

I AM THAT I AM

- A. Introduction: We are considering who Jesus is and why He came into this world, according to the Bible, as part of a discussion of the importance of reading the Bible (especially the New Testament) systematically.
1. To read systematically means to read each book from start to finish over and over until you get familiar with it. Understanding comes with familiarity and familiarity comes with regular, repeated reading.
 - a. The Bible is a collection of 66 books and letters meant to be read from beginning to end. The Bible was not written in chapters and verses. The chapter and verse numbers were added centuries after the New Testament was completed to serve as reference points.
 - b. Because Christians tend to read random verses rather than entire books, they never get the context of individual verses. This leaves them vulnerable to misunderstanding particular verses and to accepting poor or erroneous teachings that that verses out of their original context.
 1. It has always been important to learn how to rightly divide or properly interpret Scripture, but never more so than now. Jesus warned that before His second coming false christs and false prophets with false gospels will arise and lead many astray. II Tim 2:15; Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
 2. Our protection against deception is accurate knowledge from the only fully reliable source of Truth—the written Word of God (the Bible) which reveals the Living Word of God, (Jesus).
 2. In this series we're emphasizing the fact that the New Testament was written by eyewitnesses of Jesus—men who saw Him die and then saw Him alive again. What they saw changed them forever. They wrote—not to produce a religious book—but to tell the world what they saw and heard.
 - a. Jesus was born into the Jewish people group, monotheist people who knew that there is only one God—Jehovah—the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We are considering how first century Jews became convinced that Jesus is that God.
 - b. John (an original apostle of Jesus) wrote his gospel later than the other writers (AD 80-90). By that time false teachers were denying the deity of Jesus and His incarnation. John wrote his book to clearly show that Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God, in the hope that men and women will believe on Jesus (John 20:30-31). We have more to say about this in tonight's lesson.
- B. To understand who Jesus is and why He came to earth we must start with the big picture or God's overall plan for mankind.
1. Almighty God desires a family. He created human being to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him. He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18
 - a. However, both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin, beginning with the first man Adam. Because Adam was the head (first) of the human race and earth's first steward, his act of disobedience affected both the race resident in him and the earth itself.
 1. Human nature was altered and men and women became sinners by nature, disqualified for God's family and cut off from God. The earth itself was infused with a curse of corruption and death. Rom 5:19; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 8:20; etc.
 2. Rom 5:12—When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die, for all sinned (TLB).
 - b. God devised a plan to reclaim His family and the family home through Jesus. This plan is called redemption. Two thousand years ago Jesus (or the Word, as John calls Him) took on a full human nature in the womb of a virgin named Mary and was born into this world. Luke 1:31-32
 1. Jesus came into this world to die for sin. At the Cross He took on Himself the punishment due the human race for sin and satisfied Divine justice on our behalf. Heb 2:14-15; I John 4:9-10
 2. His death and resurrection opened the way for men and women to be transformed from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. John 1:12-13

- c. Jesus will come again to cleanse the earth of all sin, corruption, and death and restore this planet to a fit forever home for God and His family in what the Bible calls the new earth. Rev 21-22
 - 1. Earth won't be destroyed, it will be renewed and restored and life on earth will finally be all that God intended. Paul, an eyewitness of Jesus wrote: This world in its present form is passing away (I Cor 7:31, NIV), Why? Because it isn't the way it's supposed to be.
 - 2. Peter, another eyewitness said: (Jesus) must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his prophets (Acts 3:21, NLT).
- 2. When God created Adam and Eve He gave them one specific command: Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (lessons for another day). Suffice it to say that by choosing to eat from that tree, Adam chose independence from God, with all the consequences of that choice.
 - a. Gen 2:17—God warned Adam that the consequence would be death. The original language says in dying you will die: Because you are cut off from God you continue in a dying state until you die.
 - 1. The immediate effect of sin was a breach in relationship between God and man. Adam and Eve were ashamed and hid from God. They could no longer live with God in the beautiful garden He made for them. Gen 3:7-8; Gen 3:23
 - 2. The earth began to bring forth thorns and thistles and work became toilsome. Then, 930 years later, Adam's body died and returned to the dust from which it came. Gen 3:17-19; Gen 4:5
 - b. Gen 3:15—When the family went into the pigpen of sin and death, God immediately began to reveal His plan to undo the damage, with the promise of the coming Seed (Jesus) of the woman (Mary).
 - 1. Gen 3:21—The first death occurred when God made coats of animal skins to cover Adam and Eve, picturing what will be needed to deliver the family from death—the death of an innocent. Animal blood would cover sin until the ultimate sacrifice (the Lamb of God) could remove it.
 - 2. Gen 5:1—God inspired men to begin to keep written records as He progressively revealed increasing aspects of His plan of redemption until the full revelation in Jesus. The genealogy listed in Gen 5:1-32 (Adam to Noah) doesn't seem important. But when we examine Jesus' genealogy, we see that He came through the line recorded here. Luke 3:36-38
 - c. In Gen 12:1-3 God identified the people group through whom the promised Seed will come, the descendants of Abraham, a descendant of Adam and Seth through Noah's son Shem. God led Abraham to the land of Canaan (present day Israel), the place where the Redeemer will be born.
 - 1. The Old Testament is primarily the history of Abraham's descendants. It is a record of real people who interacted with God as He worked in their lives and advanced His plan for a family.
 - 2. Although the Old Testament is a record of real people and events (many of which are verifiable through secular records and archeological finds), it also has prophecies about the coming Seed. And many events and people picture or foreshadow certain aspects of God's unfolding plan.
 - d. For example, 200 years after Abraham arrived in Canaan, his descendants (75 in all) went to Egypt, where they were eventually enslaved. Abraham's offspring remained in Egypt for 400 years.
 - 1. God eventually delivered Abraham's descendants from Egyptian bondage under the leadership of a man named Moses. Their deliverance from Egypt is called redemption. Ex 6:6; Ex 15:13
 - 2. The night before they left Egypt, God instructed them to put the blood of a slain lamb on their doorposts to protect them from judgment. This lamb pictured Jesus, the ultimate Passover Lamb, whose blood would deliver men from judgment for sin. Ex 13
- C. Last week we talked about how Jesus was interactive with His people in the Old Testament—Preincarnate Jesus (the Word) before He took on a human nature. Consider more information about Preincarnate Jesus.
 - 1. The Word did not take the name Jesus until He was born into this world (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:31). In the Old Testament He is most often referred to as the Angel of the Lord or the Angel of Yaweh, or Jehovah.
 - a. The Angel of the Lord is not a created being. In these appearances He is identified as God. The

Hebrew word translated angel means messenger or one who is sent. That is an appropriate title because the New Testament tells us that God sent Jesus into this world. I John 4:9-10; I John 4:14

b. We said last week that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Ex 3:1-6

The Angel is clearly identified as the Lord, as God. This Being told Moses: I am the God of your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and you will lead my people out of Egypt. Ex 3:9-10

1. Ex 3:13-15—Moses asked God, when my people want to know your name, what shall I say? The Lord answered: Tell them I Am that I Am has sent you. This is my name forever.

2. I Am is from a Hebrew word that means to exist or to be. (The name Yahweh or Jehovah comes from this verb.) I Am means the Self-Existent One or Eternal—underived existence.

3. John informs us in his gospel that Jesus applied the name I Am to Himself which enraged the Jews. They took up stones to kill Him for blasphemy—He was claiming to be God. John 8:58

c. The Angel of the Lord not only commissioned Moses, He also led the Israelites to and through the Red Sea, and then back to Canaan. Consider these points.

1. Ex 13:20-22—When Pharaoh (the Egyptian King) let Israel leave Egypt and they began the journey back to Canaan, the Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire.

2. When Israel reached the Red Sea, the Lord parted the waters, they walked through on dry ground, and the Egyptian army was destroyed. The Lord who helped them at the Red Sea is identified as the Angel of the Lord. Ex 14:19-20; 30-31

A. I Cor 10:1-4—The New Testament makes it clear that this was Preincarnate Jesus. Paul (an eyewitness of Jesus), referring to the generation of Israelites delivered from Egyptian bondage wrote that the Rock that went with them was Christ.

B. I Cor 10:9—Paul pointed out that through their behavior on the journey back to Canaan they tempted Christ. How was that possible? He (the Angel of the Lord) was with them.

2. The eyewitnesses didn't accept a new or different God. They came to believe that Jesus is God because they recognized Him as the visible manifestation of God, Old Testament and New Testament. Col 1:15

a. Isa 6:1-4—Isaiah the prophet reported that he saw the Lord. John (an eyewitness of Jesus) reports in his gospel that Isaiah saw Jesus (Preincarnate Jesus).

1. John 12:37-41—John stated that despite the miracles Jesus did, many did not believe on Him, in fulfillment of what Isaiah wrote (lessons for another day).

2. Note what John wrote about Isaiah's prophecy: Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him (John 12:41, ESV). The context makes it clear that he and his is Jesus.

b. Jesus is God's clearest revelation or expression of Himself to mankind. Through Jesus the New Testament eyewitnesses learned that God's plan of redemption (His plan for a family) was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the final sacrifice for sin.

3. Remember that John wrote his gospel to emphasize the fact that Jesus is God. In his gospel John quotes Jesus referring to Himself as I Am twenty three times (John 4:26; 6:20,35,41,48,51; 8:12,18,24,28,58; 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6;15:1,5; 18:5,6,8).

a. In some English the phrase I Am is followed with the word he. However, the word he is italicized because it is not present in the original Greek text.

1. For example, when Jesus interacted with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, in the context of the coming Messiah, Jesus said: I am *he* (John 4:26, KJV).

2. The *he* was added by translators to try to make the phrase less awkward in English. But, the translation loses some of the impact of Jesus' statement: I Am that I Am. I Am God.

b. John recorded seven times where Jesus joined the statement I Am with metaphors that express His redemptive relationship with the world.

1. I Am the Bread of life (6:35); the Light of the Word (8:12); the Door of the Sheep (10:7-9); the Good Shepherd (10:11-14); the Resurrection and the Life (11:25); the Way, the Truth, and the

Life (14:6); I am the True Vine (15:1-5).

2. The Lord did the same thing in the Old Testament where we see His redemptive name joined to titles that express His relationship to His people.

A. Jehovah Jireh (the Lord will Provide, Gen 22:14); Jehovah Rapha (the Lord our Healer, Ex 15:26); Jehovah Nissi (the Lord our Banner, Ex 17:15); Jehovah Shalom (the Lord our Peace, Judges 6:24); Jehovah Raah (the Lord our Shepherd, Ps 23:1); Jehovah Tsidkenu (the Lord our Righteousness, Jer 23:6); Jehovah Shammah (the Lord is Here, Eze 48:35).

B. This is a subject for another day, but Jesus, through His death, burial, and resurrection fulfilled and fulfills every one of these names for those who trust in Him.

c. Consider two more examples from John's gospel where Jesus claimed to be I Am that I Am.

1. John 18:3-6—The night before His crucifixion, when officers came from the priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus, they said that they were seeking Jesus. Jesus responded: I AM.

A. When He spoke those words all the men fell backwards, to the ground (v5-6. Standing before these men was the great I AM in human flesh.

B. These men had no power over Him. Jesus willingly surrendered to what lay ahead—His death on the Cross which would accomplish the salvation of the world. John 3:16

2. John 8:24—In one of His many encounters with unbelieving Jews and their leaders Jesus said: Unless you believe that I Am you will die in your sins. John wrote his gospel so that men and women would believe that Jesus is God and have life through His name (John 20:30-31).

D. Conclusion: We have more to say next week, but consider these points as we close this lesson.

1. Jesus came to earth the first time to die for sin and open the way for men and women to become sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. He will come again to complete God's plan of redemption by restoring the family home (this earth). Jesus will establish the visible kingdom of God on earth and God and His family will live here forever—life as it was always meant to be (many lessons for another day).

2. The point for right now is that often times, recognizing a false teaching or a false christ is as simple as realizing that what is being taught is inconsistent with God's overall plan for His family.

a. When people say that Jesus was a great moral teacher and philosopher, their statement overlooks the fact that His number one claim was that He is God. If He's not God, then He is a lunatic.

b. When people say that previously hidden manuscripts tell us that Jesus got married and raised a family their statement completely contradicts the eyewitness testimony about Jesus (not to mention all the Old Testament prophecies and pictures about who Jesus is and why He came).

c. When people say that He came to teach us how to get along with each other and make this world a better place, their statement overlooks the fact there is a root, spiritual problem in the human race and the earth—a curse of corruption and death that can't be overcome by will power.

1. It requires supernatural transformation by the power of God (lessons for another day). Jesus didn't come to make this world a better place. He came to die for sin so the family and the family home can be restored to their created purpose.

2. He will come back and release the very elements that make up the physical world from the curse of corruption and death to which it was subjected when Adam sinned (II Pet 3:10-12, lessons for another day). This world in its present form is passing away (I Cor 7:31). It will be renewed and restored to a fit forever home for God and His family (Rev 21-22).

3. If ever there was a time to become familiar with Jesus as He is revealed in the New Testament, it's now. Much more next week!