

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

Before Abraham Was, I Am

John 8:31-59

Introduction

Today we come to the most confrontational and challenging of Jesus’s “I Am” sayings. It was so controversial that the Jewish crowd picked up stones to throw at Jesus, because they thought he was blaspheming. The deeper we go into these statements, the more we ourselves are confronted with the question, “Is Jesus just something that I add onto my life? Or, is he someone that I build my whole life around?” Who Jesus *actually* is makes all the difference in who Jesus *should be* to you and me.

Read John 8:31-59.

- 1: **What do you think it means to be enslaved? What are some things that you might be “enslaved” by? (Think about circumstances you feel trapped by, or things you wish you didn’t care so much about.)**

- 2: **What does Jesus say is true for everyone who commits sin? (v. 34)**

- 3: **Name one sin in your life that you feel has some level of mastery over you.**

- 4: **What is the secret to finding true freedom from slavery to sin? (vv. 31–32, 36)**

- 5: **How do the Jewish people react to Jesus’s statement, “the truth will set you free”? (v. 33) What about their history makes this statement a bit ironic?**

- 6: **In verses 37–47, Jesus discusses the “Spiritual Paternity” of his Jewish audience. Who do the Jews claim as their father? Who does Jesus say their father actually is?**

- 7: **How does their *real* spiritual paternity show itself? (vv. 44, 47)**

- 8: **Jesus brings this conversation to a head in verse 56–59. What does he say about himself there? How do the Jews respond?**

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

Read Exodus 3:1-15.

9: Who was Moses talking to in the burning bush? (Ex. 3:2–4)

10: How did this figure identify himself? (3:6; 13–15)

11: What does the name “I AM” reveal about God’s nature and character?

12: In light of Exodus 3, what is Jesus saying about himself in John 8:58? Who is he saying that he is?

13: In the same vein, how does this help us understand the Jews’ response to Jesus? (John 8:59)

14: What comfort is there in believing that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament and the Angel of the Lord who appeared in the burning bush?

Closing Thoughts

In Matthew 7:21 Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven...” In that place, Jesus makes clear that many people claim to know him, but at the end of the day, they don’t care to do his will. They add Jesus on as a spiritual perk to their religious lives, but they aren’t really interested in who he is or what he has done. In the same way, Jesus makes clear that not everyone who identifies as a person of faith, or a church member, or a Christian has that identity *spiritually*. Here were Jewish people, followers of Jesus, schooled in their Bibles, whom Jesus called spawn of Satan. That thought should terrify us.

It should terrify us because we really aren’t all that different from them. We are sinners, too, just like them. Like them we are slaves of our sin. As we saw in the last lesson, we are blind to our sin. We are deaf to the truth. We would rather pretend that we are basically good people than admit to the truth. Masks are easier to wear than vulnerability. Lies feel safer than honesty.

There is only one solution to the problem of our slavery to sin and blindness to the truth. Jesus must deliver us from this slavery and give us the light of his truth. Only in knowing the truth can we find freedom. Only in following Jesus can we make this *exodus* from our slavery to sin and the devil. But the great news is, we aren’t the first people Jesus has had to deliver from slavery. He is *The Angel of the LORD* who delivered the Israelites from slavery, too. He is a miracle-worker, a promise-keeper, a light in the darkness. This is who Jesus is.