the door. The father opened it to find a soldier there, carrying a package. As they talked, the soldier said, “Your son and I became very close, and he told me all about your joint art collection. I myself am an artist, and I want to give you this.”

The man took the package in his feeble hands, unwrapped it, and there was a portrait of his son in striking detail. It wasn’t a masterpiece, but it was the most precious work of art the man had ever seen. As he gazed at it, he wept. And as the young soldier left, the lonely father pushed aside thousands of dollars’ worth of art and hung the portrait of his son in the prized spot over his fireplace.

The following Spring, the old man grew ill and passed away. The art world was full of anticipation, wanting to get its hands on this man's fabulous collection. A day was set to auction it all off, and according to the old man's instruction the first painting was one that was not on any museum's list—the painting of the man's son. When the auctioneer asked for an opening bid, the room was silent.

"Who will open the bidding at \$100?" he asked. The moments stretched on awkwardly, and finally someone in the back of the room said, "Let's go on to the next piece."

"No," replied the auctioneer. "We have to sell this one first."

Finally, a neighbor of the man spoke. "Will you take fifty dollars for the painting? That's all I have, but I knew the boy and I liked him, so I'd like to have it."

"Fifty dollars, we have fifty dollars," shouted the auctioneer. "Will anyone go higher?" No one did. "Going once, going twice, gone." And the gavel fell.

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief, thankful that now they could proceed with the "real" auction and get their hands on the masterpieces. But imagine their shock when the auctioneer suddenly declared that the proceedings were over. A loud clamor rose. Stunned disbelief. "What do you mean it's over?" the people shouted. "What about the masterpieces?"

The auctioneer replied, "It's very simple. According to the will, whoever takes the son gets it all."

1 John 5:11-12 says, *"¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."*

In Christ we have the bread of life that has come down from heaven that is God's provision for eternal life and the satisfaction for the hunger of our souls.

In Christ we have the light of the world that dispels the darkness, opens our eyes, and transforms our hearts eternally.

In Christ we have the door, the only entrance to eternal life.

And in Christ we see the Father, and we see Christ as the only way to the Father, and He calls us to trust Him.

For those here who have never met this Jesus, I want you to know that the door is open for you. Jesus says to you, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." If you'd like to talk further about following Christ, I and some of the elders will be up front here immediately after the service available to talk with you.

For those who know Christ, maybe you've allowed your relationship with Him to grow cold. Maybe you need to be reminded once again, of the wonder and splendor of who He is. I pray also that He would renew your vision of Him today and that you would be refreshed and renewed in your spirit and that your love for Him would be rekindled afresh.

Let's pray.