

Jesus' "I Am" Sayings in the Gospel of John

I Am

Seven Powerful Claims of Christ



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I Am

Seven Powerful Claims of Christ

“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

Jesus adopted the most personal name of God from the Hebrew Scriptures to reveal himself as the one who is and will always be: *I am*. Seven times in John’s gospel, Jesus picked up this ancient name that God used to introduce himself to Moses. When Jesus began revealing his identity, he used “I am,” but he also included new meaning with the name: “I am *the bread of life*,” “I am *the light of the world*,” etc. Little by little, Jesus showed that he is everything we have ever longed for and needed.

The Unspeakable Name

When God revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14, God used a form of the Hebrew verb for “to be,” calling himself “I am who I am,” or “I will be who I will be,” or simply “I am.” This Hebrew name is made up of just four consonants in English letters: YHWH. To emphasize God’s holiness when God’s people read the Scriptures, they would substitute a different name for God rather than vocalize the personal name of YHWH. They would say “Adonai,” which means “Lord.” In fact, Jewish scribes who copied the Hebrew Scriptures did not record the vowel sounds of God’s name, just in case someone would unintentionally utter the name correctly.

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Instead, they substituted the vowel sounds from Adonai. For many years, it was thought that the pronunciation was “Jehovah,” but the most up-to-date research indicates it is most likely pronounced “Yahweh.”

HOLINESS

When we say that God is holy, we acknowledge far more than that he is without sin. We are also recognizing that God is separate from us, in the sense that he is not the same as we are. He is not simply like us, only better. Nor is he just the fullest and best expression of all human qualities. He is other than, different from, and far greater than us. Although God is altogether holy, he chooses to be connected with us through the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Bread of Life

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'I will rain down bread from heaven for you.' EXODUS 16:4	"Then Jesus declared, ' I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry.'" JOHN 6:35

The Story

John 6 records two astounding miracles that serve as convincing confirmation of the truth of Jesus' powerful claim: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Firstly, he feeds more than five thousand people by multiplying five loaves of bread and two small fish (John 6:1–15). This miracle mirrors the feeding of the Israelite multitudes with manna as Moses led them from Egypt (Exodus 16). Secondly, Jesus walks on water on the Sea of Galilee, then causes the disciples' boat to arrive safely on the opposite shore through a storm (John 6:16–21). Both miracles demonstrate Jesus' power over the physical world, as well as his care and concern for humanity.

The next day, a large crowd sought out Jesus, but they were more interested in receiving additional loaves of bread from him—and even potentially using him to achieve their own goals of overthrowing Roman rule—than in discovering his unique identity and mission (John 6:26). Jesus wanted the crowds to move beyond just consuming the gifts (the loaves and fish) he offered. He called them to understand his identity as the one who is uniquely connected with and sent from God, and who offers the bread of eternal life, not just perishable bread (John 6:51).

Life Application

We can trust that Jesus will always provide what we need. His power and care for us gives us strength and encouragement to keep following after him.

- † Why are we sometimes more interested in the things Jesus can give us than in *who* he is?
- † What are some ways you can regularly "eat" the bread from heaven in order to experience a full and abundant spiritual life?



Light of the World

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." ISAIAH 9:2	" I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." JOHN 8:12 "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. " JOHN 9:5

The Story

Twice in John's gospel, Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world." The first time is in John 8, right at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. In this festival, all Israel gathered in and around Jerusalem to remember and celebrate how God provided for their ancestors in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.

The temple sat atop a hill, with a commanding view of Jerusalem. Four towers rose above the largest of the temple's courtyards, each topped with a candlestick (menorah) with multiple branches. Each night of the feast, the candlesticks were lit and all Jerusalem, covered in darkness, could look up and see that light. Surrounding this courtyard were twelve brass trumpet-shaped receptacles that emptied into offering boxes. Imagine how the flickering light would have danced and flashed against the gold lampstands and the brass trumpets! People gathered in that evening light, music played, and they danced with joy.

This was the setting for Jesus, when he stood up in the courtyard with the brass trumpets surrounding him and claimed to be the light of the world in the very place where the light of their celebration had just ended (John 7:14; 8:12).

The celebration of light during the Feast of Tabernacles was a reminder of God's presence with the Israelites as he had showed them the way with a pillar of fire (a column of light) that they followed on their journey through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21).

