**“I Am” sayings of Jesus**

I want today to focus on Jesus and who he says he is.

Campbell Morgan wrote that “Our joy is in proportion to our trust. Our trust is in proportion to our knowledge of God” (G Campbell Morgan)[[1]](#footnote-1)

We need to go back to the cornerstone of our faith.

Ephesians 2:19-22 *you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

We have spoken a lot over the past months about doing for God, about mission and about praying. But I want to return today to the focus of our faith – that is Jesus.

1 Corinthians 3:11 *No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Christians get opposition from universalists (like Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christadelphians) and monotheists (like Muslim and Jewish religions) because of our recognition of Jesus as part of the godhead of God.

We believe that God the Father, Jesus as God the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God in a concept called Trinity.

The concept of the Trinity is the belief that the one God, described in the Holy Bible, eternally exists in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that these three are one God, co-equal and co-eternal, having precisely the same nature and attributes, and worthy of precisely the same worship, confidence, and obedience. They are each individually detailed in Scripture, all exalted with the same power and holiness of our Creator.

The Nicene Creed

“We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets.”

We do not believe in three Gods. That's a heresy called Tritheism. We do not believe that the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are three "forms" of God—like steam, water, and ice. That’s called Modalism. And we do not believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are "parts" or "pieces" of God. That would imply that Jesus is 1/3rd God, the Father is 1/3rd God, and the Holy Spirit is 1/3rd God. [[2]](#footnote-2)

We believe in the Trinity of God.

Today I want to look at why we can say Jesus is part of the godhead through what Jesus said about himself because that belief is crucial to our faith.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 *we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

So, let’s turn to what Jesus said about himself.

In John 10:30-33 Jesus said *“I and the Father are one.” 31 Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, 32 but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” 33 “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”*

In John 14:9 *Jesus answered Philip: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?*

And the biggest proof of his divinity are the “I AM” statements made by Jesus

In the Old Testament, God revealed His name to Moses: “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14).

Ex 3:13–15 *Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” 15 God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.*

God introduces Himself to Moses with an expression usually translated “I am who I am.” The personal name of God reflected in the tetragrammaton, YHWH. The phrase was meant to convey the eternality, self-existence, and changelessness that belong to God alone.[[3]](#footnote-3) We say that tetragrammaton as Yahweh. In the past we used Jehovah for the same word.

When Yahweh was translated from Hebrew into Greek, the translators used the phrase ego eimi. The pronunciation of "Ego eimi" is ay-MEE.

Thus, in Judaism, “I AM” is unquestionably understood as a name for God.

Whenever Jesus made an “I am” statement in which He claimed attributes of deity, He was identifying Himself as God. And when he did so, he faced the wrath of those hearing it.

This usage is especially prominent in the Gospel of John.

In all of the biblical accounts of Jesus’ “I am” statements, the Greek has a strange form. Usually, “I am” is the translation of the Greek word eimi. But in Jesus’ “I am” sayings, the Greek is in an intensive form: ego eimi. It’s almost as if Jesus were saying, “I, I am.” He used both words—“Egō eimi”—which made His point emphatically: “I am.”.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In using the expression, Jesus is explicitly identifying Himself with Yahweh, asserting His eternality, self-existence, and changelessness, and claiming to bear Yahweh’s presence on Earth.

When He used the term Egō eimi, his opponents recognized in all this talk of Egō eimi the self-identification of the Lord God to Moses in the burning bush, “I am who I am” (Exod. 3:14\*; cf. Isa. 41:4\*; 43:10\*).

John 18:6 records that those who came to arrest Jesus “*drew back and fell to the ground*” when He identified Himself with the words “I am.”

John 18:6 *When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they stepped back and fell to the ground. 7 Again he asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” 8 Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he.*

The word “he” in the phrase “I am he” is an English addition to avoid an awkward ending to the phrase; however, this term is not present in the Greek text. It finishes with I Am.

There are the seven major “I am” statements found in John’s gospel, spoken by Jesus:

• “I am the bread of life” (6:35, 48; see also 6:41, 51); This comes after he had fed the 5000 with bread and they followed him seeking more. By equating Himself with bread, Jesus is saying he is essential for life. Secondly, the life Jesus is referring to is not physical life, but eternal life.

• “I am the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5); This comes right before He heals a man born blind. Jesus not only says He is the light; He proves it. Jesus’ words and actions echo Genesis 1:3, “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

• “I am the door” (10:7, 9); This “I am” statement stresses that no one can enter the kingdom of heaven by any other means than Christ Himself. Jesus’ words in this passage are couched in the imagery of a sheepfold. He is the one and only way to enter the fold. “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” (verse 1, ESV).

• “I am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14); With this “I am” statement, Jesus portrays His great love and care. He is the One who willingly protects His flock even to the point of death (verses 11 and 15). When Jesus called Himself the good shepherd, He unmistakably took for Himself one of God’s titles in the Old Testament: “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1).

• “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25); Jesus made this “I am” statement immediately before raising Lazarus from the dead. Again, we see that Jesus’ teaching was not just empty talk; when He made a claim, He substantiated it with action. He holds “the keys of death and the grave” (Revelation 1:18, NLT). In raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus showed how He can fulfill Yahweh’s promise to ancient Israel: “[God’s] dead shall live; their bodies shall rise” (Isaiah 26:19, ESV). Apart from Jesus, there is neither resurrection nor eternal life.

• “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (14:6); Jesus is not merely one way among many ways to God; He is the only way. Scripture said that “The very essence of [God’s] words is truth” (Psalm 119:160, NLT), and here is Jesus proclaiming that He is the truth—confirming His identity as the Word of God (see John 1:1, 14). And Jesus alone is the source of life; He is the Creator and Sustainer of all life and the Giver of eternal life.

• “I am the true vine” (15:1; see also 15:5).[[5]](#footnote-5) This “I am” statement emphasizes the sustaining power of Christ. We are the branches, and He is the vine. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it is joined in vital union with the vine, only those who are joined to Christ and receive their power from Him produce fruit in the Christian life.

These I am statements are powerful evidence that Jesus was claiming , but today I want to talk about one not in that list, but one which I believe has more impact on who Jesus said he was and therefore more confronting to those who say that Jesus was just a good man or that Jesus was a prophet.

It comes as Jesus responds to a complaint by the Pharisees about the laws of Abraham and their descent from him.

Jesus replied: in John 8:56 *Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” 57 “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”58 “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “****before Abraham was born, I am****!” 59 At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.*

This is a powerful declaration of God’s name, as applied by Jesus to Himself.

When Jesus describes Himself as “I am”, the Jews attempt to stone Him because they interpreted His words as a blasphemous claim to deity.

The verbs Jesus uses are in stark contrast with each other: Abraham was, but I am. There is no doubt that the Jews understood Jesus’ claim to be the eternal God incarnate, because they took up stones to kill Him.

Jesus tells his opponents that Abraham has seen him and they mock him – “how could you be old enough to see our ancestor Abraham, you are only 30 years old!”. He replies, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, Egō eimi” (8:58\*). His opponents recognized the deeper implications of the statement and attempted to stone him for blasphemy (8:59\*).

Later, they will say that they wanted to stone him because, “being a human being, he makes himself God” (10:33\*).

Both implicitly and explicitly throughout the narrative, Jesus identifies himself as “I am”—the self-designation of YHWH in Torah.

This is one of the strongest statements anywhere in the NT of the early Christian belief that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh.[[6]](#footnote-6)

According to one commentator, “there seems little doubt, therefore, that the statement of 8:58 is intended to convey in an extraordinary way such exclusively divine qualities as changelessness and pre-existence” (Guthrie, New Testament Theology).[[7]](#footnote-7)

There is no vagueness in this. The words rendered “was” and “am” are quite different. The first means, “Abraham was brought into being”; the other, “I exist.”

The statement therefore is not that Christ came into existence before Abraham did (as Arians affirm is the meaning), but that He never came into being at all, but existed before Abraham had a being; in other words, existed before creation, or eternally.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The thought conveyed here is not only that the second person of the Trinity always existed (existed from all eternity), but also and very definitely, that his existence transcends time[[9]](#footnote-9)

He identifies that he is God.

If he had said, ‘Before Abraham was, I was’, it would not have been so bad. They could have been charitable and written him off as some kind of loonie. But he did not say that.

He said, ‘I AM.’ He was claiming a continued ever-present existence from before Abraham’s time to that moment. And he identified with God who described himself as ‘I AM’?

What else could Jesus be doing, but laying claim to deity? The Jews did not believe the claim, but considered it a blasphemy—and took up stones …[[10]](#footnote-10)

For me, this particular passage confirms that Jesus is God.

In the words of C S Lewis:

“Jesus [. . .] told people that their sins were forgiven. [. . .] This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin. [. . .] I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.”

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (- Mere Christianity)

This passage is the dividing line. We either write Jesus off or we worship him.

We can have confidence in Jesus as being who he says he is (ego eimi)

I return to the quote I started with: Our joy is in proportion to our trust. Our trust is in proportion to our knowledge of God (G Campbell Morgan)

We can trust Jesus and rejoice.

1. Warren Wiersbe *Be Amazed* 136 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.christianity.com/wiki/god/god-in-three-persons-a-doctrine-we-barely-understand-11634405.html#google\_vignette [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Lexham Bible Dictionary. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sproul, R. C. Who Is Jesus? (Vol. 1, pp. 9–10). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Miller, J. E. (2016). I Am Sayings. In The Lexham Bible Dictionary. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Johnson, L. T., & Penner, T. C The writings of the New Testament: an interpretation (Rev. ed., pp. 542–544). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 306–307. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Vol. 2, p. 145). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. William Hendriksen The Gospel of John 67 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Olyott, S. (2011). What the Bible Teaches about The Trinity (p. 36). EP Books [↑](#footnote-ref-10)