

THE “I AM” STATEMENTS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- WORKSHOP 100: I AM the Bread of Life (John 6:25-35, 41-59)
I AM the Light of the World (John 8:2-20, 9:1-12, 35-41)
- WORKSHOP 300: I AM the Gate for the Sheep/I AM the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21)
I AM the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:1-54)
- WORKSHOP 400: I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-14)
I AM the True Vine (John 15:1-17)

What is the meaning of “I AM”?

Exodus 3:12-15 – When Moses asked God for his name at the burning bush, God’s reply was “I AM” or “I AM WHO I AM.” The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, and the “I Am’s” in the Gospel of John are the exact same words = *ego eimi*.

What might the author of John intend to communicate to the Christian Jews of his community by reporting that Jesus used the same phrase, I AM?

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

What we know about the setting for the Gospel of John:

- The Gospel of John is not like the synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke - whose writers drew from a common source of stories, even if each of them had a different emphasis.
- John was the last gospel to be written. Scholars tell us that this gospel was known in Egypt by the year 100 because a papyrus fragment of John was found there.
- By that time the Temple had been destroyed (70 CE), causing all Jews – Pharisees, priests, Jews, and Jewish Christians alike – to struggle over religious identity and power.
- We know that the early believers were Jews who believed Jesus was the long-awaited messiah and we know they continued to worship in the synagogues.
- Between 85 and 95 CE, the identity struggles were so great that it had become a practice to excommunicate perceived heretics - the Jewish Christians - from the synagogue.
- Though it is not certain how wide spread the occurrence, there was even a “Benediction Against Heretics” that was used at that time.
- The gospel itself points to this crisis within synagogues. Three times in John the expression “put out of the synagogue” occurs (9:22, 12:42, and 16:2).
- At the time of the writing of this gospel, the audience to whom John was writing was a persecuted religious minority.

Patterns are repeated in Jesus' I AM declaration:

- The context of each "I AM" informs and gives new depth to the saying
- Familiar Old Testament connection
- Importance of BELIEF in God and Jesus as one
- Conflict with Jewish leaders
- References to the future

Workshop 100**PATTERNS in "I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE" – John 6:25-35, 41-59****Context informs and gives a deeper level of meaning to I AM the Bread of Life**

- John 6:1-15 - I AM the Bread of Life comes just after the feeding of the 5,000.

John 6:25-35:**Reference to the future**

- John 6:27 – "...food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you..."

BELIEF in God and Jesus as one

- John 28-30 - God's work is that they believe in Jesus whom God has sent

Familiar Old Testament connection

- John 6:31-33 - Manna in the wilderness is mentioned.

John 6:41-51:**Conflict with Jewish leaders**

- John 6:41-42 - The Jews began to complain about him.

Reference to the future

- John 6:51 - Those who eat of the bread will live forever.

John 52-59:**Conflict with Jewish leaders**

- John 6:54 - Those who eat and drink.....will have eternal life and be resurrected.
- John 6:58 - Those who eat of the bread will live forever.

PATTERNS in "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD" – John 8:2-20, 9:1-12, 35-41**Context which informs I AM the Light of the World:**

- John 7:2 - The second I AM takes place in Jerusalem during the Jewish Festival of Booths also known as the Feast of Tabernacles.

Familiar Old Testament connection

- Feast of the Tabernacles/Booths in the wilderness. (Lev. 23:33-44; Deut. 16:13-15)
- Light, in addition to being an important part of the Tabernacles celebration, has always been a symbol of the presence of God for the Hebrews.

Conflict with Jewish leaders just prior to the I AM

- John 7:11 - "The Jews were looking for him at the festival, and saying 'Where is he?'"
- John 7:32-33, 45-47

John 8:2-11:

Conflict with Jewish leaders

- John 8:6a - "They said this to test him"

BELIEF in God and Jesus as one

- In John, sin is not a moral category about behavior, but rather a theological category about one's response to the revelation of God in Jesus.
- John 8:10-11 - Faith of the accused woman is implied as she walks away with Jesus' forgiveness.

John 8:12-20:

Conflict with Jewish leaders

- John 8:13b - Pharisees challenge Jesus – "...your testimony is not valid."

BELIEF in God and Jesus as one

- John 8:13,19 - Evidence of rejection of this belief – Jewish leaders deny the notion that God and Jesus are one as they challenge his testimony regarding the adulterous woman.

Reference to the future

- John 8:20 - "No one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come."

John 9:1-12

BELIEF in God and Jesus as one

- John 9:3-4 - Healing of the blind man is about believing that Jesus is doing God's works. Blindness is not caused by sin.
- John 9:38 the blind man declares he believes and worships Jesus.

Reference to the future

- "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work." (9:4)