

JESUS - IN HIS OWN WORDS

Many Bible scholars have tried to provide a narrative on who Jesus was during His ministry on earth. To reveal His main characteristics, they have attempted to paint a picture. But nothing can describe Jesus better than His **own words**. By listening to what He says about Himself we can get the most accurate image of who He really is. I am referring to the **“I am”** statements of Jesus, and the absolute truth that they unveil. What Jesus said about Himself is paramount to our faith. Every word documented in the Bible concerning who He said He was, is deliberate and intended to communicate something vitally important to His followers.

To grasp the full significance of what Jesus declared about Himself, we must first understand the Jewish culture and mindset. The Jews of Jesus' time were fiercely monotheistic, they believed that there was only one God, “Yahweh.” As the first of the Ten Commandments says, **“You shall have no other gods besides Me”** (Deuteronomy 5:7). They loathed all other gods, whom they called idols (nothings). The one and only God created everything, and is the only Person in the entire universe worthy of worship. No image or likeness can be made of Him. Anything or anyone else who demanded worship was to be scorned. “Yahweh” was so special, or holy, that His people had to live a very distinct life of separation from anything unholy or impure. God did not share His glory with anyone, and His name, “Yahweh,” is an unlimited name. It can be literally translated **“I AM.”** In an exchange between Moses and God, we discover God's name, ***Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”*** (Exodus 3:13-14). Literally, ***“I am Who I Am and I will Be Who I will Be!”*** What a sovereign and supreme statement!

Now, along comes Jesus, and He starts making claims about Himself that begin with the Greek phrase "εγω ειμι", or "I AM." This statement is nothing less than a claim to be the very God of the Jews, "Yahweh" in human flesh. Nothing could be more audacious, and dangerous, to say in the midst of a fiercely monotheistic people who have been trained to kill those who make false, heretical claims about their One God. This is confirmed by the reactions of the Jewish religious leaders who were most devoted to preserving their faith in the one true God!

Let us now look at the "I AM" statements of Jesus:

- **The human soul's life-sustaining food**

"I AM the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35) The Jews were fiercely angry Him, because He said, ***"I am the bread that came down out of heaven."*** And they were saying, ***"Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, "I have come down out of heaven."***(John 6:42) ***"I AM the bread of life."*** (John 6:48) ***"I AM the living bread that came down out of heaven."*** (John 6:51)

- **The life-giving light of the world**

"I AM the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) ***"While I am in the world, I AM the light of the world."*** (John 9:5) Light represent life and Jesus declares that He is the light that brings forth all life. The Greek word here is "zoe" - the 'God kind' of life. Jesus also said, ***"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."***

- The source of all Salvation

“And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I AM from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM, you shall die in your sins.” (John 8:23-24)

- The Good Shepherd of Israel

“I AM the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” (John 10:11) “I AM the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me.” (John 10:14)

- The Source of Eternal Life

Jesus said to her, “I AM the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and he who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.” (John 11:25-27)

- The Only Way to God

“Truly, truly, I say to you, I AM the door for the sheep....I AM the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (John 10:7-9) Jesus said to him, “I AM the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; but from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” (John 14:6-7)

• The Source of Ongoing Spiritual Life

“I AM the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser.... I AM the vine, and you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:1)

Jesus' Direct Claims to be "I AM".....

- ***“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad.”*** The Jews therefore said to Him, ***“You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”*** Jesus said to them, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.”*** Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. (John 8:56-59)
- ***“Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, “Whom do you seek?”*** They answered Him, ***“Jesus the Nazarene.”*** He said to them, ***“I AM”***. And Judas, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. When therefore He said to them, ***“I AM,”*** they drew back, and fell to the ground. Again therefore He asked them, ***“Whom do you seek?”*** And they said, ***“Jesus the Nazarene.”*** Jesus answered, ***“I told you that I AM; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way.”*** (John 18:5-8)
- ***“But He kept silent, and made no answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”*** And Jesus answered, ***“I AM; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”*** And tearing his clothes, the high priest said, ***“What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the***

blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death." (Mark 14:61-64; Luke 22:67-71)

The occasional statement that Jesus made might be misunderstood. However, when one considers the overwhelming force of the many "**I AM**" statements He made, and adds them all up, one can see that Jesus was claiming something so breathtaking (so unfathomable) that it's hard for us to imagine. I believe that lack of answers to many of life's problems can be put down to a lack of understanding of the great "I AM." When we understand who **HE IS**, we place ourselves in a position to receive the greatest blessings. By listening to Jesus' own words, and accepting that those Words reveal the true nature and divine character of Jesus Christ, we can believe and then receive what we have prayed for.

In this regard, here are some other claims that Jesus made...

- **He Claims to Control the Hosts of Heaven**; God's Angels are "His Angels." ***"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and all who commit lawlessness..."*** (Matthew 13:41) ***"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds."*** (Matthew 16:27)
- **He Claims to be the Lord of Lords**. ***Now while the Pharisees were together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think about the Messiah, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord', saying, 'The Lord said to My Lord, "Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet?" "If***

David calls Him 'Lord', how is He his son?" And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question. (Matthew 22:41-46)

- **He Claims Authority Over the Physical and Spiritual Universe.** ***"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and to anyone whom the Son wills to reveal Him."*** (Matthew 11:27) ***"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I AM with you always, even to the end of the age."*** (Matthew 28:18-20)

Many other verses could have been used under subheadings for "claims Jesus made." But we are left with a dilemma made famous by C.S. Lewis half a century ago. Either Jesus' claims are true, or they are false. If they are false, and He did not know they were false, then He was insane. Asylums are full of people who think they are God but aren't. If His claims were false and He knew they were false, then He was a deceiver on par with the Devil Himself. In this case, more people have been seduced away from the worship of the One true God by Jesus than anyone else in History. That being the case, those who bent every rule to crucify Him illegally were totally justified.

However, there's problem here. Jesus displayed no signs of being either mentally unbalanced or morally evil. In fact, His pure and gentle words have inspired billions people to moral excellence and mental health. So there's only one option left...

Jesus' claims were and are true. And that means, as God, He's entitled to the devotion, worship, faith and obedience by those He's created - you and me! Will you bow your knee and return undeserved love with undivided faith? Will you cease being "yours" and become His? For He is worthy to receive honour and glory and power and might. And He is worthy of also being called "Yahweh" - the great "I AM."

The great "I AM" is with you right now. Ready and willing to do what only the great "I AM" can do. But are you willing to let Him be what only He can BE? Remember what God said to Moses, "I AM what I AM, and I will BE what I will BE.

Jesus wants to BE your healer; He wants to BE your deliverer, He wants to BE your peace; He wants to BE your strength; He wants to BE your prosperity; He wants to BE your great reward. But more than any of these, He wants to BE your lover - the lover of your soul!

Let's love Him for Who HE IS, and allow Him to BE who He wants to BE!