

The Great “I AM”s:

CHRIST'S SELF-PORTRAIT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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Introduction

When Moses saw the burning bush (Exodus 3), he asked of God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” God replied with, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” In the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to himself as “I AM.”

The Gospel of John differs from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) in depth and outlook. John begins from before time began in his narrative about the God-man, Jesus Christ. It explores the divinity of Jesus Christ in great detail.

A very personal portrait of the Savior of all mankind is seen in John’s Gospel. John covers the prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane in four chapters! In his discourses and miracles we see the God-man revealed to us. This Bible Study will look at the discourses known as the “I AM”s. May the Holy Spirit work in your hearts as you study the words of Christ through the pen of St. John. Herein John reports for us the Savior we all need--one who can and has kept the Law for us as the God-man who lived the perfect life and died our death for us. To God alone be the Glory!

THE GREAT “I AM”s: CHRIST’S SELF-PORTRAIT IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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I AM
The Messiah
John 4:26

Preliminary: Read John 3:22-4:26

Jesus and John the Baptist: The situation--

1. What was happening?
2. What was reported to John?
3. What was John’s response?
 - a. v. 30:
 - b. v. 31:
 - c. v. 32:
 - d. vv. 33-34:
 - e. vv. 35-36:

4. What does Jesus do?

In travelling to Galilee, Jesus goes through Samaria. Read 2 Kings 17:24-41 to find out who the Samaritans were and what they did. Ezra 4 relates friction between the Samaritans and the Judeans. This friction existed in Jesus’ day. One did not pass through Samaria when one traveled from Judea to Galilee (and vice-versa). Often the Jews traveled the Trans-Jordan desert when travel from one province to the other was called for. Imagine the surprise of the Samaritan woman at the well when she arrived for water! A Jew sitting at the well! (For the historical importance of this particular well, read Genesis 33:19 and Joshua 24:32). And what takes place at this well? Let’s listen in.

1. What does Jesus ask for?
2. What is the reply of the Samaritan woman?
3. Why does she ask this question?
4. How does Jesus answer?
5. What does the Samaritan say in response?
6. What was she thinking about?
7. What did Jesus have in mind?

Of course the Samaritan is interested. If one could take one drink of water that would ensure no more thirst! She wouldn’t have to “run” to the well everyday for water ever again! Yet Jesus’ concern runs deeper than the mere physical. This woman needs a Savior. This wasn’t a chance meeting--the Lord knew she would be coming to that very spot at that very moment! Jesus knows her life history, the condition of her heart and how to relay his Gospel message to her. Using Law and Gospel, Jesus reveals her condition and heals with the Gospel.

1. Whom does Jesus ask the woman to bring to the well?

2. What is the dilemma?
3. Was this an unknown factor to Jesus?
4. What does Jesus say?
5. What does the Samaritan woman conclude about the man speaking to her at the well?

In an abrupt shift, the woman doesn't directly acknowledge her sin. She confesses that Jesus is a prophet, but in her guilt she changes the subject.

1. What does the Samaritan woman ask Jesus?
2. How does this relate with Samaritan history (cf. readings above)?
3. Jesus' responses:
 - a. v. 21--
 - b. v. 22--
 - c. vv. 23,24--
4. What does the woman expect?
5. Jesus responds--

For Personal Application

1. In what ways do you and I today act like the Samaritan woman?
2. What types of questions do we raise when we are faced with the guilt of our sin?
3. The woman expected a Messiah (just as many of the Jews and Samaritans). What should one expect from the Messiah? Was this woman looking for a political or spiritual Messiah?
4. Jesus shared his message with the woman at the well. Was she a model worshipper? What comfort can you and I take in this account from Jesus' life?
5. Jesus no doubt was fatigued--his disciples went for the food and he asked for water! Yet Jesus had a higher purpose for being at the well alone. He could speak with this woman alone. How often do we not encounter similar situations, where God has directed us into the path of an unbeliever? Into the path of a weak or afflicted brother or sister? How can we better use these opportunities God directs us into?

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6. Read Matthew 18:15-20. How does Jesus follow his own words in this account recorded by John?

7. John 4:39-42--what are the results of Jesus' teaching?

8. Read John 7:37-52.

Discuss: How is the message similar to that spoken to the Samaritans?
How is the reaction the same?
Different?

9. Read Jeremiah 2:1-3:5. God is proclaiming his judgment upon Judah. Focus on 2:13. What does God call himself?

How does that compare with what Jesus says to the Samaritan woman?

How do we build broken cisterns today? What is the cistern that does hold water?

I AM
The Bread of Life
John 6:35

Preliminary: Read John 6

Jesus is teaching in Galilee. This is the end of the second year of Jesus ministry (Passovers marked in John 2:13, 5:1, 6:4). Some time had passed since Jesus had healed the lame man at Bethesda. Followers have followed him to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias).

1. What is the situation?
2. What does Jesus ask of his disciples?
3. Philip's response?
4. Andrew's response?
5. Note Jesus' response:
 - a. v. 10--
 - b. v. 11--
 - c. v. 12--
 - d. v. 13--
6. What is the response of the people?
7. Are they expecting a political or spiritual Messiah?

That evening the disciples set sail across the Sea of Galilee. As a sudden storm hits, Jesus is seen walking on the water (cf. Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52). Once Jesus gets into the boat, John reports that "immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading."

1. Was this sudden transport mere coincidence? Explain.
2. What did the people left behind realize?

Discourse on the Bread of Life

1. To whom was Jesus addressing this discourse?
2. Why were the people looking for Jesus?
3. "Food that endures forever"--how similar to the Water of Life?
4. "On him God has placed his seal of approval"--How and when?
5. What do the people ask (v. 28)?

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6. How does Jesus answer?
7. What does Jesus’ answer say to us today?

The Jews are looking for miraculous signs--how short their memory! Just the day before they had started with five small barley loaves and two fishes, each had eaten his/her fill and were left with *twelve* baskets remaining--and yet they asked for miraculous signs!

1. What, ironically, is the sign they mention from their history?
2. Who did the Jews feel gave them the manna?
3. Who really supplied the manna?

Read Exodus 16 to learn more about the manna.

1. What special instructions were given concerning the manna:
 - a. v. 4--
 - b. v. 5--
 - c. v. 16--
2. How do verses 17, 18 show God’s providence of his people?
3. How obedient were the people?
4. What was the result?
5. What happened on the Sabbath?
6. What was the Lord's response (vv. 28,29)?
7. Describe the manna (v. 31).
8. How long did the Israelites eat this manna?
9. The manna was supplied by God. Yet it was a physical, temporal blessing that lasted until the recipients died or entered Canaan. What does Jesus say in verse 49 about those who ate the manna?

When Jesus talked about the Bread of Life (vv. 32,33), the people were attentive. Like the Samaritan woman they wanted to know more.

1. How is the response similar to the response of the Samaritan woman?
2. What were the Jews looking for?

3. How was the response similar to the response in Samaria?
4. How was the response different?
5. Despite the miracles, many could not see past the physical body standing in their presence. Who's son did the Jews regard Jesus (v. 42)?
6. Who does Jesus say that his Father is?
7. What prophesy does Jesus make in verse 51? Verses 53-59?

Verses 60-71 gives us both the sad account of disenchanted followers and the display of faith of the Twelve. It will not be the last desertion (2 Timothy 4:10--a sad spiritual obituary!). Even Simon Peter will desert on Maundy Thursday (John 18:15-18; 25-27).

1. What does Jesus here know about his fate in verse 64? Verse 71?
2. What does Jesus ask the Twelve?
3. What is Simon Peter's answer?

The Jews, hearing Jesus' words no doubt were offended--it sounded like cannibalism! Paul echoes what Jesus is speaking about when he writes to the Corinthian congregation. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16.

1. How is Jesus' discourse "foolishness?"
2. How is it wise?

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Application Questions

1. How do we seek an earthly Bread King today?
2. How would you respond if someone says: “If there is a loving God, why is there evil? hunger? pain? injustice?”
3. Explain how these people would be seeking an earthly savior?
4. In what ways do we see the Gospel as foolish and turn away from it?
5. Look again at Exodus 16. Our Father promises to give us our daily bread. We pray it in the Lord’s Prayer. In what ways do we show our lack of trust in God’s providence similar to the Israelites lack of trust?
6. In both Exodus and John 6 we see how the Jews earned their title of “a stiff-necked people.” Knowing that our necks are just as stiff, what comfort can we take from these accounts in the Bible? How do verses 28, 29 re-inforce this comfort in our lives?
7. Finally, knowing Simon Peter, what comfort can we hold dear from his example?

I AM
From Above
John 8:23

Preliminary: Read John 8:12-30

Previous to this section, many are debating who Jesus is. Some say the Christ; others say he deceives. The Christ must come from the House of David; this man was from Galilee. The Pharisees as well as many others are ready to discount Jesus' ministry because he is from Galilee.

1. Discuss the following Old Testament prophecies about Jesus and their fulfillment:
 - A. Micah 5:2--Matthew 2:1,6
 - B. Hosea 11:1--Matthew 2:15
 - C. Isaiah 9:1-2--Matthew 4:12-16
 - D. Deuteronomy 18:15--John 6:14
 - E. Psalm 110:4--Hebrew 6:20
2. Relate now how these prophecies were in the minds of Jesus' contemporaries.
3. In what ways did they show an ignorance of the Scriptures?
4. What may explain this ignorance?

The Pharisees challenge Jesus and his authority. In their eyes Jesus' testimony is invalid--he was acting as his own witness!

1. Why does Jesus say that his testimony is valid?
2. Look at the following passages where Jesus speaks about his relationship with the Father and discuss:
 - A. Matthew 11:27
 - B. Luke 23:34
 - C. John 3:35
 - D. John 5:18,20
 - E. John 6:44,46
 - F. John 10:17,30,38
 - G. John 14:6,9
 - H. John 15:23
3. In many of the above passages Jesus uses the pronoun *my* or the definite article *the*. In Matthew 6:9 the pronoun *our* is used while the pronoun *your* is found in Matthew 5:16, 6:26, John 8:42 and John 20:17. Explain the differences, both context and importance to our faith-life.

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4. John 8:20--"Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come."--What does this tell us about Jesus' mission here on earth?
5. The Pharisees were intent on keeping the letter of the Law. Explain how Jesus' words in verses 23-24 would irritate the Pharisees.
6. What is Jesus referring to in verse 28?
7. How inseparable are the Father and Son?
8. What could cause a separation between these two?
9. God promises that his word will not return void. Wherever it goes, it causes people to change--either to faith in Jesus as their Savior from sin or they harden their hearts against God and his word of Grace. Which result does John report in verse 30?

Application Questions

1. How is our understanding of the Scriptures like that of the Jews? How is our ignorance shown in our daily faith-life?
2. "...his time had not yet come." Can you remember other times in Jesus' life when this was said? How can we take these words to heart in our daily lives? In our prayer life?
3. Sometimes being a Christian is lonely. The world mocks our Christian values (Hollywood, TV, court decisions, etc.). What comfort can we take in these instances when we read verse 29?

I AM

The Eternal One

John 8:58

Preliminary: Read John 8:31-59

Some of us take time to look up our heritage. We dig up information about our ancestors so that we know from whom and where we came. Sometimes we find a prominent or somewhat prominent ancestor. Then again we may find a crook or scoundrel. The Jews know their heritage and they are proud of it. But while they remembered the valiant, praiseworthy deeds of their forefathers, the Bible also points out their weaknesses and shortcomings. Look at the following and put down the good and the bad:

PATRIARCH	GOOD	BAD
Abraham		
Isaac		
Jacob		
Judah		
David		
Solomon		

The selective memories of the Jews is evident in verse 33. “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

1. Was it true that the Jews were never slaves of anyone?
Explain:

2. What was the slavery and freedom which Jesus was talking about?

Verse 38: Jesus tells the Jews that he has seen the Father. He also tells the Jews that they are children of their father. Who are the fathers Jesus is referring to?

1. Why would this upset the Jews?
2. What does Jesus mean when he refers to father? How does it apply to us?

In verses 42-47 Jesus explains why he considers the Pharisees to be children of the Devil. What crimes does Jesus accuse Satan of?

1. Name calling now enters the picture. What do the Jews say to malign Jesus?
2. Why would these be insults?

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3. What correlation is there between what Jesus called the Pharisees and what they in turn call Jesus?
4. How does he answer their charges?
5. Can anyone be greater than their father Abraham? Again, the Jews show their partisan bias. How do we today show our bias? How do we try to hang on to the spiritual coattails of those before us?

Again Jesus makes clear who he is. With these words in verses 54-59 the claim is made openly and publicly that Jesus claims to be the Son of God. The Pharisees show that they understand what Jesus is saying. They are ready to stone him (v. 59). Leviticus 24:10-23 tells us clearly that anyone who blasphemes God is to be put to death. If a mortal made the claim that he was the Son of God, he was guilty of blasphemy. Jesus by his miracles proved that he had the authority to make this claim.

The Pharisees see Jesus' youth. How could he possibly know Abraham? But Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I AM.”

1. What was the immediate reaction? Why were the Jews “up in arms?”
2. How did Jesus again display his divinity?
3. What was the response of Jesus' audience on this occasion?
4. How is John 1:10-13 illustrated here?

Application Questions

1. The Watchtower Society denies that Jesus Christ is true God. On the basis of John 8, how would you explain the doctrine of the divinity of Christ?
2. How do we sometimes think that we are not slaves of anyone?
3. How do we display our slavery and kinship with Satan?

I AM

The Light of the World

John 8:12, 9:5

Preliminary: Read John 8:12; 9:1-41; 1:5-9

Light is important for sustaining life. The first order of creation was the creation of light. The light itself was used to separate night and day. The first humans were children of the light. Yet their act plunged mankind into darkness. The prophets in the Old Testament were sent to strike matches in order that the people would see the need for light, namely the Light of the World.

Those who are blind are without light. What vague shapes they may see do them no good. The blind person cannot discern between differing objects. We also by nature are born blind and need sight given to us. Our study in lesson five begins with the miracle of sight restored.

1. This man was blind from birth. What question did Jesus' disciples ask?
2. How do we often have that same question?
3. What is the answer Jesus gives?
4. How is this a comfort to us? How does St. Paul re-iterate this in Romans 8:28?
5. What practical advice does Jesus give his disciples? How does it apply to us?
6. How does Jesus heal the blind man? Why was this unusual? Explain the purpose of this method. How is it similar to the centurion in Matthew 8:5-13? How different from Naaman in 2 Kings 5?

Reaction of the neighbors. The neighbors were amazed at what they had seen. This was the man who used to go around begging!

1. What was he up to now?
2. How often are we not surprised or skeptical about a change in a person?
3. Compare Matthew 13:53-58 and Acts 9:13,14,26,27. What are the similarities in these accounts?
4. The Pharisees investigate. What did the Pharisees find fault with?

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5. What is their conclusion, by unbelief?
6. What is the conclusion by faith?
7. What was the recipient’s statement of faith?
8. React to the parent’s answer to the Pharisees.

Physical blindness is indeed a handicap. With it one is unable to do much productive work. He or she must rely on the help of others. Jesus makes the distinction with spiritual blindness. Those who are blind rely on the one who can help--the Light of the World! Those who believe they can see reject his help! How can we take to heart what Jesus says to the Pharisees in verse 41?

Application Questions

How do we today maintain attitudes similar to those held by the disciples in verse 2 and the Pharisees in verse 34? How do we apply this to our own personal lives?

Do we also see changes in others as positive or view them skeptically? Explain.

Compare the testimonies of the following:

The blind man who was healed--

The parents of the blind man--

What lessons can we learn from the “blind” man’s testimony?

Summarize the meaning of true vision and true blindness.

I AM
The Door (Gate)
John 10:7
The Good Shepherd
John 10:14

Preliminary: Read John 10:1-21; Psalm 23; (Zechariah 11:4-17; 13:7-9; *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*)

The illustration of sheep and shepherds is a common theme in the Bible. The Israelites were shepherds. The raising of sheep was vital to the economy of the Jewish people. Lamb dominated the Jewish diet. Thus it does not surprise us that our Lord also uses this illustration.

Sheep are very interesting creatures. Just referring to the Israelites as sheep and making that comparison would be an insult. Anyone who has tended sheep can tell you that sheep are very dumb creatures. They are obstinate and stubborn. They eat dry dead grass when good green foliage is nearby. Since sheep rarely sense danger, they are often easy prey for wolves and other carnivorous prowlers if left on their own. For King David to say “The LORD is my shepherd” and refer to his subjects as sheep was not a wise political move--it would be similar to the President of the United States using racial slurs today!

This section that you are studying now uses terms that would be familiar to Jesus’ hearers but seem strange to us in the twentieth century. A shepherd often slept at night in the doorway of the sheep pen, thus keeping the sheep in and the prowlers out. Everything coming into and going out of that pen had to pass the shepherd. The shepherd, if he was a good shepherd, literally laid his life on the line. If the sheep were lost, killed or destroyed, the whole shepherd’s future was bleak. This was his investment, his food and clothing. No doubt the shepherd felt the urgency of his calling.

1. Whom do the sheep follow in verse three? Why do they follow that particular person?
2. Why do they not follow a stranger?
3. Where do we, as sheep, hear our shepherd’s voice?
4. What mind-picture is Jesus painting by also portraying himself as the door for the sheep? What do these verses say to Universalism (that is, that all beliefs are valid and everyone is saved anyway)?
5. What is the devotion of a good shepherd to his sheep? How did our Good Shepherd fulfill this job requirement?
6. In verse 16 Jesus talks of other sheep. Who may these other sheep be? What does this verse say about evangelism? About raising our children?

7. Was Jesus' death passive or active on his part? Explain your answer based on verse 18.

Verses 19-21 record for us a division among the Jews. St. Paul also speaks of "divisions" in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. Explain the divisions that existed in Jesus' day, in Paul's day and even today. Illustrate examples of man's "wisdom" today. How do we often follow our own folly thinking that it is "wisdom"?

Application Questions:

1. What do you know about the nature of sheep? How is our own sinful human nature much like the nature of sheep?
2. Read the Zechariah passages listed at the beginning of the lesson. How many prophecies are mentioned? How were they fulfilled? How does Zechariah's prophecies reflect the themes found in Psalm 23 and John 10?
3. Compare Psalm 23 and John 10:1-21. What conclusion about Jesus do we draw from these sections of Scripture? Is the LORD ("I Am") in David's Psalm the Christ who speaks in John 10?
4. Recount the many ways and various methods the wolf uses to attack the sheep. Can the sheep protect themselves? Who can help the sheep? What does this say about our salvation?

I AM
The Son of God
John 10:36

Preliminary: John 10:22-42

1. Which feast is here reported?
2. What other name do we know this feast by?

The Feast of Dedication (*Hanukkah*) lasted eight days beginning the 25th of *Chisleu* (about mid-December). We see Feasts of Dedication in Numbers 7, for the dedication of the tabernacle, and in 2 Chronicles 7, for the dedication of the temple. Ezra and Nehemiah also report Dedication festivals (Ezra 6:16-17; Nehemiah 12:27) when the temple was rebuilt at the return from the Babylonian Captivity. These appear to be one-time festivals for one time events. We see no other Feasts of Dedication elsewhere in the Bible (except for this account in Jesus’ life). The Mosaic Law did not dictate an annual Feast of Dedication.

The feast referred to in this account appears to have had its origins from the rule of the Maccabees. The Maccabees ruled Judah after the days of Alexander the Great. Headed by Judas Maccabaeus, this family led a revolt against the Syrians in the years 175-164 BC. This family ruled until 37 BC when factions had split among the rulers and the Romans were invited to settle the disputes (the Romans never left).

The Maccabees revolted in greater part because the Syrians had defiled the temple. When the Jews finally won their freedom, they cleansed the temple and held a feast of dedication. This feast also came to be known as *Hanukkah*, which means “lights.”

1. What time of year did this occur?
2. What was Jesus doing?
3. Locate Solomon's Colonnade on a map.
4. What did the Jews want to know?
5. What was Jesus’ answer?
6. Give examples of:
 - a. “I did tell you, but you did not believe”--
 - b. “The miracles...in my Father’s name...you did not believe”--
7. vs. 27--How does it relate to the previous “I AM”?
8. What comfort and confidence is ours in verses 28 and 29?

9. What is Jesus saying in verse 30?

10. How does the Nicene Creed reflect this verse?

How does the Athanasian Creed reflect this verse?

Again the Jews show us the import of Jesus' words. As we saw in chapter 8, verse 59, the act of stoning was reserved for adultery and blasphemy (that is, claiming to be God).

1. What does Jesus say when he sees the Jews pick up stones to stone him?

2. What is the answer of the Jews?

3. How is their statement a contradiction?

4. Discuss Jesus' answer:

a. v. 34--Where is the passage found which Jesus quotes?

b. v. 35--What claim does Jesus make about Scripture?

c. v. 36--What does Jesus say about his mission?

What is the title he holds that reflects this status?

d. v. 37--Explain this statement that Jesus makes. (Compare how Jesus performs miracles with the creation of the world).

e. v. 38--What was the purpose of the miracles that Jesus performed?

5. Verse 39 again says, "*Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.*" Where does that phrase (or one similar to it) also occur?

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6. What does it re-inforce about Jesus’ mission on earth?

7. What does it say about his power?

8. Where did Jesus go?

9. What was the significance of this act?

10. What was the response of the people?

Despite the intense opposition from the Jewish leaders, many still came out to hear Jesus, just as many came to hear John the Baptizer. No doubt these were people who felt the hurt and ache of sin. The payment and satisfaction for sin was too great for any of them to even attempt. Thus it is that they come to Christ with empty hands and aching hearts and that they then find peace and joy in the message of Jesus. His miracles prove that he is indeed true God.

Application Questions:

1. The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Jesus is only the son of God and thus not true God (but only a *demi-god*). With the verses in this section, how would you answer their teaching?
2. Explain what it means to be the Son of God? How is it similar to when Jesus uses the term “Son of Man?”
3. “*We are not stoning you for any of these (the miracles), but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.*” Today many look at the purpose and mission of the Church to right society’s wrongs, to feed the poor, to advance political agendas. How is this thinking similar to what the Jews say in the verse here quoted?

4. What is the true mission of the Church? How is that a comfort to each one of us?

5. Again Jesus tells us that his sheep hear his voice. Where do we hear his voice? How do we show that we hear it? Is this an angry voice, tired voice, glad voice or an inquiring voice? Explain.

6. Discuss the various ways that you and I also echo the sentiments of the Jews recorded in verse 24.

I AM
The Resurrection and the Life
John 11:25

Preliminary: John 11

We meet a famous family in this section--two sisters, Mary and Martha, and their brother, Lazerus. We see Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42.

1. What was the circumstance surrounding the episode found in Luke?
2. What is “the one thing needful?”
3. Many congregations have ladies groups called Mary-Martha Circles (Societies, Clubs, etc.). Explain the importance that such a name expresses.

John relates to us that this Mary is also known for another event. What is she also known for? Read the account in Mark 14:1-11 and in John 12:1-11. Lazerus is sick--it appears to be terminal, as the sisters send for Jesus.

1. What does Jesus say when he gets word of Lazerus’ illness?
2. What purpose is served by Lazerus’ illness?
3. What does Jesus immediately do?
4. When Jesus does decide to return, what is the reaction of his disciples?
5. Describe the faith of the disciples at this time.
6. Of what do the disciples have in mind in making their concerns known?

Jesus then goes into his discourse about walking in light. He again uses the illustration of the light and the dark. Recall what we said in a previous study about light, as well as what John tells us about the light in 1 John 1.

7. "*Lazarus has fallen asleep*"--does this apply just to Lazarus? Explain your answer.

8. What did the disciples think Jesus meant by "sleep"?

9. How would you describe the faith of the disciples at this time?

10. How does verse 15 echo verse 4?

Thomas, also known as Didymus (both names mean "twin") speaks up. We see here someone who is sure of what will happen.

1. Why do you think the Holy Spirit wants us to know what Thomas said?
2. What was he sure would happen?
3. Why does Thomas have this opinion?
4. Compare this account of Thomas with the well-known account of his Easter pledge (John 20:24-31).

When Jesus arrives in Bethany, he learns that Lazarus has been dead four days. Since Jesus remained where he was two days before heading toward Bethany, he must have been some distance away, probably one day's journey (one day for the messenger to reach Jesus, two days for Jesus to remain, one day for Jesus to travel to Bethany). This is assuming, of course, that Mary and Martha turned to Jesus as a last resort for the healing of their brother. Jesus no doubt knew that Lazarus had already died (v. 11).

1. Why do you suppose Jesus waits to come to Bethany until Lazarus has been in the grave four days?
2. Which sister came to greet Jesus?
3. What was her greeting? Was she happy to see Jesus?
4. Describe Martha's faith.
5. What does Martha believe about the resurrection from the dead?
6. What is Martha's confession of Jesus?

Martha returns to the house and reports to Mary that "the Teacher" has arrived.

1. Why does Martha use the term "Teacher"?

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2. What was Mary's response?
3. Describe the people following Mary: why did they do what they did? What did they think?
4. Would these followers have known Jesus? Explain your answer.
5. Depending on how you answered question #4, would you say that these people acted out of ignorance or lack of faith?
6. What was Mary's greeting?
7. Compare Mary's greeting with Martha's greeting.

Jesus does not answer Mary, but he sees the crowds and asks where the body is. They lead Jesus to the tomb, whereupon he weeps.

1. Why do you suppose Jesus wept?
2. Can you recall any other times Jesus weeps? Describe these events when he weeps.
3. How do the Jews interpret Jesus' emotion?
 - a. "See how he loved him"--
 - b. "Could not he who opens eyes...kept him from dying"--

Verse 38 is a profound verse. We have already seen Jesus weep. Yet when he arrives at the actual tomb, Jesus was "once more deeply moved." Jesus again shows his sorrow over sin and its consequences. He was moved with compassion.

1. What does Jesus ask?
2. What is Martha's objection?
3. How does Jesus respond?
4. What is Jesus' prayer?
5. What does Jesus command?
6. What is the result?

Verses 43 through 57 report the fall-out that comes as a result of this miracle. Many who had witnessed it put their faith in Jesus--yet a handful steadfastly refused to acknowledge the power that Jesus displayed! We see an emphasis on politics (and a political Messiah).

1. What does Caiaphas say?
2. What does John let us know about what Caiaphas said?
3. Explain how Caiaphas was right?
4. What does Jesus do until the Passover?
5. Explain the plans and plots that the chief priests and Pharisees had at this time.
6. Who was also in danger and why (12:9-11)?

Jesus again displays that he alone dictates the terms, time, and occasion of his death. No doubt someone who has just done what Jesus did could not expect to hide for very long without anyone seeking him out--but he went into hiding and no one knew where to find him! When Jesus taught, before feeding the 5,000, the people noticed when he sailed away and went to the other side of the lake! They immediately followed. But here Jesus is able to stay in hiding. The Father has been glorified--now Jesus prepares to complete the task he came to do. He prepares to go up to Jerusalem to be crucified.

For Further Study

1. Look up the various stories of resurrections in the Bible:
 - a. Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 8:41-42, 49-56)
 - b. The widow's son (Luke 7:12-16)
 - c. Lazerus (John 11:1-46)
 - d. Good Friday resurrections (Matthew 27:51-53)
 - e. Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20)

What is the progression in these accounts? What do they tell us about the power and person of Jesus?

The Great “I AM’s”

2. We see in verse 50 that God uses an unbeliever to prophesy his truth and/or witness to his power. Can you name at least ten other times in the Bible that this happens?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

3. What do these incidents witness to us about God’s grace?

4. Explain how these incidents re-inforce 1 Timothy 2:4:

Application Questions

1. How is our belief in the resurrection often similar to Martha’s belief in the resurrection?
2. How do we (and society around us) often view death as Mary viewed her brother’s death?
3. What comfort can we take in Jesus’ tears? (cf. Hebrews 4:15)

I AM
Teacher and Lord
John 13:13

Preliminary: Read John 13:1-13

1. At what time does this incident occur?
2. What is no doubt on our Lord's mind?
3. "Having loved his own who were in the world..." What does this mean?

Who does this include? Explain.

4. Who was behind Judas' Iscariot's actions?
5. How do you harmonize verse 2 with verse 18 (and hence Psalm 41:9)?
6. What does verse 3 reassure us?
7. What other passages, studied in previous lessons, does verse 3 echo?
8. What does Jesus do in verses 4 and 5?
9. What does this signify?

In Bible times, the host would customarily wash his/her guests' feet. Often if the family were well-off, servants would be employed in this task. Jesus here washes the feet of his guests, namely his disciples. He is welcoming them into his kingdom.

1. What does Simon Peter say?
2. What was Jesus' answer?
3. Peter then declares that Jesus will never wash his feet. What is Jesus answer?
4. How does this support the fact that we are saved by grace alone?
5. How does it reinforce what Jesus says in Matthew 20:20-28?
6. How many disciples had their feet washed? Explain.
7. Verse 10--does this refer to our baptism? Explain.

The Great “I AM’s”

8. Verse 11--what comfort can we gain from this verse?
9. What does this verse tell us about how Christ views all people?
10. How is this incident, in front of Judas, similar to the witness the Triune God gave before unbelievers such as enumerated in the previous lesson?

Jesus finishes his task, puts his clothes back on and returns to his place.

1. What does Jesus ask his disciples?
2. On our own, can we ever understand what Christ has done for us?
3. Who leads us to know what has been done?
4. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’.”
 - a. What does the term “teacher” mean?
 - b. What does the term “Lord” mean?

In the ancient world philosophers, rabbis and other prominent men often had followings of disciples. These disciples usually carried on the teachings and traditions of their mentors. Sometimes these groups became powerful (such as the Pharisees and Sadducees); often they merely slowly slid into oblivion shortly after the leader died.

1. What example does Jesus now command the disciples to follow?
2. What matter of encouragement does Jesus also give in verse 15?
3. How is verse 16 to be taken in relation to Matthew 20:28?
4. How does Matthew 10:16-26 complement verse 16?
5. Jesus in his woes to the scribes and Pharisees prefaces some admonitions to his disciples in Matthew 23:1-12. Discuss how this section echoes what Jesus says in John 13:13-17?

For Further Study

1. Discuss what the term “Teacher” means and its connotations.
2. Of the teachers that you have had, which one sticks out in your mind? Was that person a positive or negative influence? Explain.

3. Discuss what the term “Lord” means and its connotations.
4. Read Doctor Martin Luther’s explanation of baptism (especially *thirdly* and *fourthly*). How is this shown in Jesus’ discourse with Peter?

For Personal Application

1. Today we see and hear many around us urging us to “make Jesus your Lord.” How is Jesus actually made our Lord? What does Dr. Luther say about this in his explanation of the Third Article?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is our Lord? How does the world understand this Lordship? How do Evangelicals understand it?
3. When we say that Jesus is our Teacher, are we acknowledging that he merely taught us the “deeper meaning of the Law?”

Is his a mystical teaching of salvation?

What is the true teaching of our Lord?
4. Do we always live, act, speak and think in ways that reflect that Jesus is both our Lord and Teacher?

How do we often fall short of this goal?

I AM

The Way, the Truth and the Life

John 14:6

Preliminary: John 14

The last lesson, together with this lesson and the following lesson (I AM the vine) are all part of Jesus’ final instructions to his disciples on Maundy Thursday. As you read the Gospel of John in its entirety, notice that chapters 13-16 record Jesus’ final instructions, encouragement and comforts to his disciples before his death. Chapter 17 gives us the content of his prayer in Gethsemane (known as the High Priestly prayer). Though John does not record the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (understandable since the Church already had the accounts from Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians), he does record for us in five chapters the words of Jesus. This detail could only come from one who was close to our Lord. In these five chapters are words of great comfort. Jesus states undeniable truths about his power and his grace. In chapter 17 we have the comfort that Jesus not only prays just for the disciples, or even just for those who believe in Jesus, but also for those throughout the whole world who are not yet believers that they may hear the Word through his messengers and be brought to faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 17 displays a unified whole. The Triune God works together to effect our salvation. By the power of the Word and propelled by the Spirit, Christians then share their joy with the world. Verse 17 is important: *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.* It is when we study the Word that we are brought closer to our Lord and to a fuller knowledge of him. The more we know, the more we cannot help but share what we know.

1. How does Jesus again tell us the unity between himself and God the Father?
2. What does Jesus say he will do for us in verse 2?
3. When does he carry out this promise?
4. When he finishes preparing that place, what will he then do?
5. When will this happen?

In the Song of Solomon we see a separation (Song of Solomon 5:2-8:4) that is similar to what Jesus here speaks about. Part of the engagement/wedding process of the Israelites included a period when the bridegroom prepared his new home for his bride. It may be this separation that is a picture for when Christ ascends into heaven and is physically separated from the Church.

Some commentators also mention the fact of marital discord. As the husband and wife go through life, busy with the affairs of day to day life, they drift apart. Hence the Church often drifts apart from her Lord with the various cares of everyday life, during the peaks and valleys. Just as the watchmen beat and bruised the wife in the Song, so also false prophets inflict damage on the Church. But Jesus, the perfect husband to the imperfect wife (The Church), protects and heals the Church, remaining with his Church in an intimate way through Word and Sacraments.

The Song of Solomon was traditionally read by the Jews during Passover. Jesus uses the illustration of marriage during the times of the Passover--no doubt because the imagery would be vivid from the hearing of the Song during the Festival ceremonies!

1. Jesus tells his disciples “you know the way where I am going.” How do we know the way?

2. What is our roadmap to show us the way? Who is our guide
3. What was Thomas' question?
4. Evaluate what Thomas said.
5. How does Jesus respond?
6. What does this passage say about Universalism (that is that all people worship the same God in separate but equally valid ways)?
7. What was Philip's request?
8. Evaluate Philip's request.
9. What was Jesus' answer to Philip's request?
10. Where else does Jesus say this same truth?
11. Again, verses 10 and 11 show us the unity of the Trinity. What can we look at to see this unity?
12. What do these verses reinforce about the person of Jesus Christ?

Verses 12-14 reinforce the power of prayer. Jesus promises that we can do greater things than he has done because he is with the Father. This does not mean that we by ourselves are greater than Jesus. Jesus set aside some of his divine attributes, or hid them, while he was on earth. For example, before the crucifixion he was bound by space and time; after the resurrection space and time no longer contained him. Through the Spirit, sent from the Father and Son, God empowers his Church to grow in grace.

1. What can we conclude about prayer in reading these verses?
2. Should we be hesitant to take our concerns and requests to God in prayer?
3. Why can we confidently go to God in prayer?
4. Did God extend this same offer to his Old Testament people? (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:14)

The knowledge and faith of the disciples seems tenuous. They were rather intelligent people--remember among them were businessmen, a tax collector and a revolutionary who obviously hadn't been caught. These men were not idiots--yet they seem to ask questions that appear to lack a true comprehension of the kingdom of God. Thus in the second half of the chapter Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit. Again we are reminded of Dr. Luther's explanation of the Third Article: *"I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him."*

1. How does Jesus describe this Counselor (v. 17)--
2. Where will this Counselor reside?

The Great “I AM’s”

3. What words in Matthew’s Gospel echo the sentiment in verse 18? How does Genesis 28:15 echo this verse?
4. How does this again display the unity of the Trinity?
5. How do we see Jesus (v. 19)?
6. What comfort do we have in the unity of the Trinity as expressed in verses 20 and 21?

Verses 23-26 re-inforce that the Father and the Son are one, their purpose and goal is one. It is in the perfect sacrifice of the Son that our sins are forgiven and the Father deems us as his own children without fault or guilt.

1. What is the peace that Jesus speaks in verse 27?
2. Is this the same peace that the angels proclaimed in Luke 2? Explain.
3. Why can Jesus now encourage us not to let our hearts be troubled?
4. How does verse 31 summarize Jesus’ entire life here on earth?

For Further Study

1. In Acts we see reference to the word “Way” (9:2 & 24:14). What does this tell us about the disciples’ correct understanding about Jesus?
2. Look up the word “Truth” in a concordance. How many times is the word used? If Jesus is the “Truth,” what does this make other religions and other gods where Jesus is not recognized as Lord?
3. Where else have we seen Jesus speak of himself as the “Life”? What does he mean when he says he is “the Life”?

5. In verse 13 Jesus says: "*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.*" Look up the following instances where God invites one to ask for anything or where someone asks for a miraculous sign. How do these instances show both God's power and God's love? How do the recipients show their faith?

A. Genesis 18:16-33--

B. Genesis 32:22-32--

C. Exodus 3 and 4--

D. Exodus 32:9-14--

E. Exodus 33:12-23--

F. Joshua 10:12-14--

G. Judges 6:36-40--

H. 1 Samuel 1:1-20--

I. 1 Kings 3:4-15 and 2 Chronicles 1:7-12--

J. 1 Kings 18:16-46--

K. 2 Kings 19:14-19--

L. Isaiah 7--

The Great “I AM’s”

M. Daniel 6--

N. Jonah 2--

O. The book of Habakkuk--

P. Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30--

Q. Matthew 16:1-4 and Mark 8:10-12--

R. Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43--

S. Acts 4:23-31--

T. Acts 12:1-19--

U. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10--

Application Questions

1. Do we always trust in God and make use of the gift of prayer? Why or why not?
2. Can we expect God to answer us as he answered our spiritual forefathers? Explain your answer.

3. Do we always view Jesus as “the way, the truth and the life?” How do we often display our lack of faith in the “way, truth and life?”

4. How is Deuteronomy 30:11-20 reflected in John 14?

I AM
The Vine
John 15:1, 5

Preliminary: Read John 15 and 16

1. What is the illustration that Jesus uses in chapter 15?
2. How does this illustrate our salvation?
3. In verse 2 we read, “He (the Father) cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.” What is Jesus here referring to?
4. What does this say about the doctrine of the Church?
5. He also trims clean the fruitful branches so that they may bear more fruit. What is being referred to here?
6. What is it that makes us clean?
7. What truth does Jesus express in verse 4? How does that relate to our lives?
8. Discuss the relationship between Isaiah 64:6 with verse 5?

St. Paul also writes of branches, namely those ingrafted onto the vine. Read Romans 11:11-24. We see that the gardener is continually in action, grafting branches onto the vine, cutting away those that are not producing, those that have broken off.

1. What is it that makes the branches grow?
2. Who does the pruning and grafting?
3. What do the branches themselves do? Explain.
4. We speak of our works as fruit. To whom does the glory go when our works are seen (v. 8)?
5. In verses 9-11 Jesus again re-affirms the unity between himself and the Father. Again, Jesus is true God and is one with the Father. Where else have we seen this concept expressed?
6. Jesus’ command in verse 12 is echoed by John in his first epistle, chapter 4, verse 7. What is this command?
7. How is this love made manifest?

Jesus also speaks of a new relationship between himself and the disciples. No longer are they *servants*, but they are *friends*. Read why Jesus makes this change and the distinction it bears.

1. What does the servant know about his master's business?
2. What do friends know about each other?
3. What truth does verse 16 reinforce?
4. Where else have we seen the truth that Jesus speaks in the second half of verse 16?
5. Again Jesus re-iterates his command in verse 17, which is...

In verse 18 Jesus again returns to his illustration of a servant. Jesus is being upfront with his disciples. He is pondering his death--and knows what awaits the disciples. Only one of the twelve--John himself--die a natural death. Jesus is emphasizing to the disciples that what they are about to witness is also their lot in life. He has already predicted Peter's denial--now he predicts further down the road when Peter will also die for his Lord's name. Peter, according to legend, elected to be crucified upside down. He did not feel that he deserved to die the way his Master died.

The other disciples (except Judas) also fled when Jesus was arrested. Nine of those ten would later end their lives as martyrs. They would experience firsthand what their Master endured. John himself was not immune. In the book of Revelation we find John exiled on the island of Patmos.

Often Christians feel that they ought to be immune to troubles. But nothing could be further from the truth! Especially today when conservatives are assailed for their acceptance of the divine, inerrant and inspired Word of God.

1. In our persecution, what ought we to remember?
2. How did the disciples view their suffering in Acts 5:41,42?
3. How did Paul view suffering in Romans 8:18?
4. How did Jesus give this same warning to Paul in Acts 9:15,16?

Again, this section displays the full unity of the Trinity! Jesus also talks about the unity in the message and work of our salvation.

1. Why does the world treat us as it does?
2. Who is the One who sent Jesus?
3. What does verse 22 say?
4. How is this thought expressed in Matthew 11:20-24?
5. How is this thought expressed in Matthew 12:39-42?
6. What does verse 24 tell us about the purpose of Jesus' miracles?
7. Explain the psalm: "*They hated me without reason.*"

The Great “I AM’s”

8. In chapter 16, verse 2, Jesus gives a prediction of actions taken by the Jewish leaders. Who comes to mind as you read this verse?

Jesus again promises to send the Holy Spirit. As we have gone through these last few chapters, we indeed see repetition of thoughts. Remember that this is the night before Jesus dies. No doubt his heart is heavy. Yet in confronting his death, Jesus seeks to assure his disciples that it is not in vain. His death has a purpose! He will not remain dead! He will arise!

1. What further work will the Counselor do when he comes (vv. 8-11)?
2. How does he carry this out in our lives?
3. What means does he use?

Again we see the unity of the Trinity in verse 15! Jesus also speaks cryptically to the disciples in verse 16.

1. What did the disciples have trouble understanding?
2. Were the disciples able to ask Jesus about the meaning?
3. What was Jesus’ explanation?
4. Does this refer to his Resurrection, Ascension or Pentecost? Explain your answer.
5. Jesus again speaks of peace in verse 33. What is this peace Jesus talks about? How is it different from the world’s view of peace?
6. How has Jesus overcome the world?
7. What is our comfort in knowing that Jesus has overcome the world?

For Further Study

1. Read Dr. Luther’s explanation of the Third Article. How does Luther express what Jesus says about the Counselor?
2. Discuss and consider those who suffered for the sake of the Lord in Scripture (both Old and New Testaments). What can we take from their example? What was the one thing that maintained these martyrs during their times of persecution?

3. We saw Jesus talk about love again in this section. How does Paul define love in 1 Corinthians 13?
4. We indeed suffer for Christ. However, many false prophets also point to their suffering as proof that they are “valid.” What did Paul have to say about the nature of suffering in 2 Corinthians 11 and 12?

Application Questions

1. Considering what Jesus all said on Maundy Thursday, how can we testify to the Watchtower Disciples about the Trinity?
2. What can we testify about the Divinity of Christ?
3. How can we properly call ourselves *servants* of Christ?
4. How can we properly call ourselves *friends* of Christ?
5. What is our comfort in times of trouble? turmoil? persecution?
6. When are we also “hated by the world?”
7. What aids us in our struggle against the world?

I AM
The Alpha and Omega
Revelation 1:8
The First and the Last
Revelation 1:17
Revelation 22:13

Preliminary: Read Revelation 1-3, 22 (a thorough reading of the book would be preferable)

The Book of Revelation is the account of Jesus appearing to the disciple whom he loved to re-assure that disciple and his Church. Persecution is on the horizon for the Church, as well as human traits becoming manifest in the individual congregations. The book is a letter which was to be sent to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Some of the names are familiar from Paul’s missionary journeys.

The Book of Revelation has often been misinterpreted. How often have you heard someone tell you that “*only 144,000 people will be saved.*”? How often have you heard of history being dated by events in the Book of Revelation?

Jesus appears to John in a *vision* full of *imagery* and *symbolism*. This needs to be kept in mind as one reads and studies Revelation. In the face of persecution, Jesus wishes to reassure his Church that though he allows these things to happen, these plagues and calamities have limited power. God does not allow these plagues to exceed their power. Just as he raised up judges, prophets and good kings in the Old Testament, so also God will take care of the New Testament Israel--the Holy, Christian Church!

This chapter is not a thorough study of Revelation. It is here to show the divinity of Jesus Christ as expressed in the “I AM” statements. A more thorough study ought to be taken up as a separate study. This is a book of intense comfort! It is sad that many are afraid to study it or lack a knowledge of this grand book of the Bible.

The Greek Scriptures call this book *Apocalypse*. It simply means “to uncover.” It has come to be used as a generic term for a genre of symbolic literature that depict the ultimate (final) victory of good over evil. Today people associate “apocalypse” with the end times, mainly because of Revelation and the false interpretations attributed to it.

Revelation does lead to the end times. But its greater message is the message of our Lord who is “with us always, even to the end of the ages.”

1. What is the stated purpose of the writing as stated in verses 1-3?
2. To whom is the letter addressed?
3. What do we all know about these churches from other books of the Bible?
4. What is verse 5 referring to with
 - a. the faithful witness?
 - b. the firstborn from the dead?
 - c. ruler of the kings of the earth?
5. Of what comfort is it to John’s hearers that Jesus is “the ruler of the kings of the earth”?

6. What is our comfort in that phrase?
7. What has he done for us (vv. 5,6)?
8. How does that depict the Trinity?
9. Verse 7 tells us how Jesus will come. How did the angels state the same thought in Acts 1:10,11?
10. What is Alpha? What is Omega?
11. What does this tell us about Jesus?

John lets us know how this letter comes to be written and what its purpose is.

1. Where was John?
2. Why was John there?
3. What then happened?
4. What was John instructed to do?
5. What else did John see?
6. Where else in the Bible have we seen the vivid imagery that John saw?
7. Explain how this confirms Jesus' words: "*The Scriptures cannot be broken*"?
8. What does Jesus mean with "the First and the Last?"
9. What event does Jesus remind John of in verse 18?
10. Of what comfort is that to each of us?

Verse 20 gives us hope and comfort. Jesus gives the meaning of the seven stars and seven lampstands. Remember--he is addressing seven congregations!

1. What are the seven stars?
2. What are the seven lampstands?
3. What comfort can we, as a congregation, take in this illustration?

The Great “I AM’s”

The following chapters relate personal messages from the Lord to the individual congregations. Below write the name of the congregation, its virtue that is commended, weakness that is rebuked and the promise to those who endure and overcome:

CONGREGATION	VIRTUE	WEAKNESS	PROMISE
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

1. Which congregation does your congregation most resemble?
2. How can you, as an individual, work to overcome weaknesses in your congregation?

The last chapter (22) of Revelation gives us comfort with the River of Life. John closes out by recording what Jesus says about his person and his message.

1. How is heaven described in verses 1-6?
2. What aspect of our salvation is again told us in these verses?
3. Throughout the book John is shown the visions by an angel. Who is this angel? Explain on the basis of verse 9 and verse 13.
4. Who are the dogs in verse 15?
5. What is included in verse 15 in “everyone who loves and practices falsehood?”
6. What is the “outside” referred to in verse 15?
7. What “I AM” is reflected in verse 17?
8. Why the stern warning in verses 18 and 19?
9. How is it similar to:
 - a. what Jesus says in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-20)?
 - b. Deuteronomy 4:2?
 - c. Deuteronomy 12:32?
 - d. Proverbs 30:6?
10. What does this tell us about how God views his word?
11. What does tampering with God’s word ultimately do to our sure hope and comfort of salvation?
12. “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people.” How is God’s grace with us always?

Application Questions

1. How is God's word tampered with today?
2. How do we often tamper with God's word in our personal lives?
3. Recall when God's word was first tampered with. What was the result?
4. Why ought we not tamper with God's word?
5. In conclusion, what comfort do we have in the "I AM" statements?
6. Why do we have this comfort?

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!