

THE GREAT “I AM’S” of JESUS

by

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CHAPTER NINE

I AM . . . LIFE

In presenting the great “I Am’s” of Jesus, one text has at least three sermons in it. In John 14:6, Jesus declares, “**I am the way, the truth, and the life.**” Each of the three words deserves a full discussion.

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

In the beginning when God said “**Let us make man,**” He was making sure that there would be no misunderstanding about the origin of man. Whatever the scientist or the philosopher or the theologian can say about man’s origin, let it be verified by Genesis 1:26 or declared false. When God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life He was identifying man as a new kind of creation. One cannot go back of that declaration for the origin of man; neither can he change the truth of the declaration by his logic. God made man.

If there is any question about the Trinity, here, in the divine recordings of Holy Writ, is expressed the plurality of the Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were together in the creation.

The agent in creation, who spoke the world into existence, was Christ. Under divine inspiration, John, the loyal, loving disciple of Jesus, gave full credit to Jesus in the act of creation. “**Without him was not anything made that was made**” (John 1:3), declared John. The Gospel of John begins very much like Genesis. “**In the beginning,**” is the opening phrase of each of the books. Genesis begins with “**In the beginning God created.**” John begins, “**In the beginning was the Word.**” It is the same statement. In John, the Word is Christ.

“**Without him was not any thing made that was made,**” John says. Then he enlarges upon the meaning of that statement. The worlds were spoken into existence. The stars were flung into space. Plant and animal life were created. Jesus had a right to say “**I am . . . life.**” He made the world and all that is in it. Then He made a higher form of life.

“**In him was life; and the life was the light of men**” (John 1:4). If “**Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,**” John was speaking from divine inspiration when he verified the claim of Jesus that He was life. Not only did He give life to man, He also became man’s inspiration. The life which he received from Christ became the light of man.

We see not Jesus in the flesh, but we see Christ in the lives of men. He **“lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”**

THE NEW LIFE

Jesus came into a world beset by sin. He saw the best of men living in darkness, looking for light and life. Perhaps the best man that Jesus ever met, judged by moral standards, was Nicodemus. Yet it was to Nicodemus, the good man, a ruler of the Jews, a personable individual, as nearly perfect according to the law as a man might live, to whom Jesus said: **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life** (John 3:16).

This is the beginning of the new life. No matter how good one may be, he needs the new birth, as Jesus told Nicodemus. **“Ye must be born again,”** is the need of every man, good or bad. But to every man, good or bad, is the definite promise that if he will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, he will have everlasting life.

God’s provision for man’s need offers salvation to every person who will accept His plan. I believe in the doctrine of election. God does elect those who will be saved. According to John 6:40, God has already voted for me. Now if I vote for Him, the election will be complete and I will be saved. God does not will the destruction of any. He offers His Son for the salvation of every man who will believe. He states it thus:

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life (John 6:40).

Paul was considered the greatest preacher of Christ. He was a practical theologian. In preaching the way of life, Paul reached a climax in Romans 6:23, when he declared, **“the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** The sinner is permitted to make his choice. He may receive the wages of sin in death; or he may accept the free gift of God through Christ and have eternal life.

THE ABUNDANT LIFE

When I was a boy, I was intrigued the first time I heard Dr. John R. Sampey, of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, make the statement, **“He was saved by the skin of his teeth.”** Salvation is open to everyone who believes in Christ. But salvation is not the end of the Christian life: it is the beginning. Christ is not satisfied with simply a beginning when there should follow Christian growth. He wants the Christian to live fully, not meagerly.

For the abundant life, the Christian must look to Christ. He must become more like Christ. He must grow in Christ. For this reason, Jesus came into the world and gave His life. He came to ransom and to restore. He also came to make life worth living after the individual is redeemed. He said, **“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”** (John 10:10).

Paul was able to say about his life, **“I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”** The less of one’s self and the more of Christ there is in one’s life, the more abundant that life. The Christian is to partake of the personality of Christ, not just the sayings and commandments of Jesus. He is to grow in the likeness of Him who is the abundant life.

However, in the progress of the abundant life, the words of Jesus are important. The Holy Word, which is inspired, becomes a means to Christian growth. The Christian is to learn what the Bible says and to do what it commands. If he is really to live, he must know the mind of Christ. It is not strange, then, that Jesus said, **“The words that I speak unto you, they are . . . life”** (John 6:63).

The way of the abundant life is found in knowledge of the words of Christ, the way of Christ, and the will of Christ. The follower of Jesus will constantly be asking the question, “What would Jesus do in this situation?” The answer will come through the study of what Jesus said and the way He acted as well as in a surrender to His will and the seeking of His way through prayer.

The ministry of Jesus had grown popular because His sayings were different and His miracles were challenging. The things He did impressed the people so much that He was afraid they were following Him because of the miracles. He tried to turn their thinking from the miracle of things to the miracle of the spiritual relationship which He proclaimed. His spiritual teaching was not so popular. The crowds went away. With only His disciples left, Jesus turned to them and said, **“Will ye also go away?”**

We shall ever be grateful to Simon Peter, who was always ready with an answer. On this occasion the answer was perfect. He replied, **“To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life”** (John 6:68). This was the right answer for the perfect life. He who would live abundantly would stay with Jesus for the words of eternal life and the way of the life abundant.

FRUITS OF THE NEW LIFE

Jesus would have those who are born again to live the abundant life in such a way that their lives will bear fruit. Christians ought to propagate themselves. One of the evidences of the new life is found in the new look, the new walk, the new conversation. The Christian should look like it and act like it. Paul put it this way:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

Christ, in giving us the new life, has set our feet on a new path. He has lifted our eyes to a new vision. He has centered our affection on a new world. Life has a different meaning. As the Christian enjoys the new life, he is preaching the gospel of grace. The love of God is shown in the life of the Christian. Those among whom he moves are impressed by the Christian’s attitude, his conduct, his conversation. Buried with Christ into death, the Christian is raised with Christ into a new walk with Him.

Christian conduct is not a cloak which one wraps about himself but is the outward expression of an inner life. The glow of a radiant personality, the beaming of the Christian's facial expression, and the wholesome influence of the Christian's presence are all fruits of the new birth. A new radiance comes to life because of an inner spring which wells up and flows out in life-giving expression. Jesus pictured it in these words:

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:14).

Is it not the purpose of your Christian life to radiate a refreshing stream of enriching influence? One of the evidences of the new life bears fruit in the fellowship of the saints. Christians have a new love for one another even as they have a new love for the world. Their love for the world is perfectly expressed in the compassion of Jesus as He looked out upon the world as sheep without a shepherd.

Love reaches out and down to the center even as it reaches out and up to God through Jesus Christ. John spoke of this evidence of the new life in I John 3:14, "**We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.**"

There is a constant reminder that the Christian life does not consist in the abundance of things but in spiritual matters. Fruits of the Christian life are in spiritual conquest, not in material prosperity. In speaking of the rich man who looked out upon his harvest and his full barns and encouraged himself to eat and drink and be merry, Jesus raised the question ". . . **then whose shall those things be . . .**" after the deluded man's soul should have been required of him. Fruits of the Christian life are not in full barns but in the fullness of life through Christ.

SECURITY OF THE NEW LIFE

Much of life is spent in wrestling with the present for the security of tomorrow. Man is more concerned about his security in his later life than about his eternal security after this life is done. After all the plans of experts in economy and taxes are carried out, there still will be insecurity in this life. There is no way that man can be sure he will have plenty for his rainy day.

There is a security in the new life. John offered this assurance in his first epistle (5:12), "**He that hath the Son hath life.**" The sinner is invited to lay hold on Christ. This, if he does it, is the beginning of security. From this point forward, it is not the Christian who holds on to Christ but Christ who does the holding.

Some fearful Christians live in mortal fear because they do not have the security which Christ offers. They have trusted Him as Saviour but are not sure that salvation is secure. They think security depends upon them instead of upon Him.

Be not fearful: Jesus has offered perfect security to those who will trust Him for salvation and depend upon Him for their security. Paul expresses it simply, but completely:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above . . . Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1-3).

You have trusted Christ for your salvation. Now trust Him for your security. Let your life be hid with Christ in God and be sure that He is able to fulfill His promise, **“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself.”**

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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