

The Great I Am: John 18:1-11

Why do trained soldiers fall to the ground when Jesus simply responds “I am he”?

“I am he”

- hints at “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14)
- HS would have confirmed and emphasised this as being a statement of deity: Jesus is God.

John Piper (Desiring God website)

God’s name is almost always translated LORD (all caps) in the English Bible. But the Hebrew would be pronounced something like “Yahweh,” and is built on the word for “I am.”

So every time we hear the word Yahweh, or every time you see LORD in the English Bible, you should think: this is a proper name (like Peter or John) built out of the word for “I am” and reminding us each time that God absolutely is.

There are at least 10 things the name Yahweh, “I AM,” says about God:

1. He never had a beginning. Every child asks, “Who made God?” And every wise parent says, “Nobody made God. God simply is. And always was. No beginning.”
2. God will never end. If he did not come into being he cannot go out of being, because he is being.
3. God is absolute reality. There is no reality before him. There is no reality outside of him unless he wills it and makes it. He is all that was eternally. No space, no universe, no emptiness. Only God.
4. God is utterly independent. He depends on nothing to bring him into being or support him or counsel him or make him what he is.
5. Everything that is not God depends totally on God. The entire universe is utterly secondary. It came into being by God and stays in being moment by moment on God’s decision to keep it in being.
6. All the universe is by comparison to God as nothing. Contingent, dependent reality is to absolute, independent reality as a shadow to substance. As an echo to a thunderclap. All that we are amazed by in the world and in the galaxies is, compared to God, as nothing.
7. God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He cannot be improved. He is not becoming anything. He is who he is.
8. God is the absolute standard of truth and goodness and beauty. There is no law-book to which he looks to know what is right. No almanac to establish facts. No guild to determine

what is excellent or beautiful. He himself is the standard of what is right, what is true, what is beautiful.

9. God does whatever he pleases and it is always right and always beautiful and always in accord with truth. All reality that is outside of him he created and designed and governs as the absolute reality. So he is utterly free from any constraints that don't originate from the counsel of his own will.

10. God is the most important and most valuable reality and person in the universe. He is more worthy of interest and attention and admiration and enjoyment than all other realities, including the entire universe.

That is who stands in the garden ready to submit to a gruesome death in our place. Even though Jesus is being taken prisoner you get the impression that he is in control. He knows what must happen for our sake and is prepared to do it.

Two often quoted passages speak of Jesus being God and his submission to being punished in our place:

- Col 1:15-23
- Phil 2:5-11

You see God's heart for man in Exodus when he says (HCSB):

“ And they will know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, so that I might dwell among them. I am Yahweh their God.” (Exodus 29:46)

He wants to dwell with us, live with us. That's why Jesus died and came back to life: to defeat everything that would separate us from God and everything that would harm us.

To understand God's heart for you and me more let's look back at the “I am” statements of Jesus:

I am the bread of life, John 6:32-42

We all have a spiritual hunger in us, a hole inside that needs to be filled. Some people try to fill it with hobbies, pleasure, things, people. The only thing that truly satisfies is God. Here Jesus says I am who you hunger for and I will meet that need now and forever.

I am the light of the world, John 8:12

Think for a moment the comparison of Dark vs Light

Light = forgiveness, freedom from fear, a direction for your life, holiness - 1 John 1:7

I am the gate, John 10:7-10

Jesus the way to a safe, good place in life. Every blessing of heaven showered on us who do not deserve it. Psalm 23

I am the good shepherd, John 10:11-15

Jesus offers protection, not that nothing bad will happen to you in this life but that in everything he is dwelling with you, protecting you from worse, giving you strength for each day.

Again this reflects the heart of God that we see in the OT: Ezekiel 34:11-16

I am the resurrection and the life - John 11:25-26

Spiritual life now. Life that ceases to be existence at the moment of conversion and becomes true life, life in all its fullness, life as Jesus demonstrated it when he walked amongst us. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal 2:20

I am the way and the truth and the life - John 14:6

He is the only way to God. There is no other way. How do we respond? We walk in the way of truth because Jesus is the way of truth. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

I am the true vine - John 15:5-8

Again this speaks of dwelling, living with, connection. You and God connected, depending on God for all you need, safe in the Father's arms. When Jesus is number one in your life and you depend on him and remain in him then there is fruit, spiritual fruit, God's kingdom growing around you, not in your own strength but in his strength.

John 17:11

Jesus, God the Father (and God the Holy Spirit) = one. He wants us to have the same unity amongst ourselves. That's his desire for each of us and each church in Reading.

Our response:

Hebrews 10:19-25

"Draw near to God" - to live with, to talk with, to listen to, to worship

In that place of closeness here the words of Jesus as he spoke them to Bartimeus:

"What do you want Me to do for you?"

"Love and good deeds" - to serve him, to live out our worship in mission (telling people the good news about Jesus) and mercy (serving them in love) Doing the work of God: "I will seek the lost, bring back the strays, bandage the injured, and strengthen the weak"

