

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter One - Why Did Jesus Come?

From Eden to Redemption

Primary Scripture: Genesis 1-3; Exodus 3:1-15; John 1:1-18; John 3:16-17; Romans 3:21-26

Objectives

- See and understand God's original design for humanity.
- Acknowledge the entrance of sin into creation.
- Understand why separation from God required divine intervention.
- Trace the theme of redemption from Genesis through the Gospel of John.
- Recognize Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's eternal plan of redemption.
- See the foundation laid for Jesus later identifying Himself as "I AM."

Introduction

Every meaningful story begins with a question. The central question of this study is not simply, "Who is Jesus?" It's "Why did Jesus come?"

Many believers answer immediately, "Jesus came to die for our sins." Yes! Praise God, that answer is wonderfully true.

Yet Scripture presents a far larger story.

Jesus did not arrive merely because humanity needed forgiveness. He came because God desired restoration.

The Bible opens with fellowship. The Bible ends with fellowship. Between Genesis and Revelation God's unwavering pursuit of His people is recorded as His Story...and history.

- The cross was never God's final objective. Relationship was.
- The resurrection was never simply proof of victory.
- It was the beginning of restored life through reconciliation.

This study begins where Scripture begins, not in Bethlehem, but in Eden.

God's Original Design

Genesis introduces God as Creator. He speaks, and creation responds.

Light appears. Waters separate. Dry ground emerges. Life flourishes. After each creative act, Scripture records: "God saw that it was good."

Creation was not random. Neither was humanity. Genesis 1:26-27 declares: "*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'*"

Humanity alone bears God's image. This means every person possesses inherent dignity, purpose, and the capacity for relationship with the Creator. Adam and Eve were not merely inhabitants of Eden. They were called to reflect God's character, exercise faithful stewardship over creation, and enjoy unhindered fellowship with Him.

Nothing separated humanity from God. No shame. No guilt. No sacrifice. No death. No temple veil. No mediator. God walked with His Image-bearers in intimate fellowship. This is the Bible's

first picture of worship. Before there was music, there was communion. Before there were sacrifices, there was fellowship. Before there were priests, there was unhindered access. Relationship preceded ritual. Presence preceded ceremony.

This foundational truth shapes every page that follows in Scripture.

Adam and Eve, like each of us today, were created to be Image bearers. They were created in the very three-part structure of mind, flesh, and spirit to reflect the Identity of God in His Trinity.

Adam and Eve, like each of us, were created for covenant relationship with God. The invitation originates entirely with Him - an act of grace from the God who already knows every heart, mind, and spirit. In His omniscience, God does not invite us in order to discover how we will respond; rather, knowing us fully, He graciously gives us the genuine opportunity to receive His invitation, trust Him, and live in covenant with Him - or to reject Him and choose life apart from Him.

Their purpose was not simply to tend a garden and steward creation. What they were assigned to do was not who they were. Their purpose was much higher, much more divine in relationship to God.

The Entrance of Sin

Genesis 3:1 records one of history's most consequential moments.

The serpent questioned God's word: "*Did God really say...?*"

The temptation was not merely to eat forbidden fruit. It was an invitation to redefine truth apart from God's revelation. Adam and Eve chose autonomy over trust.

Their rebellion introduced consequences that Scripture traces throughout human history.

Among them were:

- Separation from God.
- Spiritual death.
- Physical mortality.
- Shame.
- Broken relationships.
- Toil.
- Corruption throughout creation.

Sin did more than break a rule. It fractured a relationship.

The prophet Isaiah later declared this reality: "*Your iniquities have separated you from your God.*" (Isaiah 59:2) Our sin today separates just as all sin separates us from the Holy, Sovereign God.

Humanity could no longer enjoy unrestricted fellowship with the Holy One. Yet even in judgment, God revealed mercy. Genesis 3:21 records: "*The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.*" The first death recorded in Scripture was not Adam's. An innocent life was required so guilty people could be covered.

The blood covered their sin. The animal sins covered their shame.

Many Christian theologians see the first biblical anticipation of substitutionary atonement - the pattern that reached its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

The story of redemption began almost immediately after humanity's fall.

God's response to sin was not abandonment. God responded with promise not His full punishment. His promise is His covenant. Genesis 3:15 announces that the offspring of the woman would ultimately crush the serpent's head.

Often called the *Protoevangelium* ("the first gospel"), this promise introduces the biblical expectation of a coming Redeemer who would defeat evil and restore what had been lost.

Every covenant, sacrifice, prophet, priest, and king that follows points toward the fulfillment of that promise.

God's Responds with Covenant

From the opening chapters of Genesis onward, Scripture unfolds through a series of covenants. These covenants are not isolated agreements; together they reveal God's ongoing plan to restore humanity in relationship to Himself. These covenants prove that redemption was never an afterthought; instead, God's eternal purpose was, is, and will forevermore be redemption for restoration of fellowship.

The biblical covenants progressively answer one question: How will a holy God dwell once again with sinful people?

Why Blood?

One question often troubles thoughtful readers of Scripture: Why did blood become necessary to access God?

The answer begins in Genesis and develops throughout the Law.

Leviticus 17:11 explains: "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls.*"

Blood represented life. Because sin brings death (Romans 6:23), atonement required the giving of life.

Throughout Israel's sacrificial system, innocent animals died in place of guilty worshipers. These sacrifices accomplished several purposes.

- They reminded Israel that sin is serious.
- They demonstrated God's mercy.
- They pointed beyond themselves.

The writer of Hebrews makes this clear: "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4).

The sacrifices were never the destination. They were signposts directing God's people toward the coming Messiah.

1 THE ADAMIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: Genesis 1:26–31; 2:15–17; 3:14–24



Although the word covenant is not explicitly used in Genesis 1–3, passages such as Hosea 6:7 suggest that Adam stood in a covenant relationship with God.

Within this covenant, humanity received:

- Dominion over creation
- Meaningful work
- Fellowship with God
- Moral responsibility
- One prohibition: not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When Adam disobeyed, covenant fellowship was broken. Yet judgment was accompanied by grace. God clothed Adam and Eve, promised a coming Redeemer (Genesis 3:15), and preserved humanity rather than destroying it.

THE PATTERN BEGINS HERE:



This rhythm appears throughout Scripture and reaches its fulfillment in Christ.

2 THE NOAHIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: Genesis 6–9



Human wickedness increased until "every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).



Judgment came through the Flood.



Yet God's covenant faithfulness continued. He preserved Noah and his family and established a covenant promising never again to destroy the earth by flood.



The rainbow became its sign.



This covenant reminds us that although God judges sin, He also preserves creation because His redemptive purposes are still unfolding. The coming Messiah would arise within the preserved human family.

GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

ONE STORY.
ONE REDEEMER.
ONE PURPOSE.

3 THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: Genesis 12; 15; 17; 22



With Abraham the story narrows. Rather than addressing humanity generally, God chooses one family through whom blessing will come to every nation.

God promises Abraham:

- A people
- A land
- A covenant relationship
- Worldwide blessing



Genesis 12:3 declares: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Paul later identifies this promise as anticipating the Gospel itself (Galatians 3:8).



The covenant with Abraham shifts the biblical narrative from merely restoring individuals to creating a redeemed people through whom God's salvation would extend to the nations.

THE MOSAIC & DAVIDIC COVENANTS

THE MOSAIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: Exodus 19–24



Israel's deliverance from Egypt was not the end of redemption. It was the beginning of covenant formation.



At Mount Sinai, God declares: "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:6)



The Law did not provide salvation. Rather, it revealed God's holiness, exposed humanity's sinfulness, and instructed Israel how to live as His covenant people.



The Tabernacle became the visible symbol of God's dwelling among His people.



YET ONE REALITY REMAINED UNMISTAKABLE: Access to God's presence was restricted.

- Only priests entered the Holy Place.
- Only the high priest entered the Holy of Holies.
- Only once each year.
- Only with sacrificial blood.



The covenant established the expectation that God's ultimate answer would not simply be another prophet or priest. It would be a King.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89



God promised David that his throne would endure forever.



This covenant looked beyond David to an eternal King.



The prophets repeatedly returned to this promise.



Isaiah foresaw a child whose government would never end (Isaiah 9:6–7).



Jeremiah anticipated a righteous Branch from David's line (Jeremiah 23:5–6).



Ezekiel described one Shepherd who would rule God's people forever (Ezekiel 34:23–24).

Old Testament Covenant Eras

The Longing of the Old Testament or Old Covenant

By the close of the Old Testament and hundreds of years of covenant eras, Israel possessed:

- God's promises.
- God's Law.
- God's prophets.
- God's priests.
- God's kings.
- God's Temple.

Still, fellowship remained incomplete. The shedding of animals' blood never fully satisfied God's Holy Presence's requirement to remove sin and sin's effects permanently.

The prophets continued speaking of a greater covenant. Jeremiah promised a New Covenant written upon the heart (Jeremiah 31:31–34). Ezekiel anticipated a new spirit and a new heart (Ezekiel 36:25–27). Isaiah even described the suffering Servant who would bear the sins of many (Isaiah 53). Malachi ended with expectation rather than fulfillment. So, the Old Testament concluded with hope and the unfilled role, or Role of the Lamb of God.

Israel still awaited the One who would accomplish what sacrifices, kings, prophets, and priests could only foreshadow. For four hundred years, the prophetic silence settled over Israel. Yet heaven still echoed with God's promise.

When John opens his Gospel with the words, "*In the beginning was the Word...*" John intentionally takes the reader back to Genesis.

The God who created the world had now entered it. The Creator had come to restore His Own creation. The covenant story was about to reach the decisive moment of God's manuscript.

And it is at this point that Jesus would begin revealing Himself using words that echoed the voice from the burning bush:

"I AM."

The One who spoke to Moses would now speak again - not from flames upon a mountain, above the blood spattered and crusted Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle, but in flesh among His people.

Reflection - What do you see in your life?

Take a moment to consider God as the Covenant Maker and Keeper. It's His very Nature that gives us assurance in our faith, our hopes, and our eternity. Have you entered into that covenant with Him? Is your eternity secured by God's covenant, not your own reasoning, efforts, and strength?

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter Two - The Great I AM Revealed

The Burning Bush and the Revelation of God's Name

Primary Biblical Text : Exodus 2:23 - 3:1–22

Objectives

- Understand the historical setting of Israel's bondage in Egypt.
- Explain why God revealed His personal name to Moses.
- Understand the Hebrew phrase **אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה** (*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*).
- Distinguish between Ehyeh and YHWH.
- Recognize why Jesus' "I AM" statements created such controversy.
- Appreciate how God's revealed name shapes worship, faith, obedience, and identity.

What's in a Name?

Every relationship begins with an introduction. Throughout Scripture, names matter. A name often reveals identity, purpose, authority, and character. And identity is a priority of God.

- Abram becomes Abraham.
- Jacob becomes Israel.
- Simon becomes Peter.
- Saul becomes Paul.

Yet no name in Scripture carries greater significance than the name by which God reveals Himself as recorded in Exodus 3. In one of the most sacred moments in biblical history, God chose to reveal His covenant name.

This revelation would shape every generation of Israel and ultimately prepare the world for Jesus' declaration: "*Before Abraham was, I AM*" (John 8:58).

Israel's Four Hundred Years of Waiting for this Burning Bush

The story does not begin at Horeb, the mountain of God (Exodus 3:1). It begins over four centuries earlier. Joseph had died. The generation that remembered him disappeared. Exodus opens with sobering words: "*Now there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph*" (Exodus 1:8).

Israel's favor became oppression. The descendants of Abraham multiplied just as God had promised. Ironically, the fulfillment of God's promise frightened Pharaoh. His fear led to Hebrew slavery. Slavery led to oppression. Oppression led to cries for deliverance.

Exodus 2:23-25 provides one of the Bible's most comforting descriptions of God's covenant faithfulness: The Israelites groaned because of their difficult labor and oppression, and they cried out...God heard...God remembered His covenant...God saw...God knew.

God is no distant divine being. His desire for relationship in addition to His nature as the Covenant God kept His attention on His people of ancient days and today:

- God hears.

- God remembers.
- God sees.
- God knows.

God had never forgotten Israel. Instead, Scripture communicates in covenant language revealing Himself as the same God who entered covenant with Abraham and was now acting according to His promises. The deliverance of Israel would become the defining act of redemption in the Old Testament. Yet it would also become a shadow pointing toward a greater Exodus still to come.

Moses in the Wilderness

Forty years before the burning bush, Moses wrongfully took matters into his own hands. Having been raised in the King of Egypt's house as his daughter's son, he knew his own story of rescue, of being drawn out as his very name signifies. Knowing his heritage and watching an Egyptian brutalize a Hebrew, Moses was moved to defend his ethnic brother and killed the Egyptian. Suddenly that decision made Moses a fugitive and murderer.

Acts 7 records Stephen's defense against the accusation that he disrespected Moses by citing all the prophets rejected by Israel and specifically referenced Moses' actions: "*He supposed his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation through him, but they did not understand.*"

Moses fled into Midian. He became a shepherd. Egypt's Prince became a servant. The man educated in Pharaoh's court now learned patience in the wilderness rather than being viewed immediately as the defender of the Hebrews when he took the life of the Egyptian in his own effort. God stripped Moses of any political or royal authority to ensure no human institution could be praised or credited.

Scripture often demonstrates that God prepares leaders in obscurity before calling them into public ministry.

- Abraham waited decades.
- Joseph suffered and was imprisoned.
- David tended sheep.
- Elijah lived beside a brook.
- John the Baptist grew in the wilderness.
- Jesus spent forty days in the desert.

Preparation often precedes revelation.

Reflection - What do you see in your life?

- Have there been seasons in your own life when God seemed silent?
- How does Israel's four hundred years of waiting shape your understanding of God's timing?
- Can you identify moments when God prepared you privately before calling you publicly?

The Burning Bush

Then Exodus 3:2 records one of history's most extraordinary scenes. "*The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.*"

The bush burned. Yet it was not consumed. For centuries Jewish commentators have reflected upon this image. Several themes repeatedly emerge.

The fire represents God's holy presence.

His holiness purifies without annihilating those whom He calls.

The bush represents Israel.

Though oppressed, she is not destroyed.

The fire reveals a God who is entirely holy while remaining near His creation.

Unlike pagan gods who demanded humans ascend to them, the God of Israel descended.

The initiative belongs to God.

Revelation begins with Him.

Holy Ground

As Moses approached in Exodus 3:3-6, God called: "*Moses, Moses.*" The repetition signifies intimacy and urgency. Other significant double callings include:

- Abraham, Abraham.
- Samuel, Samuel.
- Martha, Martha.
- Simon, Simon.
- Saul, Saul.

God then instructed: "*Remove your sandals.*" The ground itself possessed no inherent holiness. Rather, God's presence made the place holy.

Holiness in Scripture is fundamentally relational. Things become holy because they belong to God. The sanctuary became holy; the altar became holy; the Sabbath became holy; Israel became holy. Nothing has intrinsic superiority. God sets apart for Himself that which He deems holy.

Moses could not approach casually. Reverence precedes revelation.

"I Am the God of Your Fathers"

Before revealing His name in Genesis 3:6, God revealed His relationship. "*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*"

This statement anchors the burning bush in covenant history. God is not introducing Himself. He is identifying Himself as the faithful covenant keeper. Everything that follows grows out of promises already made.

God's name - reflecting His nature - cannot be separated from God's covenant. Likewise, God's power cannot be separated from His faithfulness.

The God who now speaks is the same God who called Abraham centuries earlier.

History had changed.

Empires had risen.

Generations had died.

Yet God's covenant remained.

His character had not changed.

God's very name which He spoke of Himself assures believers that all His promises rest upon His own unchanging nature rather than upon human ability or faithfulness.

Moses' Question

In Genesis 3:13, Moses appears to ask a pretty simple question: "*What is Your name?*" Yet beneath the question lies centuries of history and eternal hope.

The Hebrews knew the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They knew stories of creation, the Flood, and the patriarchs. They had inherited the covenant promises. The Hebrews didn't lack the awareness that God existed. They needed revelation and understanding of who He is and how He would show Himself in the unfolding story of redemption and ultimately in relationship.

In the ancient times, names were more than labels. They often disclosed character, authority, vocation, or destiny. To ask someone's name was beyond purposes of identification and association. Names revealed one's identity, their nature, and the authority by which they acted.

Moses therefore asks more than, "What should I call You?" He is asking, "By what character, authority, and covenant identity shall I introduce You to Israel?"

God's answer is the theological foundation of Israel's worship for generations and our history as Judeo-Christians grafted into the eternal covenant of the Most High and Sovereign God.

God's self-designation. Israel's covenant confession. Our eternal guarantee.

God's Name was revealed by God Himself of Himself, now and forever. "*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*" is the Hebrew of God's response in 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?' God said to Moses, 'Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'Ehyeh has sent me to you.'"

God's Name: The Hebrew Text

God responds with one of the most profound declarations found anywhere in Scripture in naming Himself:

אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה Transliteration: **Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh**

The Hebrew verb הָיָה (*hayah*) means:

- to be
- to become
- to exist
- to happen
- to come to pass

The form **Ehyeh** is the first-person imperfect. Most English Bibles render it: "I AM WHO I AM." Other respected translations include:

- I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE
- I AM WHAT I AM
- I SHALL BE WHAT I SHALL BE

The Hebrew imperfect describes great meaning beyond a simple present tense. God declared that He would continue or unfold action from a point that had no beginning and will have no end. Consequently, God communicates both His eternal existence and His active presence.

God is not merely saying, "I exist." He is declaring, "I am the One who always is." "I am the One who will always be." "I am the One who will prove Myself faithful." "I am the One who will become everything My covenant people need Me to be."

The Hebrews' Confession: The Hebrew Text

God declares of Himself, "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh" and then in the third-person form, "YHWH." *"Say to the Israelites, 'YHWH, the God of your fathers... has sent me to you.' This is My name forever"* (Exodus 3:15).

Consider what God did and is doing as we read this. Ehyeh means "I AM." YHWH is the third-person form. Where God speaks of Himself as, "I AM," His people speak of Him as, "HE IS."

What an eternal and glorious call and response!

Most scholars understand YHWH to derive from the same Hebrew root (*hayah*). The two expressions belong together. One is God's self-designation. The other is Israel's covenant confession.

Reflection - What do you see in your life?

- Why do you think God revealed His name before revealing His plan for Israel's deliverance?
- Do you accept His invitation for quiet fellowship and let Him reveal His name to you in Bible study and praise?
- Do you accept God's covenant name and the trust and live the meaning during seasons of waiting, trial, and suffering?

Dare to answer the invitation to covenant and call of the Eternal God Who is everything we need by answering in the affirmative, *"Yes! He is!"*

This foundation is needed to appreciate the gravity, traditional, and spiritual importance of the statements Jesus made in John. Revisit week one and reread this again prior to next week. Be ready to encounter the I AM in flesh.

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter Three -The Great I AM revealed in the New Covenant From Sinai to the Savior

Primary Biblical Text: Exodus 3:14-15, 43:10-13; 46:4; John 8:48-59

Objectives

- Have a much greater appreciation of the Old and New Testament's relationship.
- Understand the historical background studied to date explains why Jesus' language generated such strong reactions.
- See that Jesus, the Son of God, is eternal with no beginning nor end.
- Appreciate that the God of covenant revealed Himself in understandable terms through Jesus Christ for the purpose of relationship.

The Burning Bush foreshadowed the Blessed Hope in Christ

Last week, God revealed His name to humanity in Exodus 3:14 - I AM WHO I AM. God has been and is eternal. God is also ever present in every instant of life. He also established He is what His covenant people need... period.

Israel's response, in Exodus 3:15, was to address Him in reverence but also in worship, "*He Is!*" In declaring that the God of the Hebrews, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all of Israel, Who called Himself, "I AM WHO I AM," their confession in agreement was in the Hebrew - YHWH. Translations of this have yielded Yahweh, by adding vowels not used in Hebrew for the sake of pronunciation and writing.

The use of "LORD" in the Old Testament translations of our Bible express this YHWH, or declaration that He Is the Great I AM WHO I AM. Prophets, priests, kings, and all the Hebrews addressed their God with His covenant name.

God's eternity means that in His fullness He forever has been, is, and will be. Judeo-Christians know the God of the Bible Who reveals Himself as spirit, as the will or mind, and in the flesh. Yahweh is sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. His nature is eternal. He has no rival.

Read that again. Yahweh has no rival. Once more for those in the back: YAHWEH HAS NO RIVAL.

So much time is spent on understanding satan, the devil, demons, angelic presence, and all the other gods secular culture erects.

But there is One Hope - Yahweh. He is a Triune Being of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. God the Father and His covenant love was dominant in the Old Covenant. Jesus Christ, the fullness of God in the flesh, was the turning point of all human history. And, just as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit is now Christ with us on this planet and in this life until our Savior returns.

Be focused on the One True God. Because He Is!

Jesus did reveal Himself as the Great I AM. The disciple of Jesus, John, who wrote the book we cherish as the Gospel of John, captured this beautifully.

John's writings reveal Jesus as the Lamb of God slain in the sense of the Old Testament law to fulfill the requirements for our sin, the covering of our sin before God, and to be His children. The beloved disciple nicknamed "Son of Thunder" by Jesus for his bold and sometimes awkward ways accurately recorded that Jesus revealed the fullness of God the Father in the flesh.

This is an important point to see as we study, Jesus - the Resurrected I AM in the New Covenant. John also revealed the truth that those of the traditions of the Jewish faith rejected: that Jesus was God.

Prophets, especially Isaiah, emphasized that Israel's hope was in the eternal God who revealed Himself to Moses while also pointing to the Messiah who would come in Isaiah 9 and the sin-bearing, suffering Servant of Isaiah 52-53. John, a son of Zebedee and brother to James, was a partner in the fishing crew of Peter, but all were Jewish men called by Jesus as one of the twelve.

John knew of Isaiah's words very well. He knew of Moses experience at the burning bush with *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* – I AM WHO I AM.

Understanding this prophetic background provides greater understanding of the context of Jesus' words which often angered and caused the Jewish leaders of His day great frustration, even to the point of Jesus' persecution and ultimate arrest for crucifixion. As author of the Gospel of John, the fisherman-turned-disciple assumes readers understand these passages within the same context of Jewish tradition and Law.

As Jesus refers to Himself using "I am" statements, the religious of the Hebrew traditions were incensed with His equating Himself to and with God. While Jesus was not introducing new theology, He was certainly getting attention as He identified Himself directly with the covenant God already revealed throughout the Hebrew writings that served as their Holy texts.

Reverence to Revenge

The reverence embedded in Hebrew culture and tradition of the name of God was set. Most Jews during New Testament times would not speak the name of Yahweh. Instead, they addressed God as Adonai, or Lord. According to commentaries, the high priest alone would pronounce Yahweh's name on the Day of Atonement during the annual Temple service.

In looking at the Gospel According to John in its entirety, there's a bit of a progression in the responses of the religious authorities and crowd of Jesus' day. Looking at events recorded in real time by the disciple,

- in John 2-4, Jesus' early ministry featured Him cleansing the temple, performing signs, such as healing, and speaking with authority uncharacteristic of a man raised as a carpenter's son by His devout Jewish family.
- in John 5:16-18, Jesus equates Himself with God resulting in the first time the religious leaders spoke of killing Him.
- in John 6, Jesus explained He was the bread of life "which comes down from heaven," causing many followers to leave Him.
- In John 8:48-59, Jesus declared He lived before Abraham as I AM, and the religious had heard enough, clearly being reminded of Isaiah 43:10-13.

The people of God moved from reverence of God's holy name to a determined revenge to put a halt to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

The I Am statements of Jesus played an instrumental role in this anger and wrath.

Jesus Is Divine

From the opening words of John throughout each event, Jesus is not just teaching for the purpose of education. He is transforming the covenant of God to reveal Who He is before we understand what He provides.

John saw, heard, and understood this New Covenant within the context Jesus taught to the Jews and non-Jews alike. John wrote in John 1:1-4 and verse 14, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth."*

John saw it. The other disciples saw these miraculous truths within context, and some wrote about them. Today, we see them - if we'll just take in the complete meaning.

Jesus revealed that His identity flows directly from God the Father. His work flows from His identity. And His flesh holds the very character and fullness of God as humanity experiences Jesus, the Son of God.

- I am the Bread of Life.
- I am the Light of the World.
- I am the door and the Good Shepherd.
- I am the Resurrection and the Life.
- I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
- I am the True Vine.

Jesus did not merely perform miracles. As He revealed the character of God to us, He also modeled to each believer how we are to relate to Him as the Word within our daily lives and bring God's kingdom to this earth despite the cultural, political, and societal influences.

Just as God had revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, Jesus revealed God the Father to those who witnessed His ministry. Moses was the vessel through which God gave His people the law, or that which testifies against us that we are sinners and must have a covering or atonement. Jesus was the Vessel through which God revealed grace and the New Covenant that provided the eternal Atonement by the literal blood of the Lamb of God.

Today, we see these truths in the Word.

Well, at least they're made available through the Word. It's a matter of our decision and our application as to whether we make Jesus Lord.

We all want the Savior's rescue. But do we want His Lordship and reign in our lives?

Reflection - What do you see in your life?

In this week's study and the last two, a great deal of information about God, His Son Jesus, and how God reveals Himself to us has been discussed, hopefully meditated upon, and time-released through your life to being making the transformational change that God's word does as the Holy Spirit works in and through us all.

Let's get personal. And let's tell the truth, or confess.

"Is God personal to me?" Has God revealed Himself to me as loving Father who does not want me to separate from Him because of my sin. Is Jesus personal to you? Is there a very specific and known time you are able to recall that you have confessed to Jesus that you are a sinner, you need His blood to cover you and your sin – like all of humanity – to have the debt of your sin removed and forgiven? Have you made Jesus Christ Lord of your life, above all things and the center of your love, devotion, and service with evidence to back it up?

If those answers don't come easy, stop. Now. Confess. Tell the truth to God. Say what He says about us. He loves us. *"For God so loved the world..."* all of us! He loved us so much that *"He gave us only begotten Son..."* Jesus was born to be the Lamb of God that was sacrificed for our sins. Let that overwhelm you.

You cannot earn this love. You, like none, deserve this love. Yet, *"while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!"* Thank God today for His love. Accept Jesus as your Savior. Begin to live the life resurrected in Him. Then, He IS personal!

Now, once salvation is sure and once you have made Jesus Lord, you are in covenant with the One True God. His word is sure. He is eternal. He is unchanging. He reveals Himself in an abiding relationship. The closer we draw to Him, the closer He draws to us (Hebrews 10:22).

As we abide in Christ, we experience the fullness of God through the word of God, His Spirit testifying to ours in our inner knowing, and through direct communication in prayer - which involves both offering petitions and, very importantly, listening!

This relationship let's us see and experience God's faithfulness. Do you stand on God's eternal promises or do you live life as if they have expired due to some shelf-life determined by religion or a denomination?

Agreeing with John's truth that Jesus was the "Word made flesh," pause to reflect on the amount of time you spend in direct communication with Jesus. Do you pray beyond asking for the urgent and routine? Do you speak honestly before Him then listen? Do you expect an answer?

How much time do you spend with Jesus coming to life, as revealed by the Holy Spirit, in reading the Bible? We cannot fool God. We certainly mock Him when we dare to believe we can read a meme on social media with a Bible verse and consider that "our devotion."

If confession is telling the truth, then our thoughts, words, intentions, actions, and testimonies are the evidence of Who we say Jesus is in our lives.

Now, the rest of His Story

The first two I AM statements are quick to reveal and inform us that Jesus was not just carrying forward theological statements. He was speaking with the authority given to Him by His Father, God the Holy Father, to do His will and represent His very Fullness in flesh.

“I AM the bread” and “I AM the light of the world.” In the next pages, prepare to see Jesus’ very presence and power in the same way we see God the Father in His covenant names used with Jehovah.

Let’s yield to the Holy Spirit so He can show and reveal to us Jesus as the Word made flesh.

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter Four - I AM the Bread of Life

The God Who Alone Satisfies the Human Soul

Primary Biblical Text: John 6:1-71

Chapter Objectives

- Understand the contrast and also relationship between the manna in the wilderness and Jesus as the true Bread from Heaven.
- Understand Jesus' declaration, "I AM" statements reflect His nature as God and that application in our lives.
- Distinguish between physical provision and spiritual satisfaction and fulfillment.

The Universal Hunger

Every person hungers. Some hunger physically. Others hunger emotionally. Some hunger for purpose. Others for acceptance.

Still others spend their entire lives pursuing success, wealth, influence, education, relationships, or pleasure, believing one more achievement will finally satisfy the hunger within for identity, purpose, and belonging.

Scripture teaches that beneath every human appetite lies a deeper spiritual hunger. Ecclesiastes 3:11 declares that God *"has set eternity in the human heart."*

Human beings were created for communion with God. When that relationship is broken, the soul continues searching for what only God can provide. Another way to say that is that not every pursuit will contribute to the filling of the God-sized spot in our very being to make us complete, satisfied, and fulfilled.

But also see the truth: Every single human has a yearning to live fulfilled. Only God satisfies and fulfills completely if we abide in Him.

Jesus' first great "I AM" statement speaks to this universal longing that presents itself as an unsatisfied hunger, appetite, or desire.

Jesus didn't just meet our body's physical need for nourishment and sustenance for life; He declares He is the Bread! His presence satiates the hunger within us.

The Giver becomes synonymous with the gift.

Setting the Scene

John appears to intentionally connect two miracles in his writings with this capture of Jesus speaking ground-shaking truth in such close proximity to the feeding of the 5,000. Know for sure that Jesus planned it that way! His *kairos* timing, or appointed time, is never too early, too late, but forever on time!

In John 6:1-15, Jesus tested his disciples to see how they would meet both their physical and spiritual needs of the throng that numbered 5,000 men. In that miraculous event, in faith, the disciples presented what was available to Jesus who took it, blessed it with thanks before the Father, and broke and multiplied it to provide an abundance and overflow.

This miracle pointed to more than just the super on the natural! This sign, as Jesus called these miracles, pointed to Him! Only Jesus could have put God's super on the five loaves of bread and two fish. The crowd, however, missed the sign. They are content with full bellies and hearing great teachings.

Jesus wants transformed hearts. Jesus taught in John 6:22-71 to those who were looking for signs that they should see the One Who sent Him and all the miraculous provisions - God the Father.

How did Jesus appeal to these who wanted to partake of "the works of God?" He declared that they must believe in Him whom He sent - they must believe in the Son of God, Jesus the Christ.

Remember, the audience to whom Jesus spoke was comprised of His Jewish brethren. And the author the book of John was first Jewish and then a believer in Jesus Christ. Their minds were framed to look for a political or military messiah. But Jesus was about to reveal His Identity using the parallel of The Exodus.

Read John 6:22-24. The people were in pursuit of the one who miraculously provided bread that they knew had to be a miracle in the middle of the countryside feeding such a throng. And Jesus called them out. Keep reading John 6:25-31.

Again, the people heard Jesus speak of God the Father providing to meet needs with their role in that arrangement to believe in trust and obey Him. Yet, they still sought a sign. *"What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our father ate the manna in the desert: as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"*

These Jews were drawing their own parallels. They saw Jesus feeding the 5,000 compared to Moses who led the Hebrews as God provided "bread from heaven," or manna everyday for 40 years after leading them out of Egypt and slavery.

Notice the parallels that shaped their perspective of Jesus:

Exodus

Moses led Israel
Wilderness
Passover
Manna from heaven
God provided
Physical life

John 6

Jesus leads the crowds
Wilderness
Passover (John 6:4)
Bread from heaven
God provided
Eternal life

Everyone has a hunger or a need. What frames your perspective of Jesus? Is it religion? A bad church experience? A pious, pretentious "Christian?"

These followers had their physical hunger satisfied and now they pursued a repeat performance. They wanted to belong and be present when this modern day Moses made God's bread available as their hunger returned.

Jesus spoke of the profound difference in John 6:27. God provided the bread that endures to everlasting life. The crowd thought about their hunger pangs and appetites. Jesus spoke of His sustenance that satisfied eternally.

In John 6:32, Jesus had to correct these chasers of earthly bread. *"Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven."*

Moses was never the provider. God was. Now, God provided eternal life in *the Bread*.

The True Bread

Jesus then makes the first great "I AM" declaration. *"I AM the Bread of Life."* in verse 35. This statement changes everything. Jesus didn't say He gives bread; provides bread; brings bread. Jesus is the bread.

God Himself provides. But the provision is no longer merely something God gives. God gives Himself.

John records this pattern that he witnesses as Jesus unfolds these truths. Every "I AM" statement reveals not merely something Jesus does; each reveals who He is.

Jesus' Identity precedes His ministry. His person explains His work. His Identity and work reveal the relationship we are to have with Him.

Jesus contrasted His life to the manna of the Old Covenant, *"Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever..."*

Manna was provided every morning for six days of the week to be gathered for that day, except on Fridays, when enough was gathered for the Sabbath. Manna, in Hebrew, literally means, *"what is it?"* Each day, God provide the "it" of their lives, their nourishment, their sustenance, and the temporary food needed for their journey. Yet *it* did not produce eternal life.

Jesus' controversial teaching, as versus 52-66 records, was a *"hard saying"* that He recognized to offend the traditions and religion of the Jews. As a result of Jesus introducing the idea that He was the true Bread of heaven, *"many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more."*

Uniting the Old and New Covenants

Remember in Exodus 3, God declares of Himself, *"Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh"* or *"I AM WHO I AM."* Then in the third-person form, *"YHWH,"* He instructs Moses, *"Say to the Israelites, 'YHWH, the God of your fathers... has sent me to you.' This is My name forever"* (Exodus 3:15). The Hebrews were to say, *"Yes! He IS!"* is the eternal name of our God.

Jesus declared, *"I AM the true Bread."* Our response should be, *"Yes! He IS!"*

Reflection - Is Jesus the True Bread of Your Life?

- Have you accepted a temporary taste of a church experience or a feeling in a moment of emotion instead of the abiding presence of God?
- Do you seek the temporary blessings and fixes when Jesus wants you to seek Him, seek His life-giving presence, and be in eternal communion with Him?
- What would it mean for me to daily feed upon Christ through His word, prayer, worship, and obedience?

- Do you get a hunger pang or have an unmet need and decide that's that time to go to church and remain connected to the Body of Christ?
- The truth of this teaching is that Jesus says, "I AM the Bread!", and believers are to say, live, and declare, "Yes! He IS the Bread!" Does my life reflect this truth in word, deed, desire, plans, and testimony?

Only communion with Christ satisfies the deepest hunger of the human heart. Consider your daily consumption of the Bread. Does God the Father prepare a table before you for daily nourishment, relationship, communion, and the experience of His Spirit by abiding in and with Him?

Seriously reflect on how malnourished our culture is.

If you saw a starving, emaciated child, wouldn't your response be to intervene? If you saw a brutalized animal needing a morsel of food, wouldn't the goodness within you rise up to offer and share something?

But we cannot give what we do not already possess! How nourished or malnourished are you? Yes! YOU! Does Jesus see you each morning consuming His word, taking in His nourishment, and communing with Him throughout the day in prayer, praise, and continuing meditation on the truth He provides each morning?

Dear friends, we must first partake of the Bread daily, just as Jesus taught us to pray, "*Give us this day, our daily bread*" (Matthew 6:11). Then we must be prepared to share this eternal nourishment that gives life to others. The manna came daily. Jesus taught us to pray in thanks to God the Father for our daily bread.

The I AM IS the Bread! *Yes! HE IS!*

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter Five - I AM the Light of the World

Jesus Dispels Darkness

Primary Biblical Texts: John 8:12-30; John 9:1-41; Exodus 13:21-22; Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 9:2; Isaiah 49:6

Chapter Objectives

- Understand why Jesus declared, "I AM the Light of the World" during the Feast of Tabernacles.
- Trace the light from Genesis to John's Gospel.
- Recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies.
- Distinguish between physical sight and spiritual sight.
- Apply Christ's light to personal discipleship and witness.

Opening Reflection

Darkness is one of Scripture's most enduring and vivid images.

- Darkness conceals.
- Darkness confuses.
- Darkness isolates.
- Darkness breeds fear.

Light does more than allow us to see. Light reveals reality.

The Bible begins with darkness. "*The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep*" (Genesis 1:2).

The first recorded words of God are: "*Let there be light.*"

- Before God creates humanity
- Before He creates the sun and moon
- Before life flourishes

He speaks light into darkness.

This pattern continues throughout Scripture. Whenever God moves in redemption, He brings light. John understands this better than any other Gospel writer. His Gospel opens: "*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*" (John 1:4-5).

The Light that first shone in creation now stands in the Temple courts speaking to Israel.

The Setting

The events of John 8 do not occur in isolation. They unfold during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), one of Israel's three pilgrimage festivals.

The feast celebrated God's faithfulness during Israel's wilderness journey. Two ceremonies became central to the celebration. One involved water. The other involved light.

Each evening enormous golden lampstands were lit within the Court of the Women in the Temple. Ancient Jewish sources describe the illumination as visible throughout Jerusalem.

The first recordings of the Jewish Law, the Torah, or the Mishnah, later records of the Feast of Tabernacles, "There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not illuminated by the light."

The lamps reminded Israel of the pillar of fire that led God's people through the wilderness. For generations Israel celebrated the God who guided His people by light. It was within the scenes of this sacred festival time that Jesus stands and declares: "*I AM the Light of the World.*"

The timing is unmistakable.

He is not simply making a promise as a devout Jew impacting culture for the traditions of Israel.

He is identifying Himself as the fulfillment of what the festival celebrated. Jesus was essentially saying that the pillar of fire pointed to Him in the days of the Hebrews' wilderness journeys.

Light in the Old Testament

The imagery of light runs throughout Israel's Scriptures and moves forward to John's own words written in the First Century hundreds and thousands of years later.

- **Creation:** God's first creative act is light. Creation begins when darkness yields to God's command.
- **The Exodus:** God leads Israel by a pillar of fire. Light becomes guidance, protection, and presence. God Himself accompanied His people.
- **The Psalms:** David wrote in Psalm 27:1, "*The LORD is my light and my salvation.*"
Isaiah: Isaiah repeatedly spoke of light in messianic terms. "*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.*" (Isaiah 9:2) Later God says concerning His Servant: "*I will make You as a light for the nations*" (Isaiah 49:6).

Israel expected the Messiah to illuminate more than Israel. Israel expected to see the Messiah rule as the King of the Jews in sovereignty, politically, and militarily. John saw that Jesus would bring God's salvation to every nation.

"I AM the Light of the World"

Jesus now speaks. "*I AM the Light of the World. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*" (John 8:12).

Notice the sequence.

"I AM..." Identity.

"The Light..." Nature.

"Of the World..." Mission.

Jesus' claim extends beyond Israel. He spoke as He came for the nations...the world. In doing so, this fulfills God's promise to Abraham that through his offspring all families of the earth would be blessed.

More Than Information

Light is not merely knowledge. Throughout Scripture, darkness represents:

- sin
- deception
- rebellion
- ignorance
- death

Light represents:

- holiness
- truth
- righteousness
- life
- God's presence

Jesus therefore offers more than education. He offers transformation. One may possess information while remaining spiritually blind and never changed by Jesus' divine presence and power.

The Pharisees knew Scripture. Yet they failed to recognize the One to whom Scripture pointed.

Knowledge without Christ remains darkness.

John 9: A Living Illustration

John intentionally follows Jesus' declaration with the healing of a man born blind. The miracle illustrates the discourse of the moment.

The man lacks physical sight. Yet he gradually gains spiritual understanding. The Pharisees possess physical sight. Yet their spiritual blindness deepens.

John constructs the narrative with remarkable irony. The blind man increasingly sees. The religious experts increasingly refuse to see.

By the chapter's conclusion Jesus declares: *"For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind"* (John 9:39).

The miracle becomes another sign. Physical healing points toward spiritual illumination. Yet we pursue the physical healing and miss the spiritual illumination, just as the Pharisees did!

The Light Exposes

Light comforts. It confronts. Darkness hides reality, while light reveals reality.

This explains why many rejected Jesus. John earlier observed: *"People loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil"* (John 3:19).

The issue was never merely intellectual. It was moral. The Light exposed hearts. Jesus knew and knows the hearts of humanity.

Some welcomed Him. Some welcome Him today. Others preferred darkness. Today, still, too many prefer darkness.

The Word is Illuminated

Every "I AM" statement reveals another aspect of Christ's divine identity.

The Bread of Life satisfies. The Light of the World reveals. Without light we cannot recognize truth. Without Christ we cannot access God and know Him because of the ministry of reconciliation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:12-21).

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ involves more than a conversion of belief - there must be transformation, or newness of life. We have a different "shine" or identity.

Scripture repeatedly describes salvation as illumination. Paul writes: "*God... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Notice Paul's language. The same God who said, "*Let there be light*," now speaks and lives as spiritual light in human hearts through Christ. Is your life transformed by the Light of the world?

Creation and redemption mirror one another.

Reflection - Does Jesus' Light Shine in Your Life?

- What areas of my life do I keep hidden from Christ's transforming light?
- Have I confused having religious knowledge with genuine relationship with Christ in His Light?
- How has Christ illuminated my understanding of God the Father?
- What is a key responsibility that comes with walking in Christ's light?
- As an Image bearer of God made to reflect Him, how can I reflect His light this week?

Preparing for the Next Chapter

The first two "I AM" statements answer two universal human needs:

- Bread - humanity's deepest hunger.
- Light - humanity's deepest darkness.

The third I AM statement addresses another universal reality. Every person seeks protection, security, and certainty and stability of leadership.

Next, Jesus declares: "*I AM the Door of the Sheep*." (John 10:7, 9) and "*I AM the Good Shepherd*" (John 10:11,14).

The ancient sheepfold, the role of the shepherd, and the Old Testament background shepherding applied to Israel will link to Jesus' revelation in John 10 as our safety, provision, and eternal life within God's flock.

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter Six - I AM the Door and the Good Shepherd

The Savior Our Security, Refuge, and Leader

Primary Biblical Texts: John 10:1-30; Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34

Chapter Objectives

- See Jesus explain Himself as the Door and the Good Shepherd and appreciate the meaning.
- Recognize Christ as the only entrance into the Father's fold and assure your secure entrance.
- See the Good Shepherd as Protector - physically placing Himself between evil and danger seeking His helpless flock.
- Distinguish the voice and character of the true Shepherd from thieves, strangers, and hired hands.
- Rest in the security of belonging to Christ and respond by hearing and following His voice.

Opening Reflection

Every home has a door. Every city has a gate or main entrance. Every flock requires a shepherd. A door determines who may enter and what danger must remain outside. A shepherd knows the sheep, walks before them, leads them to provision, searches for them when they wander, binds them up with care when injured or hurt, and defends them when predators approach.

In John 10, Jesus mixes His metaphors in His teaching. It's been said of mixed metaphors that they're linguistic smoothies - the ingredients may not blend completely, but they make us smile.

Within a few sentences, Jesus declares that He is both the Door and the Shepherd. He is the Door through whom the sheep enter, and He is the Good Shepherd who leads, knows, protects, and gives His life for them. The images, however, within the context of the work of a shepherd, meet in one picture: The Shepherd is shown lying across the single opening of the sheepfold, or a grotto or cave. His own body becomes the door. Nothing reaches the sheep without first confronting him. Nothing leaves the safety of the fold apart from him.

Jesus presents Himself not merely as a religious teacher who points toward safety, but as safety and security Himself. He is our entrance, our refuge, our defender, and our Shepherd. Between evil and the weak stands Christ Jesus the Good Shepherd..

The Setting of John 10

John 10 follows immediately after Jesus heals the man born blind in John 9. The religious leaders rejected both the miracle and the man who received it. They questioned, intimidated, and finally expelled him. Their conduct exposes a deeper blindness: those entrusted to shepherd Israel have failed to recognize God's work and have mistreated one of His sheep instead of binding the maimed one up in love to restore.

Jesus answers their failure with shepherd language drawn from Israel's Scriptures. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David had all tended flocks. More importantly, God repeatedly identified Himself as Israel's Shepherd. David sang, "*The LORD is my Shepherd.*" Isaiah described God gathering lambs in His arms. Ezekiel 34 condemned leaders who fed themselves while neglecting the weak, injured, scattered, and lost as good shepherds would do.

Against that background, Jesus' words are comforting to some and confrontational to others. He is comforting the rejected sheep, but He is also exposing false shepherds. The man cast out by religious authorities is found and healed by the true Shepherd. Those who claimed authority are revealed as strangers and outsiders to the flock.

The Sheepfold and the Shepherd at the Opening

In the villages of first-century Judea, several flocks might be gathered at night into a common stone enclosure. The sheepfold usually had one narrow opening. In some settings there was no wooden gate. The shepherd himself guarded the entrance, lying across it through the night.

His body became the boundary between safety and threat. A wolf, thief, or intruder could not enter without passing over him. A sheep could not wander out without crossing the place where he lay. The shepherd's presence secured the flock.

See this. The background from which He spoke gives force to Jesus' declaration: "*I AM the Door*" (John 10:7-10). He did not merely say, "I know where the entrance is," or "I can show you the path." He said then and speaks now to declare, "I Myself am the entrance, and I Myself stand between evil, danger, and separation and My people."

The image anticipates and points to the cross. Jesus does not protect from a distance or gives advice or counsel. He places Himself in the path of judgment, sin, death, and the destroyer. He lays His life down as the defense between evil and the weak. The helplessness of the sheep is not denied; it is answered by the strength and sacrifice of the Shepherd.

Why the Door Comes Before the Shepherd

Jesus first says, "*I AM the Door*," and then, "*I AM the Good Shepherd*." The order matters. Before sheep follow the Shepherd, they must belong to the Shepherd's flock. Entrance precedes discipleship. Salvation in faith precedes sanctification – or the act of being made sinless. Relationship precedes obedience. Order matters.

Stop. Revisit that sequence of events. Have you innocently went to the Shepherd seeking healing of sin and hurts? Have you yielded your own will to follow His voice and ways? Do you answer Him when He calls? Do you abide and obey out of love and desire for His presence?

Christianity does not teach that people earn entrance by following well enough or by merit. We enter through Christ by faith - or trust in action - and His grace, and then those who belong to Him learn to recognize and follow His voice. Obedience is the fruit of belonging, not the price of admission beyond the Door.

Read that last statement again: Obedience is the fruit of belonging. Obedience is not the price of admission beyond the Door. Are you obedient? Yes? You, then, follow and belong to the Shepherd.

Jesus declares, "*If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture*" (John 10:9). The promise contains four dimensions of life under the Shepherd's care:

- Salvation: Christ rescues from sin, judgment, and separation from God.
- Security: the sheep live under the watchful care of the Shepherd.
- Freedom: going in and out describes peaceful confidence, not imprisonment or fear.
- Provision: finding pasture signifies nourishment, rest, restoration, and flourishing.

The Door is not only an entrance at the beginning of faith. Christ remains the believer's continuing place of safety, access, and life...if we remain in His flock and in His care.

The Only Door

Jesus does not present Himself as one entrance among many. He says, "*I AM the Door.*" No human ancestry or ethnicity, religious performance, moral beliefs or efforts, spiritual diversity, or personal achievement can open the Father's fold. Only Jesus.

This exclusivity can offend a culture that prefers unlimited options and equates a moral superiority to diversity of beliefs. Yet it is a profound source of assurance to read Jesus' own words explaining of this one way into His fold.

The Door excludes every false claim to salvation, but it also opens freely to "anyone" who enters through Him. The narrowness or exclusivity is not in the invitation; it is in the Identity of the Savior.

The Good Shepherd

Jesus then declares in John 10:11, "*I AM the Good Shepherd.*" The Greek word translated "good," *kalos*, carries the sense of beauty, nobility, excellence, and completeness. Jesus is not merely competent or morally acceptable. He is the Shepherd exactly as God intended a shepherd to be.

Everything Israel's failed leaders were not, Christ is. They ignored the weak; He strengthens them. They abandoned the lost; He seeks them. They exploited the flock; He gives Himself for it. They protected their positions; He lays down His life.

The shepherd does not drive the sheep from behind as though they were mindless robots. He walks before them. His leadership begins with presence. The sheep follow because they have learned his voice and trust his character.

The Shepherd Who Lays Down His Life

The heart of John 10 is the repeated commitment of Jesus: "*The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep*" (verses 11, 17, and 18). David risked his life against predators. Moses interceded for Israel. The prophets suffered for their message. Jesus goes further: He intentionally surrenders His life.

The sheep do not die for the Shepherd. The Shepherd dies for the sheep. Isaiah had written, "*All we like sheep have gone astray.*" The wandering flock deserves judgment, yet the Shepherd bears the iniquity or life of sinful practices, rebellion, and evil of the sheep.

The cross is not an interruption of Jesus' shepherding ministry. It is its fulfillment. At Calvary, Christ places Himself fully between His people and the consequence of their sin. He becomes the Door by laying down His body, and He proves Himself the Good Shepherd by refusing to abandon the flock when danger arrives. The cross proves, the Good Shepherd did lay down His life for His sheep!

The Hired Hand, the Thief, and the True Shepherd

Jesus contrasts Himself in John 10:10-13 with thieves, strangers, and hired hands. The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The stranger has a voice that the sheep do not recognize. The hired hand remains only while service is convenient and meets his/her terms; when the wolf appears, he flees.

The hired hand's relationship is based on a contract or agreement. The Shepherd's relationship is based on covenant, an everlasting covenant.. The hired hand calculates personal risk and gain. The Shepherd accepts the cost of protecting those who belong to Him to the point of death.

The contrast provides a test for every voice calling the sheep. Does it resemble or sound like Jesus Christ my Shepherd? Does it permit you to enter into communion with God the Father based on truth, love, joy, peace, a life set apart but a secure, stable life? Or does it manipulate, scatter, consume, and destroy? Is there a tempting voice calling a sheep on the edge of the flock seeming to always call away to lure from love, safety, trust, and God's best?

The sheep of Christ learn discernment through familiarity with His Word and His character.

"I Know My Own"

Jesus says, *"I know My own, and My own know Me"* (John 10:14). Biblical knowing is more than recognition or stored information. It describes intimate, covenant relationship that is beyond mere awareness and perception.

Christ does not relate to His people as numbers, cases, or anonymous members of a crowd. He knows each sheep personally. Jesus sees and tends to the wounds others cannot see, the fears that remain unspoken, the places of wandering, and the particular care each one needs.

This means believers are never protected by an impersonal, academic, and distant system. Their security rests in a Person. The same Shepherd who governs the flock knows the individual sheep. He leads the flock corporately, but He loves personally and individually.

The Sheep Hear and Follow

The sheep are not praised for strength, intelligence, or independence. Their defining response in John 10:27 is recognition: *"My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me."* A sheep follows because the shepherd's voice has become familiar through repeated presence and the experience of care and safety.

Following Christ therefore requires more than admiring Him from a distance. It means learning His voice in Scripture, trusting His direction when competing voices are louder, and moving when He leads even when the path is not fully visible.

The Shepherd's voice never contradicts His revealed Word. It does not flatter the sheep into danger or terrify them into bondage. It calls, corrects, comforts, and leads toward life.

Security in the Shepherd's Hand

John 10 culminates in one of Scripture's strongest assurances in verse 28: *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."*

The believer's security does not finally depend upon the strength of the sheep, but upon the strength of the Shepherd. Sheep are vulnerable. They can become frightened, distracted, injured, or lost. Yet the Shepherd is vigilant, faithful, and powerful.

The Good Shepherd Jesus connects His protection and provision to the Father's the authority as Master in verses 27-30,: *"No one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."* *The flock is held within the united purpose and power of the Father and the Son.*

This security is not permission to the sheep to ignore the Shepherd's voice. It is the confidence that enables and will ensure obedience of the sheep of His flock. The sheep follow not to persuade the Shepherd to love them, but because they already belong to the One who will not abandon them.

Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34 Fulfilled

When Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd, He identifies Himself with the Shepherd of Psalm 23: the One who provides, leads, restores, accompanies through the valley, prepares a table in the presence of enemies, and brings His people home.

He also fulfills Ezekiel 34, where God promises, *"I Myself will search for My sheep,"* and then promises to appoint one Davidic Shepherd over them. Jesus is both: Yahweh come to seek His flock and David's greater Son sent to rule it.

The Door and Shepherd declarations therefore reveal more than what Jesus does. They reveal who He is. The God who promised to rescue and shepherd His people has come among them.

Abundant Life Under the Shepherd's Care

Jesus contrasts the destroyer with His own purpose: *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."* Abundant life is not primarily wealth, ease, or freedom from hardship. It is going through life in communion with Christ with access to God the Father.

The Shepherd's provision may include green pastures, but Psalm 23 also includes the valley of the shadow of death and the presence of enemies. Security does not mean the absence of every threat. It means the presence of the Shepherd in every place at all times, even when we stray.

Because Christ is both Door and Shepherd, believers may rest. The refuge is not merely a location; it is Jesus Himself. He stands at the entrance. He goes before the flock. He walks through the valley. He searches for the wandering. He carries the weak. He confronts the predator. He gives His life, takes it up again, and holds His sheep securely.

Personal Application

- Have I entered through Christ, or am I relying upon religious activity, morality, heritage, or achievement?
- Where have I sought security apart from the Shepherd?
- Which competing voices most often pull my attention away from Christ?
- Do I follow the Shepherd's voice, or merely admire Him?
- Where do I need to trust that Christ stands between me and what seeks to destroy?
- How can I reflect the Shepherd's care toward someone vulnerable, overlooked, or wounded?

Reflection – What do you see in your life?

Knowing most of us instantly and always want the protection of a shepherd, The Good Shepherd, to lay down His life to save ours and also knowing we want the care and provisions from Jesus Who leads us, we have to look at the covenant between the Shepherd and His sheep.

It is only His sheep Jesus commits to protect, provide, and keep in His presence. There are other sheep. Those sheep do not belong in His flock, not because they walk funny, have the wrong type or color of wool, or have a strong will. They do not recognize the Good Shepherd's voice and have not entered into the safety of the Door.

Have you? Have you answered the voice of Jesus and His invitation to eternal covenant? Have you agreed to answer only to His voice, follow His ways, and abide in His flock on His terms, not your own?

Jesus has called. He waits only for so long. Respond to His invitation. Let Him lead, protect, and provide for you as a sheep. Otherwise, expect others who seek to lead but are hirelings, or worse - they're in league with the enemy of God - the devil. He wants to steal, kill, and destroy.

Answer the call to the Good Shepherd and enter in today!

Preparing for the Next Chapter

The next declaration confronts humanity's deepest fear: death.

Standing before the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus does not merely promise a future event. In John 11, He declares, "*I AM the Resurrection and the Life.*" This statement further distinguishes Jesus Christ as Savior and the Messiah. It also disqualifies all other gods, beliefs, or practices that do not produce life, even to one who is dead.

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter Seven - I AM the Resurrection and the Life

The Great I AM Who Conquered Death

Primary Biblical Texts: John 11:1-57; Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 4:15

Chapter Objectives

- Understand why Jesus delayed going to Bethany.
- Understand the raising of Lazarus in terms that relate and contrast to Jesus' resurrection.
- Appreciate Jesus' declaration that resurrection is not merely a future event but is found in His own person.
- Apply the hope of resurrection to daily Christian living in this life.

Opening Reflection

Every civilization has attempted to answer one question: What happens after death?

Some deny life beyond the grave. Others imagine reincarnation. Still others hope that personal goodness outweighs failure.

The Bible offers a radically different answer. It does not begin with humanity's search for immortality. It begins with God's victory over death.

Jesus' fifth "I AM" statement is spoken in the shadow of a funeral. Unlike the feeding of the five thousand or the healing of the blind man, this miracle takes place in a cemetery.

Death appears to have won. Mourning fills the village. Hope has expired. Then the Great I AM arrives.

The Road to Bethany

John carefully identifies the family. His dear friends who are siblings: Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. This household appears repeatedly throughout the Gospels, because Jesus loved these people; He loved this home; He loved their fellowship and community engaging with all of His disciples.

John writes something remarkable in John 11:5: "*Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*" But this seems perpendicular to readers immediately who next read in verse 6, "*So, when He heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer.*"

Jesus loved them. Therefore...He delayed. Now what? At first glance this seems contradictory.

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus never acts according to human urgency or tradition. Jesus responded according to the Father's purpose.

Sometimes love rushes to the scene and arrives immediately. Sometimes love waits. The delay was not indifference. The delay was definitely not a "No, I won't come!"

Jesus' purposed delay was preparation for a greater revelation.

Do you have delays in answers to prayers or open doors you seek and knock upon? Consider the truth of this teaching.

Why Four Days?

John 11:7-14 settles any confusion. Lazarus died. While Jesus delayed so that *“the Son of God may be glorified through it,”* as He said in verse 4, the idea of witnessing a man being resurrected from the dead was not their lead thought. Jesus had just told the disciples that *“Lazarus sleeps,”* and that they will go so He may *“wake him.”*

Naturally, the disciples conclude that Jesus knows the brother of Martha and Mary to be ill and will be healed. Verse 12 records their belief that *“if he sleeps he will get well.”* They had no full appreciation of what lay ahead when Jesus declared, *“I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe...”*

So, when Jesus finally arrives, Lazarus has been in the tomb four days. John intentionally includes this detail just as Jesus intentionally delayed His travel. Now, the disciples hear in direct terms by the Son of God in verse 14, *“Lazarus is dead.”*

There was a widespread belief and accepted truth of the day among the First Century Jews that the soul lingered near the body for three days before departing completely. While this idea is not taught as Biblical doctrine, it was the reality of the day borne from a mixture of culture and tradition.

By the fourth day there could be no question and there wasn't. Lazarus was not unconscious. He was not revivable. He was unmistakably dead. Jesus removes every possible natural explanation with His purposed delay. Only the Creator could reverse what had occurred.

Martha's Great Confession

Martha often receives criticism for being practical and a worker who took didn't make time to worship. John's contrast presents Martha as the sister bearing both remarkable grief at the loss of her brother, the disappointment that the miracle-working dear friend had not arrived sooner, and still, she expressed determined faith.

"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Martha declared truth in John 11:21. Martha knew Jesus as the One Who gave life. How could death possibly take her brother away in His presence? But Martha went on (v. 22), *"Even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You."*

Jesus answers: *"Your brother will rise again."*

Martha immediately responds with sound theology. *"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."* She understands Jewish teaching. Daniel 12 had already prophesied and promised resurrection. Even many Pharisees believed in a future resurrection. So, Martha expects that future hope.

Jesus now transforms it. He presents new wine requiring a new wineskin. What He was about to do would burst the dried up, stale faith of the Jews who had failed to remain God's people and were now a fixture within culture, politics, and only separate as a power structure. Jesus was soon to be on the way to His own death and resurrection. His authority after this miracle was set.

"I AM the Resurrection and the Life"

Then comes one of the greatest declarations ever spoken as only Jesus could speak it.

"I AM the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die."(John 11:25-26)

Notice what Jesus does not say. He does not say:

- "I will bring resurrection."
- "I can perform resurrection."
- "I understand resurrection."

He declares: *"I AM the Resurrection."*

Once again, the miracle is not the central point. The Person is. Jesus is what is needed; He is what we need:

- Bread is found in Christ.
- Light is found in Christ.
- Entrance is found in Christ.
- Shepherding is found in Christ.
- Now resurrection itself is found in Christ.

Jesus never merely gives God's gifts. He embodies them.

How does this fact and truth inform you and all who seek God's blessings? Do we live as if Jesus provides what we need? Do you live a life that proves Jesus provides?

Resurrection Is a Person

This changes Christian hope. Our confidence does not ultimately rest in an event. Our hope and confidence rest in Christ. Before Jesus arrived, there was no hope of life.

If Jesus merely teaches resurrection, our hope depends upon His words. Yet, if Jesus is the Resurrection, our hope depends upon His person Who is present.

This distinction explains why Christianity is fundamentally relational. Salvation is union with Christ. Abiding in Him is communion with Christ. Eternal life is fellowship with Christ. Victory over death is participation in Christ.

Everything centers upon Him - Jesus Christ, God in flesh and fullness, and God's Lamb... and Victor.

"Do You Believe This?"

After declaring His identity, in verse 26 Jesus asks Martha one of the most searching questions in Scripture. *"Do you believe this?"*

Notice the question. He does not ask,

- "Do you understand this?"
- "Can you explain this?"
- "Are you good enough for this to apply to you?"

Faith always involves trust beyond complete comprehension. But faith requires a response. It's either trust in action or only an awareness of pieces of information that one may or may not believe and trust.

Martha responds with one of the clearest confessions in John's Gospel. *"Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world"* (John 11:27). Her confession parallels Peter's in the pressing exchange in Matthew 16:15 when Jesus asks, "But *Who do you say I am?*" Remember Peter's response? *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

John presents Martha not merely as a grieving sister, but as a model disciple. Her confession was truth, not "her truth," not reality, and not the religious traditions. Martha told the Truth.

Jesus Wept

The shortest verse in the English Bible - John 11:35 - may also be among the deepest. Martha had gone to her sister Mary, telling of the arrival of Jesus and His words of promise. Yet Mary fell at Jesus' feet (John 11:28-33), her words spoke of what could've been. In her mind, the options of life had been exhausted.

Most focus on Jesus' tears, just like we will, but rush past His indignant and troubled spirit in verse 33. The Jews who accompanied Mary were vessels of the hell Jesus fought. They refused to see truth. They may have been there to comfort the family, but offered no hope and would not embrace the miracle.

Jesus moved toward the tomb where Lazarus' body was wrapped in burial cloths, anointed for death in Jewish custom, and in darkness behind a large stone rolled into place for security from devouring predators and varmints.

"Jesus wept." The One who knows He is about to raise Lazarus still enters fully into human sorrow. This reveals something essential about God. Divine power never diminishes divine compassion. Jesus does not stand outside suffering as a detached observer. He enters it. Jesus loved His friend, Lazarus, His friends Martha and Mary, and us...*you* included!

Even the Jews remarked, *"See how He loved him"* in verse 36. Jesus showed us the love we are to be known for as His followers. Hebrews 4:15 declares: *"We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses."* The tears of Jesus reveal the heart of God toward a world broken by sin and death. He has cared, does care, and will forever.

"Lazarus, Come Forth"

Standing before the tomb in verses 38-39, Jesus commands: *"Take away the stone."* Martha hesitates. Death has already begun its work. And it's ugly. It smells. It's going to be messy. And this is not how we do things! Any number of things were racing through Martha's determined head.

Yet Jesus reminds her in verse 40: *"Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"*

Remember the groaning and troubled spirit of Jesus back in verse 33? Well, it was still with Him in verse 38 after He heard the whispers of some of the Jews who asked why this man who opened blind eyes couldn't have saved His friend.

Verses 41-42 inform us how we should handle detractors, disbelief, and persecution. We are to focus on God our Father, not the distractions or detractors. Jesus was not just overcoming the enemy of death. He was fighting the disbelief in the hearts of the very creations He made.

“Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.” Jesus addresses God the Father. He acknowledges His assurances of knowing He has been heard all along by His Heavenly Father. Yet, for the sake of others, He speaks aloud. He declares truth for all to hear and to reframe the picture.

Then He calls *“with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”*

John records no elaborate ritual. No incantation. No struggle. The Creator simply speaks. Just as light appeared in Genesis through His word, life now returns through His word. The same voice that called creation into existence calls a dead man from the grave.

Resurrection, Revelation, and Reflection

Lazarus would eventually die again. His restored earthly life in his fleshly earth suit was temporary and temporarily restored, just as ours is. But Lazarus returned to mortal life with an incredible story. He was not the same man. He could not possibly be after such an experience. Within a matter of weeks, Jesus would be arrested, despite this witnessed miracle, tried as some hardened criminal, publicly crucified and executed, and resurrected. His resurrection was different. His body had been flesh. His resurrected body was not.

Jesus’ resurrected body is as ours will be when perfected in glory, healed of our sins and diseases, restored in its form to glorify God, and incorruptible because of the Holy Spirit’s power.

Lazarus’ resurrection still has great meaning despite his body that would die again. His death proves without Christ’s presence, there is no hope, no life. With His presence, His word, there is hope and life. We are dead in decaying flesh with no hope and no life without Jesus Christ. With Christ, we are *“raised to walk in newness of life.”*

Are you still in your diseased, decaying flesh without Christ? Has there been a time certain that the Spirit of the Living Christ has come into your body, exchanged places with your dead spirit, and is now living in and through you? Have you answered Jesus’ call to come forth?

Or are you still bound up in spiritual darkness of this world, culture and politics, sin, or some stronghold that robs you of life? John 11:44 speaks of the man who died coming forth *“bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth.”* Jesus instructed, *“Loose him, and let him go.”*

Dear friend, answer Jesus’ call and come forth. Shed those graveclothes that carry the stench of disease and that which held you lifeless. But walk away changed, transformed, and alive in Christ!

The Final Turning Point

John concludes the narrative with an unexpected consequence. Many believe. Others report the miracle to the religious authorities which triggers the Sanhedrin to meet and the Chief Priest Caiaphas to declare: *"It is better for you that one man should die for the people."* Ironically, Caiaphas speaks more truth.

Lazarus' resurrection sets in motion the events that take us directly to Calvary. The miracle that gives one man temporary life leads to the sacrifice that offers eternal life to the world. We are all Lazarus at some point. But who will come forth in Christ?

More Application and Preparation for Chapter Nine

Be still and be honest.

- Seeing the compassion of Jesus in this account, do you know Him in this way?
- Do I believe in THIS Jesus, the One Who is the Resurrection from death?
- Or do I still remain bound or tote around my graveclothes believing they carry reason or rationale?
- Can I say that I know Jesus as He describes Himself?
 - I AM the Bread of Life - Christ satisfies.
 - I AM the Light of the World - Christ reveals.
 - I AM the Door - Christ saves.
 - I AM the Good Shepherd - Christ leads and lays down His life.
 - I AM the Resurrection and the Life - Christ conquers death.

Death is the final enemy of fear over humanity. Death is defeated. Those who have died with Christ, been buried with Him, and raised to walk in newness have already begun their eternity on this earth and will transition on with God into His very presence, leaving a decaying flesh suit.

Next is John 14:6 which bring together all these statements and declarations. The emphasis on the next chapter is the "THE" in these statements. There is no other.

None. Be prepared to be confronted, likely convicted, and be prepared to confess.

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter Eight - I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life The Exclusive Path to the Father

Primary Biblical Texts: John 13:31-38; John 14:1-14

Chapter Objectives

- Understand the setting of Jesus' sixth "I AM" statement.
- Recognize the Old Testament background behind "the way."
- Explain why Jesus presents Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life - not merely as one who teaches them.
- Understand the exclusivity of Christ's declaration of Himself.
- See how Jesus unites all previous "I AM" statements.
- Apply Christ's invitation to trust Him completely.

Opening Reflection

Humanity seeks answers. In that seeking, it's important to ask the right questions.

The greatest question is not: "How do I get to heaven?" The greater question is: "How can sinful people come into the presence of a holy God?" Why is this the greater answer to seek?

Our salvation's end goal should not be a destination; it must be in the presence of the Most High God Who is holy and seeks relationships with each of His creation. Too often, we speak of "dying and going to heaven" as the ultimate reason for the need of salvation.

It is a good reason. Who wants to go to hell!? But the ultimate place of blessing, completeness, and best is in the presence of God. David summed it up nicely in Psalm 16:11, *"In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*

The question about being in God's presence has echoed since Adam and Eve left Eden. It shaped the Tabernacle and Temple. It set the parameters of the priesthood. It was the reason for every sacrifice. Everything in Israel's worship anticipated the day when God Himself would provide the answer.

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus gives that answer. Not through another law, sacrifice, or a prophet. The Son of God answered that timeless question.

The Upper Room

John 14 takes place in the Upper Room. The atmosphere is heavy with the preparation for Passover in the minds of the disciples and the mind of Jesus, the Lamb of God, soon to be slain.

Jesus has washed the disciples' feet. Judas has departed into the night. Peter has been told that he will deny his Lord. The cross is less than twenty-four hours away. The disciples sense that something beyond their full understanding is happening.

Fear fills the room. How do we know? Jesus begins in John 14:1 with comfort in addressing His disciples, *"Let not your hearts be troubled..."*

These are not mere words to placate or simply reassure. They are grounded in His identity. Everything Jesus says next rests upon who He is.

"In My Father's House"

Jesus tells the disciples in verse 2: *"In My Father's house are many rooms..."* The emphasis is not on a building with gilded architecture or even stressing heavenly geography.

The emphasis is relationship. Notice His language. *"My Father's house."* Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus continually draws attention to the Father while speaking as the Son of the living God in

- everything He says,
- everything He does,
- everything He reveals.

Everything in Jesus' ministry points toward the Father.

The purpose of redemption is not merely escaping judgment through a singular transaction we call salvation. Redemption, or the purchase of our lives out of slavery to this world's dominion of flesh, pride, and separation from God, welcomes all believers into the Father's household.

Human history has come full circle. Humanity lost fellowship in Eden. Christ restores fellowship with the Father as His blood covered the sins of all the world and came back to life conquering death and any force of this earth - the dominion of the flesh.

Redemption is Rescue, but Also Relationship

Jesus' words fell into a room unsettled with fear knowing the cherished Son of God has been talking about His death, then a promised betrayal by one of the twelve, and even Peter's denial. Yet Jesus is promising that these friends and brothers will be with Him in dwelling places belonging to His Father.

John 14:1-3 should inform every believer that salvation is the rescue from the payment for our sin debt, or death. But it is also a never-ending relationship in this life and ultimately in the presence of God with Him.

Jesus goes on to tell them in verse 4, *"And where I go you know, and the way, you know."*

Think about this within the context of this study alone. The "I AM" of the Old Testament made Himself available to Moses in the burning bush that was never consumed by fire. Then God dwelled within the tabernacle above the blood encrusted Mercy Seat and below the wings of the cherubim with its many steps and sacred actions for the High Priest to enter into the Holy of Holies once annually. Now, after millennia, Jesus is telling the disciples about His Father's House as their ultimate and permanent dwelling where they will abide in His presence with Jesus.

Thomas Asks the Right Question

Thomas interrupts. He responds within the context of knowing a pathway or highway to a location, *"Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?"*

This is an honest question. Thomas is not resisting Jesus. He simply cannot see what Jesus sees. As a Jewish man, like the other disciples, he asked the question as framed by his life worldview or all the teachings and experiences wrapped up together. While Thomas' renown is to be a doubter, he question provoked one of the greatest declarations ever spoken.

"I AM the Way"

Jesus answers first: "*I AM the Way...*"

Throughout the Old Testament, "the way" described the path of covenant faithfulness.

- David prayed: "*Teach me Your way, O LORD*" in Psalm 86:11.
- Isaiah spoke of "*The Highway of Holiness*" in Isaiah 35.
- The prophets repeatedly contrasted the way of the righteous with the way of the wicked.

No one, however, had ever claimed to be *the* Way.

Moses pointed toward God's way. The Law described God's way. The prophets called Israel back to God's way. Jesus declares: "*I AM the Way.*" The destination and the path now meet in one Person.

The New and Living Way

The writer of Hebrews later expands this truth. Through His flesh, Jesus opens "*a new and living way.*" (Hebrews 10:20) The veil separating humanity from God's presence will soon be torn as the disciples hear these words. The fulfillment of Scripture comes as Jesus explains it all pointed to Him:

- The Tabernacle.
- The Temple.
- The priesthood.
- The sacrifices.

He is now the fulfillment of them all.

One cannot bypass Jesus Christ to reach God. Nothing is superior; nothing can be added to or taken away from this "Way." There are not ways to earn this provision because Jesus is the Way, not One of many or an option that can be considered or included among others.

The Way is complete because the Way is a Person. The Way is Jesus.

"I AM the Truth"

As part of the pursuit of humanity to find answers, we seek to know truth. Sadly, modern society defines truth on a sliding scale that seems to change with style, trends, and circumstances. Truth today is often reduced to opinion and framed around one's reality that may not and most likely doesn't align with God's truth, or the Truth.

Scripture speaks differently. Let's just say, the Word made flesh speaks differently (John 1:14).

Truth is grounded in God's own character. Jesus does not merely speak truth. He embodies it. John has already declared: "*Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" (John 1:17)

Truth is not abstract or elusive. Truth has a face. Truth spoke to these disciples. Truth was revealed. God the Father's nature was revealed in Truth through Jesus Christ.

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus perfectly reveals the Father. To know Christ is to know truth. To reject Christ is to reject truth itself. Does that seem like an exaggerated statement?

Truth Revealed

Pilate later asks in John 18:38, "*What is truth?*" Ironically, truth stands before him charged as a criminal and soon to wear a crown of thorns after being beaten and scourged. In verse 37, Jesus had just told Pilate, the governor assigned by the Roman Empire to oversee the region of Jerusalem, that He was born for the cause of bearing witness to truth. Jesus is truth.

Throughout Scripture, God's truth is never merely information. It is revelation and uncovers reality as God sees it, not as humanity perceives it.

"I AM the Life"

The final phrase of the trio of "I AM" identifiers in John 14:6 is "life." John has already declared in John 1:4: "In Him was life." Now Jesus explains why.

Life does not only originate with Him. Life exists in Him. He is eternal life. He is abundant life. He is resurrection life. Every previous declaration converges here.

- Bread nourishes life.
- Light illuminates life.
- The Door grants entrance into life.
- The Shepherd protects life.
- The Resurrection restores life.

Now Jesus reveals that He Himself is Life. Compare this to the teaching in the Old Testament that living in right relationship with God was life - His breath sustained the Hebrews; His covenant was His provision, protection, and presence; and His love set upon His people made them His possession that gave them purpose.

Life was having a right relationship with the Father. And yet, the most educated, learned, and knowledgeable Jews of Jesus' day missed that the Father had sent His Son to give them permanent, unfettered access through His sacrifice.

God sent Jesus to give us life! Now and forevermore!

The Exclusive Claim

John 14:6 not only tells the Who - Jesus, He then speaks words that have challenged every generation. This truth still challenges and divides cultures today that worship self, demand personal rights, and celebrate individualism, even as other forms of religion and beliefs are embraced: "*No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" The Who is Jesus; He is the means to the ultimate goal. And that what, or another Who, is God the Father. In the presence of God the Father is fullness of joy. In Christ there is God's Presence where there is love, joy, peace, abundance, life!

Jesus truly lived on this planet as Yahweh Incarnate. Jesus was the fullness of God. While in flesh, His wisdom, reasoning, desires, ambitions, strength, all came from the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Way. There is nor can be any alternative route, method, or vehicle. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice. There is, can be, and will be no other.

Jesus lived saying the words of the Father, loving as the Father would, healing as the Father wanted, and giving His own life as the perfect, sinless sacrifice to bear humanity's sin.

Jesus is the Truth. He was literally the Word of God made flesh.

Jesus is alive. Of all religions that have, do, and will exist, there is only One Deity alive - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There have been burials, there are tombs, and there are lifeless bones in graves of other gods.

Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father. Among the last time John got to hear Jesus declare Himself as the "I AM" was in the vision recorded when he was exiled in persecution for his faith on the island of Patmos. Revelation 1:11 records Jesus speaking, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.*"

John didn't see a specter or ghost. He saw Jesus in His resurrected body after being raised by the power of the Holy Spirit. John saw the High Priest of Heaven in Revelation 1:12-16 before He declared in verse 18, "*I AM He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore...*"

Jesus is life. By Him, of Him, through Him, and in Him is life. He conquered death. No other god has arisen from death or overcome flesh or the grave.

Christian exclusivity does not arise from cultural superiority. It arises from Identity in Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

Everything depends upon who Jesus is.

Review and Reflection

Every previous "I AM" statement answers one aspect of human need.

- Bread - The Bread satisfies.
- Light - The Light reveals.
- Entrance - The Door admits.
- Shepherd - The Shepherd leads.
- Resurrection - The Resurrection conquers death.
- Way - The Way brings us home in God the Father's presence.
- The Truth reveals the Father.
- The Life makes communion possible forever.

Do I meet my needs through Christ Jesus? Have I accepted a counterfeit or attempted to supplement faith with something else like my horoscope, some type of witchcraft, or use of "alternative medicines or therapies" that are filling an emptiness only Jesus fills?

Preparing for the Final Chapter

One "I AM" statement remains. On the night of His arrest, after leaving the Upper Room and walking toward Gethsemane, Jesus describes Himself once more.

"*I AM the True Vine.*" (John 15:1)

Chapter Eight answers the question, "How do we come to the Father?" Chapter Nine answers another important question, "How do we remain in Him?"

Jesus' last evening with His disciples was made complete not with ministry, miracles, or even mission, but with His teaching about abiding. Before the disciples are sent into the world, they must first learn that lasting fruit is impossible apart from continual communion with the Great I AM.

Be ready to be challenged by God's word to authenticate your faith in Jesus and reveal your growth and maturity.

JESUS: THE RESURRECTED I AM

Chapter Nine - I AM the True Vine

Abiding in the Great I AM

Primary Biblical Texts: John 15:1-17; Psalm 80:8-19; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; John 8:24, 28, 58; Revelation 22:1-5

Chapter Objectives

- Understand Jesus' final "*I AM*" statement is not optional for an authentic Christ follower.
- Recognize Israel as God's vineyard in the Old Testament and see yourself in His Church.
- See the reason Jesus calls Himself the True Vine and your role.
- Understand the biblical meaning of abiding and what that looks like today.

Opening Reflection

Individuals entering a relationship ask two questions: How do I enter or gain access? But then, how do I remain? The first eight chapters of this study have answered the first question.

- Christ is the Bread.
- The Light.
- The Door.
- The Shepherd.
- The Resurrection.
- The Way.

Every declaration has pointed us toward gift of salvation and the lifelong process that gives us a relationship with Him as Savior and Lord with access to His Father as our Father.

Now Jesus answers the second question. How does the believer live after entering God's Kingdom? How does one abide in the King's Domain?

His answer is beautifully simple. Remain with Me. Christian maturity is not achieved by striving harder. It grows by abiding, staying connected to The Vine, and appreciating this relationship.

The Setting

Jesus speaks these words while walking toward Gethsemane. The public crucifixion on the cross is only hours away. The disciples will soon scatter. Peter will deny Him. Judas has already departed in his act of betrayal. Everything appears to be falling apart.

Yet Jesus does not spend these final moments discussing prophecy, church government, or even evangelism. Instead, He speaks about relationship. His concern for His disciples is expressed in His admonition to remain united to Him after His visible presence is gone.

United. Not uniform. Jesus admonishes His disciples then and us today to be as one through death to their own and our own will and spirit to the will of the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Put yourself in these verses as if you were present with the disciples then hearing the very voice of Jesus give instruction.

Israel - God's Vineyard

Throughout the Old Testament, Israel is repeatedly described as God's vine. Psalm 80 declares: "*You brought a vine out of Egypt.*" Isaiah 5 presents one of the most beautiful, yet and heartbreaking parables as God carefully plants His vineyard. He removes stones and builds a watchtower. He provides everything necessary. Yet instead of producing good fruit, the vineyard produces wild grapes.

Wild grapes grew naturally. Reflected no effort of agricultural cultivation and devotion to purity of their seed. They were not used for wine that would be considered worthy for consumption or special occasions.

Jeremiah echoes the same theme. "*I planted you a choice vine...*" Yet Israel turned away. The prophets repeatedly reach the same conclusion. The problem was the vine itself. The Vinekeeper had shown the devotion, work, and strategic work required to separate this soil and seed from that which was wild and not set apart.

In John, the disciples have a mindset framed with the agriculture of the day, which included grapes harvested for consumption, sell, and winemaking. They were also aware, as Jews, that Jesus' words carried meaning beyond a life science lesson or another teaching of Israel as the vine planted by God.

"I AM the True Vine"

Jesus declares in John 15:1, "*I AM the True Vine.*" The adjective *ἀληθινός* (*alēthinos*) means genuine, ultimate, perfect, the real fulfillment. Jesus is the genuine, ultimate, perfect Vine. Unlike the vine of Isaiah 5 that came from the diligence, care, and work of the Vinekeeper, yet was spoiled, Jesus was "the True Vine."

Jesus is not saying Israel had no purpose. Instead, He is declaring that everything Israel was called to become throughout the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Him.

- Israel was called to bear fruit. Jesus perfectly bears fruit.
- Israel was called to bless the nations. Jesus blesses the nations.
- Israel was called to reveal God. Jesus perfectly reveals the Father.

The True Vine succeeds where every previous vine failed. There is no substitute, counterfeit, or identical replica. Separated from God in flesh, man could not be what Jesus was. Man cannot be what Jesus is. Man will not be what Jesus will be.

The True Vine is the only way we are connected to God the Father, the Vinekeeper. The True Vine is the only way we have access to the life within the Vine, the Holy Spirit as we abide as branches.

The Father - The Vinedresser

Only here among the seven metaphorical "I AM" statements does Jesus explicitly identify God the Father's role. John 15:1 continues in the red letters of Jesus, "*My Father is the Vinedresser.*"

The Father clears, sows and plants, prunes, cleanses, cultivates. Fruitfulness is therefore a work of divine cooperation, participation, and relationship.

- The Father tends, keeps.
- The Son is the Source of access and life.
- The Spirit empowers as the very nourishment and vitality.
- The believer abides – and is pruned, dunged down, watered, and illuminated.

This beautiful picture of the Trinity reminds us that discipleship is participation in God's own work rather than independent religious effort or some convenient version of the Gospel to fit our tastes and conveniences, culture and heritage, or even politics.

John 15:2-3 frames the anticipation that only in Jesus is there life, growth, and, therefore, fruit, which the Father expects. Jesus' words also assure branches that the Vinedresser will not just prune, but "*take away*" those branches that do not bear fruit.

What Does It Mean to Abide?

Abide is a key word repeated throughout John 15. When something repeats in God's word, be attentive. God's highlighter is often through repetition. Abide in the Greek is the word μένω (*menō*) It means to remain; to continue; to dwell; to stay; to make one's home. John uses this word throughout his Gospel and later in his letters in 1, 2, and 3 John.

Abiding is not passive, nor an emotional state that gives certain feelings. It describes continual communion. One must decide to abide, then endure what comes – the elements and events of circumstance and cultivation.

The Christian life begins with faith, but it matures through abiding. Jesus is describing a relationship that is ongoing rather than occasional or a convenience. The branch possesses no independent life. Its life continually flows from the vine. Likewise, every aspect of Christian life and growth flows from continual connection to and dependence upon Christ.

Fruit Is the Evidence - Not the Cause

Jesus teaches: "*Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.*" The order is sequential for purpose. Abiding comes first. Fruit follows.

Religion often reverses the sequence. Produce more, work harder, serve longer, try again. But where is the relationship with Jesus?

Many have a relationship with church. Fewer have a relationship with Jesus as the Vine.

Jesus echoes the command to remain for a purpose. Fruit is never manufactured. It grows naturally from living connection reflecting the likeness of the Vine from Whom it is yielded. The branch does not struggle to bear fruit. It simply remains attached in obedience and yielded.

As has been said and deserves repeating, a branch of a tomato vine will not bear lemons, potatoes, or any other agricultural produce. Like produces like. This is still the seedtime and harvest promised by God to Noah (Genesis 8:22).

Let's be clear on this point. The offspring or yield must bear the Image of the Vine. The branch is the obedient conduit. God is the Creator, meaning the fruit must look like the Creator not us. Why is this important? Fruit should *not* bear the image of

- a tradition or cultural upbringing,
- a religion,
- a political party or affiliation, or
- a socially acceptable version of Jesus.

"Apart from Me"

Perhaps one of the strongest sentences in the chapter is also among the simplest. *"Apart from Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

Jesus does not say, "You only produce a little." He says, *"Nothing."* This is not an exaggeration. Without Christ, ministry becomes performance. Knowledge becomes pride. Service becomes exhaustion. Religion becomes and is empty. The Christian life cannot merely begin with Christ then be filled with works attempting to earn salvation and reward.

Believers must be grafted into the Vine, continue in Christ with unsevered, connected relationship, and then fruit comes naturally.

Love Is the Fruit of Abiding

Notice the sequential process. Jesus moves naturally from abiding to obedience then to love. These are not separate subjects. They describe one truth. Whoever abides obeys. Whoever obeys loves.

Jesus then in John 15:12 gives what He calls *"My commandment."* *"Love one another as I have loved you."* Christian maturity is measured not primarily by knowledge, but by Christlike love. The True Vine produces fruit. The fruit must reflect the love that Jesus shows us.

The Friend of Christ

Jesus then makes an astonishing declaration in John 15:14-15. *"No longer do I call you servants...I have called you friends."* This aspect of relationship with Christ the Savior and Lord does not diminish His Lordship.

Rather, this reveals the intimacy He shares with His disciples through direction connection that gives us access to:

- the God who walked with Adam,
- spoke with Abraham,
- met Moses face to face,
- and shepherded David.

Now Jesus calls ordinary fishermen His friends. The restoration begun in Eden continues in reconciling us to God. God the Father and Vinedresser again walks with His people.

The Absolute "I AM" Statements

This entire study has examined John's Gospel which frames the "I AM" declarations Jesus said of Himself. Let's take a look at John 8. This, again, captures words that spoke in the presence of the Apostle John but are resonating throughout all of creation as Truth today.

John 8:24 records Jesus stating, *"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."* The Greek text simply reads: *ἐγώ εἰμι* (*Egō eimi*) or *"I AM."* If this sounds familiar, the phrase echoes Exodus 3 when Yahweh identified Himself to Moses.

The Seven "I AM" Statements in Perspective

The Great I Am, Jesus, is the Resurrected I AM. Can you say that you believe and live these declarations:

- **I AM the Bread of Life** - Jesus satisfies your deepest hunger and needs?
- **I AM the Light of the World** - Jesus reveals truth and radiates on and through you?
- **I AM the Door** - Jesus grants access to God and entrance into His Kingdom?
- **I AM the Good Shepherd** - Jesus lovingly leads, cares for, and protects you?
- **I AM the Resurrection and the Life** - Jesus conquers humanity's greatest enemy?
- **I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life** - Only Jesus reconciles, or makes right as one, humanity to the Father?
- **I AM the True Vine** - Christ continually sustains the life He gives.

Jesus meets humanity's deepest needs. His self-declared Identity reveals who Jesus is right now.

The Great I AM

The purpose of John's Gospel has never been to merely catalog miracles or record remarkable teachings. John writes to answer one question: **Who is Jesus?** That answer echoes throughout Genesis through Revelation as His name reflects. Jesus means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation." He is our answer, the solution, the perfect sacrifice, the resurrected Great I AM.

That's who Jesus is.

Who is Jesus to *you*?

Know Him beyond Savior - needed for the covering of our sins and access to God. Live daily by making Him Lord - above all, your focus, your anchor, your hope, and your strength.

Let Jesus be the I AM, or everything you need.

1 THE ADAMIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: Genesis 1:26–31; 2:15–17; 3:14–24



Although the word covenant is not explicitly used in Genesis 1–3, passages such as Hosea 6:7 suggest that Adam stood in a covenant relationship with God.

Within this covenant, humanity received:

- Dominion over creation
- Meaningful work
- Fellowship with God
- Moral responsibility
- One prohibition: not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When Adam disobeyed, covenant fellowship was broken. Yet judgment was accompanied by grace. God clothed Adam and Eve, promised a coming Redeemer (Genesis 3:15), and preserved humanity rather than destroying it.

THE PATTERN BEGINS HERE:

SIN ENTERS

JUDGMENT FOLLOWS

GRACE INTERVENES

HOPE REMAINS

This rhythm appears throughout Scripture and reaches its fulfillment in Christ.

2 THE NOAHIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: Genesis 6–9



- Human wickedness increased until “every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).
- Judgment came through the Flood.
- Yet God’s covenant faithfulness continued. He preserved Noah and his family and established a covenant promising never again to destroy the earth by flood.
- The rainbow became its sign.

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS
יהושע מלך היהודים
ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΝΑΖΩΡΑΙΟΣ
Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ

This covenant reminds us that although God judges sin, He also preserves creation because His redemptive purposes are still unfolding. The coming Messiah would arise within the preserved human family.



GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS

ONE STORY.
ONE REDEEMER.
ONE PURPOSE.

3 THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: Genesis 12; 15; 17; 22



With Abraham the story narrows. Rather than addressing humanity generally, God chooses one family through whom blessing will come to every nation.

God promises Abraham:

- A people
- A land
- A covenant relationship
- Worldwide blessing

Genesis 12:3 declares:
“In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Paul later identifies this promise as anticipating the Gospel itself (Galatians 3:8).

The covenant with Abraham shifts the biblical narrative from merely restoring individuals to creating a redeemed people through whom God’s salvation would extend to the nations.

THE MOSAIC & DAVIDIC COVENANTS

THE MOSAIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: Exodus 19–24



- Israel’s deliverance from Egypt was not the end of redemption. It was the beginning of covenant formation.
- At Mount Sinai, God declares: “You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:6).
- The Law did not provide salvation. Rather, it revealed God’s holiness, exposed humanity’s sinfulness, and instructed Israel how to live as His covenant people.
- The Tabernacle became the visible symbol of God’s dwelling among His people.

YET ONE REALITY REMAINED UNMISTAKABLE:
Access to God’s presence was restricted.

- Only priests entered the Holy Place.
- Only the high priest entered the Holy of Holies.
- Only once each year.
- Only with sacrificial blood.

The covenant established the expectation that God’s ultimate answer would not simply be another prophet or priest. It would be a King.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

Primary Texts: 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89



- God promised David that his throne would endure forever.
- This covenant looked beyond David to an eternal King.
- The prophets repeatedly returned to this promise.
- Isaiah foresaw a child whose government would never end (Isaiah 9:6–7).
- Jeremiah anticipated a righteous Branch from David’s line (Jeremiah 23:5–6).
- Ezekiel described one Shepherd who would rule God’s people forever (Ezekiel 34:23–24).