

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

JANUARY 17 - 21, 2022

# EPIPHANY

## JESUS REVEALED

SERMON SERIES

Jan 9 - Feb 27

# MONDAY

**Exodus 3:1-20; John 8:58**

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What's in a name? From the beginning of time, a person's name had meaning. What someone was called was not arbitrary, Shakespeare's famous complaint notwithstanding. Family, reputation, status and authority could all be associated with one's name. And every person, regardless of his or her status, reputation or authority, had a name.

Rewind about 3400 years to the barren Sinai desert at the crossroads of Africa and Asia. A refugee from Egypt's house of Pharaoh named Moses sees a blazing bush on a mountainside and is told God lives there. This Moses had been educated about many gods—lifeless statues that supposedly possessed power over various forces of nature. This was different—the bush burning on Mount Horeb wasn't being consumed. Moses is skeptical but seizes the opportunity to meet this God.

As he draws close, a voice calls out, telling Moses he stands on holy ground, identifies itself as the God of Abraham, and expresses empathy for the plight of the Israelite slaves in Egypt. Then, while the bush blazes the voice from its center tells Moses that he has been appointed to deliver his people out of Egypt!

Can you imagine the scene? Can you put yourself in Moses' place? God speaks from the center of a supernatural fire directly to you and instructs you to lead a revolt against the most powerful empire

in the world! Moses would have instantly known how humanly impossible this task was, but he would also witness the all-powerful presence of God.

This unanticipated turn of events happens so fast that Moses has doubt and the audacity to ask this God what His name is. As unfathomable as the moment is up until then, God's response transcends all human knowledge, wisdom and experience: *"I AM WHO I AM."* (Exodus 3:14)

He is not a God who has a name. He is not a God who needs a name. He exists. He pre-existed the race He created for His fellowship and their names. He lives from everlasting to everlasting unlike anything on this earth. The Almighty God. The Almighty *"I AM."*

## **QUESTIONS**

Why do you think God represented Himself to Moses as He did in their first meeting? Why did God Self-identify as *"I AM"*?

## **PRAYERS FOR ZOE INTERNATIONAL**

Pray for the Lord's blessing on our staff and missionaries for their tireless efforts to support ZOE. Pray for our children and ground workers who are part of our ZOE family. Praise God for all those who support ZOE through prayer, donations, and volunteer work.

# TUESDAY

**Exodus 3:14-15; John 8:51-59**

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Before Moses had fully grasped the meaning of “*I AM WHO I AM*,” God provided additional clarification, saying: “*This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’*” (Exodus 3:14).

“*I AM*.” A name unlike any other. And not a name so much as a profoundly deep statement of His identity. A name the newly formed nation of Israel would hold in such high esteem that they forbid its use—it was too holy to be uttered aloud. To ensure God’s name would not be used in vain (in accordance with the Third Commandment), they invented the abbreviation *YHWH* to be used as a substitute when reading from Scripture (the Torah and Tanakh).

Fast forward 1400 years to Jesus. He was both fully human and fully God and needed to inform humankind about His divine nature. Jesus utilized various methods to do so. He demonstrated His supernatural ability (the miracles), He taught God’s values (His sermons), He led through example (washing the disciples’ feet), He prophesied (His death and resurrection), He forgave sin (the woman caught in adultery), He resisted temptation (Satan’s three taunts) and He quoted Messianic Scripture specifically related to the name of God to identify Himself.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus uses “I AM” statements to reveal His divinity. These eight assertions fall into two categories: In seven of these, Jesus uses “I am” as the subject and verb of the sentence. Of the four Gospel authors, only the disciple John recognized their significance in his account. Jesus’ eighth statement (John 8:58: “... before Abraham was born, I am!”) is the most profound. It was a direct (and bold) declaration of Jesus’ deity, clearly associating the Lord with God’s covenant name revealed to Moses in his encounter with the burning bush in Exodus 3.

Anyone denying Jesus’ deity, including the cults claiming that He never professed to be God, conveniently ignore or misapply His profound “I AM” declarations.

## **QUESTIONS**

What was one of Jesus’ purposes in making “I AM” statements throughout John’s gospel? Why did the Jewish officials bring Abraham into the confrontation with Jesus and how did Jesus turn the Abraham reference around on them?

## **PRAYERS FOR ZOE INTERNATIONAL**

Pray for God’s leading to find children who are waiting to be rescued. Please pray for guidance and direction to the right areas, as well as effective means in rescuing these children safely.



# WEDNESDAY

**Genesis 22:9-14; Exodus 16:13-16; Jeremiah 23:5-6**

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Seven of the “I AM” statements by Jesus in the Gospel of John are akin to each other—Jesus was the “I” in each statement and they all describe a different quality attributed to God. It’s frequently overlooked, but Jesus might have been quoting interchangeable statements from the Old Testament (OT). A quick search produces a number of OT references to various mirror image roles of YHWH (Jehovah or Yahweh), specifically: “Jehovah Jireh,” “Jehovah Nissi,” “Jehovah Raah,” “Jehovah Tsidkenu” and “Jehovah Mekoddishkem.” What better way to communicate His divinity than to tell His followers that He is the same Person?

1. John 6:35 (“And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’”) is parallel with Jehovah Jireh: “The Lord who provides” (Genesis 22:14).
2. John 8:12 (“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”) from its context in Exodus compares to Jehovah Nissi: “The Lord is my banner” (Exodus 17:15) or lights my way through the wilderness.
3. John 10:9 (“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture”) and

4. John 10:11 (*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep"*) are related to Jehovah Raah: *"The Lord is my shepherd"* (Psalm 23:1).
5. John 11:25 (*"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live'"*) is similar to Jehovah Tsidkenu: *"The Lord is our righteousness"* (Jeremiah 23:6).
6. John 14:6 (*"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'"*) compares with Jehovah Mekoddishkem: *"The Lord who sanctifies you"* (Exodus 31:13).

The seventh "I AM" statement in John has no comparable OT reference—we'll consider that tomorrow.

## QUESTIONS

Why did Jesus use Old Testament (OT) references often when engaging the Jews? How do seven of Jesus "I AM" statements link to attributes of God per the OT?

## PRAYERS FOR ZOE INTERNATIONAL

Pray for complete healing and restoration for those God has placed in our care. Pray for wisdom for those working at our restoration homes that the Lord would fill them with compassion, wisdom, and the love of God.

# THURSDAY

**Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21**

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The seventh “I AM” statement (John 15:1) doesn’t have a matching OT reference: “*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*” How could there be? No rabbi prior to Jesus referred to God as His Father. Nevertheless, this statement is steeped in ecclesiastical symbolism that a 1st century Jew would have understood.

Numerous OT passages refer to the Israelites as a vine and/or vineyard (Psalm 80:8-16, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21, Ezekiel 15:1-8). Jesus, however, claims to be the “true” vine or the true Israel—the “New Israel.” He goes on to tell us that we (His disciples) are His branches, that we are part of Him; i.e., we disciples are members of the true Israel. Significantly, Jesus redefines what “Israel” is with this pronouncement. Only God would have the authority to change these qualifications for His chosen people—Jesus is informing His disciples of His divinity here, too.

The symbolism and instruction continue with the next verse (15:2): “*He cuts off every branch of mine that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes so it may bear more fruit.*” It’s only natural that a grapevine would bear fruit; that’s the purpose of the plant—to produce grapes.



The reference to being “cut off” potentially cites two parallel issues—one speaks to everyone, the other speaks to those who would feel entitled simply due to Jewish lineage.

The most obvious meaning relates to us Christian “branches.” A narrow reading can interpret “fruit” as the persons won (by us) to Christ, but the Apostle Paul broadens the definition to mean “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control*” (Galatians 5:22-23). In other words, the fruit of following Christ is to become Christ-like.

The other edge of this revelation severs the cord with the Old Israel. Jesus is informing the Jewish religious leaders of the 1st century that a new day has dawned. They need to “*abide in Me (Christ)*” if they want to be part of the New Israel. Metaphorically, their branch hadn’t produced worthy fruit and, consequently, it was facing judgment as a nation.

## QUESTIONS

What is the most radical, shocking aspect of Jesus’ statement in John 15:1? How did Jesus use this imagery to characterize His role? In what ways might we consider Jesus “the New Israel”?

## PRAYERS FOR ZOE INTERNATIONAL

Pray for unity as we partner with and assist government entities, law enforcement, and other organizations. Please pray for favor as we pursue new opportunities and partnerships to prevent, rescue, and restore victims of human trafficking.

# FRIDAY

**John 8:48-59; Hebrews 11:8-10; Revelation 22:13**

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While all eight of the “I AM” statements in John proclaim Jesus’ divinity, perhaps none are more profound nor as direct than the eighth, John 8:58: “*Very truly I tell you,*” Jesus answered, “*before Abraham was born, I am!*” The emphasis “*very truly*” underscores the seriousness of Jesus’ assertion. The Pharisees’ dismissive challenge of verse 57 seems to have provoked Jesus’ pointed, perhaps inadvisable, response.

What jumps out at you? It’s grammatically incorrect, right? Unless, that is, Jesus is quoting the name spoken to Moses by the voice in the burning bush: “*I AM.*” Yes, Jesus reveals His divinity with a deliberate, grammatically incorrect subject and verb because it’s not a subject and verb in the normal sense—it’s His name. Jesus isn’t merely saying that He existed before Abraham like the angels; He’s saying that He was the voice in the bush who spoke to Moses! He is the same God, “*the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End*” (Revelation 22:13).

The skeptic may say, “Well, that’s just a matter of interpretation. The interpreters could be simply manipulating the words to justify a closely held doctrine.” However, we know this interpretation of Jesus’ statement is accurate, thanks to the violent response of the Pharisees with whom He was speaking—they immediately picked up stones to kill Jesus for claiming to be God! And they would have tried, but Jesus

*“hid from them”* (8:59) as His ministry was not yet completed and the manner of the Messiah’s death wasn’t foretold as being stoned. He provoked them intentionally, while managing the events as He proceeded toward the Cross.

The eight *“I AM”* statements in the Gospel of John are clear declarations by Jesus regarding His divinity—He wanted us to be fully aware of who He was and His eternal foundation. Hopefully, as we are equipped with knowledge, our faith in Him is unshakeable and our respective branches continue to bear fruit in the “New Israel.” Therefore, heed Jesus’ related pronouncement: *“Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear!”* (Mark 4:9)

## QUESTIONS

Why do you think Jesus used such a provocative *“I AM”* statement in John 8:58 when engaging the Jewish officials? How did the Pharisees’ response indicate that they knew exactly what Jesus was claiming with His *“I AM”* statement?

## PRAYERS FOR ZOE INTERNATIONAL

Pray for provision of the finances needed for ZOE to continue to care for our current family as well as future families. As we rescue more children, pray that we can have all the resources we need to meet their needs. Praise the Lord for all His faithfulness to ZOE all these years.



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