

## 54. I AM

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When I was growing up in South Korea, we started to learn English from junior high by the teachers who learned their English from the Japanese teachers during the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1909 till 1945. Consequently, my English teacher's pronunciation of the English words were far from the proper ones, because there were plenty of Japanese and Korean accents mingled together. I remember repeating after our English teacher as we pronounced the sentences that were written on the chalkboard: "I am a boy, this is a dog, that is a cat..."

Now you know where I got my horrible broken English grammar and pronunciation. I have an excuse that I came from a foreign country, but I was surprised how many basic grammatical mistakes the Americans, who were born here and learn their English since they were babies, make in everyday conversational English.

For example: "Your" is the second person possessive adjective, used to describe something as belonging to you. "Your" is always followed by a noun, such as, "What is your name?" Normally, people don't have a problem with that. But many people use "your" for "you're". That is where many make grammatical mistakes. "You're" is the contraction of "you are" and is often followed by the present participle, such as "You're welcome." It is NOT "Your welcome." I see this mistake from many, many Americans. And they make fun of my broken English. Guess what, the joke is on them. An English lesson by a foreigner at no extra charge.

As I was preparing this study, I noticed how often Jesus used the words "I AM." Of course, His "I AM" has a lot more meaning than the English lesson I learned long ago.

Jesus used these two words to proclaim that He is the Messiah in the Gospels. The people around the world may not have understood what He meant, but these ancient Jewish religious leaders understood it precisely and hated Him all the more. Let's step into the Women's Court where Jesus previously extended His mercy and forgiveness to the woman who was caught in adultery.

### A. I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

*John 8:12-16 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." 13 The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." 14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. 15 You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. 16 And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me.*

Our Lord Jesus claimed that He is the Light of the world. Light and darkness are recurring themes in John's Gospel. God is light while Satan is "the power of darkness". People love either the light or the darkness, and this love controls their actions and their eternal destinations.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, there was a great ceremony called the "Illumination of the Temple," which involved the lighting ritual of four golden oil-fed lamps in the

Court of Women. These lamps were huge menorahs which were 75 feet high that is equivalent to a 6 story building, lighted in the Temple at night to remind the people of the pillar of fire that had guided Israel in their ancestors' wilderness journey during the time of Exodus. All night long the lights shone their brilliance, it is said, illuminating the entire city. Now, imagine the impact of the words said by Jesus in the Temple courtyard when He announced, "*I am the Light of the world,*" while the image of the lights from the gigantic menorahs were still vivid in the hearts of the Jewish people.

The Jewish religious leaders clearly understood that Jesus claimed to be God here. The word "Light", according to Jewish terminology and Scripture, was a title that was reserved for One Person alone – God. So when Jesus claimed to be the Light of the world, these Bible eggheads knew what He meant and hated Him all the more.

*Psalm 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?*  
*Isaiah 60:19, Job 29:3, Micah 7:8*

In this v13, the Pharisees were quoting our Lord's own words from John 5:31. But He quickly refuted their argument. One of the key words in this section is 'witness'; it is used 7 times. Jesus made it clear that their witness was not dependable, because their judgment was faulty. They judged on the basis of externals only with mere human judgment, but He judged on the basis of spiritual knowledge, according to the intention of the individual's heart, and truth. The way they judged the woman who was caught in adultery proved that they did not understand the Law and they had twisted sinful hearts.

## **B. WHO IS YOUR FATHER?**

*John 8:17-20 It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." 19 Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also." 20 These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.*

Here we find these religious and the OT law experts started to sling personal slurs against Jesus. They intended this as a deeply cutting insult to Jesus. They refer to His virgin birth, and to the rumors that it was not a miraculous conception, but an illicit one.

Jesus never really answered their question, "*Where is Your Father?*" The word 'father' is used 21 times in this chapter, so Jesus did not avoid the issue, but faced it straight ahead. He knew that their "father" was not God, but the devil. These men were very religious, yet they were the children of the devil.

Whenever Jesus taught a spiritual truth, His listeners interpreted it in a material or physical way. The light of God was unable to penetrate the darkness of their minds because they chose to hide inside of their spiritual dungeon so that they didn't have to hear the truth.

You'd think that blind sinners would welcome the light, but such is not always the case. The coming of the true light brought conflicts as the powers of darkness opposed it. They'd rather make fun of the Gospel and the truth of God in the Bible since they choose not to comprehend by their own choice.

How tragic that these experts in the Law did not even know their own Messiah as He stood before them! They claimed to know the Law of God, but they did not know the God of the Law. They did not have His Word abiding in their hearts, nor did they experience His love. They did not know the Father, and therefore did not know the Son.

### C. ANOTHER "I AM"

*John 8:21-24 Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." 22 So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?" 23 And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*

Jesus claimed that He belonged to a totally different world from the Jewish religious rulers. He had come from the presence of God the Father, and He explained to them that only by faith could they attain access to heaven through Him.

An insurmountable, yet simple barrier separated them – unbelief. The attitude of unbelief is not only unwillingness to accept a statement of fact, but also it is resistance to the revelation and truth of God in Christ. Their unbelief would only lead them to eternal damnation in hell as it happens to any other unbeliever.

*2 Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

Thomas Paine, very influential as an intellectual, yet an atheist in early America, wrote many books, especially his most famous one, "The Age of Reason". On his deathbed, he said, "I would give the world if I had them that The Age of Reason had not been published. Oh, Lord, help me. Christ, help me. Oh, God, what have I done to suffer so much? But there is no God. If there should be, what will become of me hereafter? Stay with me for God's sake. Send even a child to stay with me for it is hell to be alone. If ever the devil had an agent, I have been that one."

In v24, again Jesus claimed to be "God Himself". Many people say, "Jesus had never claimed to be God." Obviously, that person does not know anything about the Word of God. Jesus claimed it in many places in the Bible. V24 is one of them.

*John 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*

Did you notice the italicized word 'He' in this verse? What does it mean? It means that this word 'He' is not in the original Greek manuscript, but it was added by the editor of your Bible publishing company for your understanding. So if you take out 'He', what do you see? It reads:

*John 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that 'I am', you will die in your sins."*

When I taught you guys about Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4, I mentioned this. But for the sake of those who skipped the church service for whatever reasons, let's go over it again.

*John 4:26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."*

When Moses found the burning bush in the wilderness, he received an assignment from the Lord to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses was not wild about that idea, because he was quite content with his mundane boring shepherd job by now. So he came up with one lame excuse after another to bail out on God. His effort was futile against the One who covered all of his escape routes. So Moses finally gave in and asked the Lord for His name.

*Exodus 3:13-14 Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

That is it. One of God's many names is "I am," not 'I was,' nor 'I will be'. In Greek, it is "ego eimi." God's 'I am' shows that He is above our time limit. Here we find Jesus using this very name again as the Lord God used when He answered Moses' question and the Jewish religious rulers understood what He meant.

#### **D. WHO ARE YOU?**

*John 8:25-30 Then they said to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. 26 I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him." 27 They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. 28 Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." 30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.*

It seems incredible and ridiculous that these religious "experts" should ask Jesus, "Who are You?" The Lord already had given them every evidence that He is the Son of God, yet they had deliberately rejected every one of them. Our Lord's reply can be expressed, "I am exactly what I said!" In other words, "Why should I give you new proof, when you have not honestly considered the witnesses and evidences I have already given?"

Jesus emphasizes the point again, that His words are from God the Father. So, if the Pharisees have a hard time with Jesus, they really have a hard time with God the Father.

At the same time Jesus shows us His complete submissiveness to the Father here as well as v28 and 29. After all, Jesus is God Himself, but He only spoke what He heard from the Father, nothing else.

From v28, Jesus spoke about His own death, when He would be "lifted up" on the cross. The word translated "lifted up" has a dual meaning: "lifted up in crucifixion," and "lifted up in exaltation and glorification." Jesus often combined the two, because He saw His crucifixion in terms of glory and not just suffering.

*John 17:1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,*

Jesus never became God, nor did He ever cease to be God. His deity – which means His divine Lordship, the fact that He was God – was pre-Creation, pre-human,

pre-earthly, pre-Bethlehem, and pre-Mary. He was God before He was born on earth, and He remained God after He became a man.

Jesus was completely submissive to the Father so that we can follow His example. Submission to God means following His commands. Many believers claim that they are submissive to God. But in reality, they are only submissive to Him in the areas they like, but not in the area where they want their way. Guess what? We don't pick and choose. Either you are submissive to Him in every area of your life, or you aren't, no exception.

*John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

### **E. APPLICATIONS**

1) People love either the Light (Jesus) or the darkness (satan), and this love controls their actions and their eternal destinations. Choose your love and eternal destination carefully.

2) To "follow" the Lord Jesus means to believe on Him, to trust Him; and the results are life and light for the believer. The unbelievers are walking in darkness because they love darkness.