

The Great “I Am”
John 8:48-59
Sermon Outline

Introduction: Some say “You cannot claim that Jesus is world-wide King and hope to have a peaceful world. The sooner we drop the “Jesus is God” talk, the better off we will all be.” Jesus refuses to accept the dichotomy implicit in these words. We will look at three questions: (i) What does Jesus claim for himself; (ii) What does Jesus promise, and (iii) What should we do about it?

I) What does Jesus claim?

To be the one true God, the Creator of all and the absolute Ruler of all.

A) Evidence: vv. 53, 56-58

*Are you greater than our father Abraham...Who do you make yourself out to be?
Truly, truly I say to you, “Before Abraham was, I am.”*

- Received as blasphemy (*Leviticus 24:16*)
- Why blasphemy?

B) The name “I am” (YHWH)

1) The name that God gave to himself when he called Moses

*Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.³ And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.”⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”⁵ Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.⁷ Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (*Exodus 3*)*

YHWH (LORD, Jehovah) was Israel’s covenant name for God—the special name by which they were invited to call him.

2) The content of the name

- God has no “surname” – He gives not reference for himself
- *Isaiah 45:5-7, 18 I am YHWH and there is no other*

3) Jesus calls himself by this name

II) What does Jesus promise?

To deliver from death all who “keep his word”

A) Vs. 51: *Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death*

When Jesus called himself “I Am” he not only claimed to be God. He also claimed to be the God who delivered Moses and Israel from slavery in Egypt.

“Something greater than the exodus is here”

B) “Death” and Jesus promise

1) Meaning of death:

Curse: “Wages of sin”

Does terrible things to us

2) When Jesus promises “we will never see death” he means...a new quality of life that carries through the grave

C) How does Jesus deliver us from death?

By his own.

vv. 50, 54: I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks it and he is the judge...If I glorified myself, my glory is nothing. It is my 'Father who glorifies me....

Jesus conquers not by killing but by dying—by words and not by a sword

O woman, you may keep the gold. The child we seek doesn't need our gold. On love, on love alone he will build his kingdom. His pierced hand will hold no scepter. His haloed head will wear no crown. His might will not be built on your toil. Swifter than lightning he will soon walk among us. He will bring us new life and receive our death. And the keys to his kingdom belong to the poor. (Amahl and the Night Visitors)

Jesus annihilates our fears as readily as he annihilates our paradigms. He is absolute ruler, but he refuses to rule by force. He demands everything but will not force us to give him anything. He is YHWH who died, punished by his own justice for our crimes, receiving our death so that we would not have to taste it ourselves.

III) What do we do?

Vs. 51: Truly, truly I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death

We must keep his word

What does this mean?

Keep coming back to the gospel so that we can keep living out the gospel:

- Remembering we are known and loved, alive from the dead because of the King's self-abnegation and sacrifice.
- Choosing to be like him:

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) How do you answer the charge that religion, especially religions with a world-side missionary purpose (like Islam and Christianity) are socially dangerous?
- 2) Discuss the following: “When God calls himself “I am” he means that there is no court of appeal beyond him. He calls all the shots and defines all the terms. We cannot define “love” or “justice” ourselves and then require that God be subject to our definition.”
- 3) What do you make of Jesus' claim to be the great “I am?”
- 4) Why do people fear death? What does the Bible mean when it says that the “wages of sin is death?” When Jesus promises us that he will deliver us from death, does he simply mean that life as we know it will continue forever? If not, then what does he mean? What sort of “life” do you look forward to in heaven, if in fact you do?
- 5) Discuss the following: “Jesus conquered not by killing but by dying. He is YHWH who died—punished by his own justice for our crimes—receiving our death so that we would not have to taste it ourselves. He is the absolute ruler of all people and nations, whether they admit it or not. And yet he wants only voluntary subjects. He demands everything we have. And yet he will not force us to give him a thing.”
- 6) Discuss what it means to “keep coming back to the gospel so that you can keep living it out”