

# THE GREAT “I AM’S” of JESUS

by

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## CHAPTER THREE

### I AM FROM ABOVE

Toward the latter part of the earthly ministry of our Lord, the Pharisees decided to arrest Jesus and stop rumors concerning His miracles and His being a prophet. They sent Officers to catch Him in His words and arraign Him before the Sanhedrin. Instead of arresting Jesus as they were commissioned to do, the officers came back with the report, “**Never man spake like this man.**” Nicodemus spoke up in favor of a hearing before Jesus could be condemned. He was answered by the finality of genuine prejudice, “**For out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.**”

Jesus was in a court of the temple, “**and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them**” (John 8:2). Since the scribes and Pharisees had been unable to trap Jesus and try Him on the words He had spoken, they tried another ruse: they would make Him controvert the Mosaic Law. They brought a woman taken in adultery and challenged Jesus to lead them in stoning her according to the Law of Moses. While they accused, Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground. Presently He stood up and looked at the men. He took no issue with the Mosaic Law; He simply challenged the right of sinful man to execute sinners. “**He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,**” He said. Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

One by one, the men who came to accuse slipped away, condemned each by his own conscience. From the eldest to the youngest, they all left. Then Jesus stood up again and addressed the woman, “**Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?**” She answered, “**No man, Lord.**” Then Jesus said, “**Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more**” (John 8:10, 11).

By the time the woman had left, Jesus resumed His discourse in the temple court. As He spoke, occasionally He was interrupted by the Pharisees, who accused Him of bearing record of Himself, and, therefore, having no authority. Jesus answered that He bore witness of Himself and that the Father who sent Him also bore testimony concerning Him. He told the Jews that He would soon go away and they would seek for Him, that they would die in their sins and could not go where He was going. His hearers misunderstood Him. They wondered if He meant to commit suicide and that they could not follow Him in death. He answered their doubts by saying, “**Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world**” (John 8:23).

The testimony of Jesus concerning Himself was substantiated by that of John the Baptist. John, in preaching by the River Jordan declared (John 1:15) that the one coming after him was preferred before him, because He was before him. The forerunner came to announce the coming of the Messiah. Some of John's disciples mistook him for the Messiah, but John was vigorous in his affirmation that he was only the announcer. While preaching and baptizing in Jordan, John saw, on the banks of the stream, Jesus; and declared to his hearers: "**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**" (John 1:29). Again the next day he pointed out Jesus, And some of his disciples followed the Lord.

The ministry of Jesus was growing popular. John's followers raised the question with John. The forerunner answered, "**He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all . . . he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God**" (John 3:30-34). There was no question in John's mind about Jesus being from above. It was the purpose of John's ministry to announce that the Messiah had come. The testimony of Nicodemus was to the effect that Jesus was not of this world but came from heaven. He said, "**We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with Him**" (John 3:2).

The testimony of John, the beloved disciple, gives evidence through divine inspiration that Jesus came from above. The Gospel begins with that declaration, "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God**" (John 1:1, 2).

In the courts of the temple, Jesus continued His discourse before the multitude. Many of His hearers believed. Others wanted to argue. They claimed to be the seed of Abraham and questioned Jesus' authority to teach them. Declaring that Jesus' testimony concerning Himself was not true because it was one man's work, they were answered, "**If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoreth me**" (John 8:54). At this point His hearers were answering Jesus with a logic similar to His charge that they bore testimony concerning themselves and their testimony was not true. Jesus showed them that His testimony was true because He and the Father were one and their testimony was a joint witness.

In claiming to be Abraham's seed, the Jews were casting aspersion upon Jesus because He did not claim an earthly father but declared that God was His Father. Here Jesus had the opportunity to show His heavenly origin. He answered the sons of Abraham, "**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad**" (John 8:56).

Jesus told His hearers that if they were sons of Abraham surely they would rejoice in Him because Abraham, two thousand years before, had looked forward to the coming of Christ, and had rejoiced in His coming.

Had not David called Jesus, Lord? Jesus had asked the Pharisees (Matthew 22:41-46) what they thought of Christ. Some of them thought He was the son of David. This gave Him proper identity in the chronology. But Jesus fired a question at them, "**How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord?**"

In this, had David not recognized the eternity of Jesus when he called Him, Lord?

The Jews were not able to understand how the Lord could claim that Abraham had seen Christ's day and was glad, when Jesus was not yet fifty years old. How could He have known what Abraham thought? Jesus answered their bewilderment by declaring, "**Before Abraham was, I am**" (John 8:58). It is difficult for the human mind to conceive the scope of that statement. Before David was, Jesus was; before Abraham was, Jesus was; before time began, Jesus was; after time shall have ended, Jesus will be.

Even as Moses had been encouraged to answer the doubting Israelites or the questioning Pharaoh concerning his authority by simply stating, "**I Am, sent me,**" so Jesus declared His eternity in the two words "**I am.**" When Jesus used the words "**I am,**" He was ringing the bells of heaven. His "I am" echoed down the corridors of time far back into affinity and far forward beyond time into eternity.

Indeed, it was Jesus who was identified in Revelation 13:8 as "**the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**" He was; He has been; He is; He will be forever.

The heavenly origin of Jesus and His place above are attested even in His death. While dying on the Cross for sinful man, Jesus voluntarily laid down His life and commended Himself back into the Father's hands at the Father's house: "**And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, father, into thy hands I commend my spirit**" (Luke 23:46). Titus gave His life a ransom for man. He voluntarily laid down His life for sinful man. He commended His spirit back into the Father's hands.

Because Jesus had heavenly rights, He declared man's duty. He issued the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) against the backdrop of divine authority. He said, "**All power given unto me in heaven and in earth.**" Because of this power and authority He has issued the commission to His followers to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all men, promising His presence to those who obey His Command.

In the ascension (Luke 24:50, 51) Jesus lifted up His hands and blessed His disciples. Then "**he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.**"

Jesus came from above. After His ministry of salvation, He went back to His heavenly home. He had a right to declare, "**I am from above.**" Those who believe in Him and accept Him as Saviour may enjoy His heavenly abode with Him.

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