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I AM
and Jesus statement
Before Abraham was

I Am.

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

I AM, and Jesus statement: Before Abraham was I Am.

Topics.

- I am: in the Old Testament.
- I am: in the New Testament.
- Before Abraham was, I am.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Since the name of God is I AM some people use these words of Jesus to support the theory that Jesus is God. They reason that Jesus is saying, "Before Abraham was I existed, because I am God," but is this what Jesus was saying or is this a case of reading more into a verse than is actually there to support a preconceived mindset? This study looks at God's name in the Old Testament and then Jesus words in the New Testament to see if the name I AM applies to Jesus.

I AM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Moses asked God, "What is your name," and God said to Moses:

- **Exodus 3:13-15:** I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. ¹⁵And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

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AM: comes from the Hebrew word (hayah) and means to exist, to be and to come to pass. When the word I is added (i.e., I Am) it means I am the existing one that brings to pass and causes a thing to happen to appear and to exist. With this understanding these verses could read (God said unto Moses, "I AM the one who exists and brings to pass."

I AM when used as a title of the God means:

- I exist in the past, the present moment and the future.
- I am the eternal one I have no beginning and no end.
- I am the supreme authority, creator and will of the universe.

In eternity where God's dwells there is no time, so I AM means forever present, but God also says that his name is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob and that this will be His name forever. (Exod. 3:6) (Exod. 3:15). This means that God's full name is I AM (the existing one that brings to pass) the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Though the words I am in the following verses are not used in the context of God's name it is clear that they refer to God:

- He said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur (Gen. 15:7).
- When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God (Gen. 17:1).
- The LORD appeared unto him (Isaac) the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father (Gen. 26:24).

Though the words I am in these verses are not used as God's name they clearly refer to God, but the words I am do not always refer to God they often refer to human men as the following verses show:

- Jacob said unto his father, "I am Esau thy firstborn" (Gen. 27:19).
- Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "I am Pharaoh" (Gen. 41:44).
- He said, "Who art thou?" And I answered him, "I am an Amalekite" (2 Sam. 1:8).

In these verses the, "I am" refers to Jacob, Pharaoh of Egypt and an Amalekite showing that the words I am do not always refer to God when used in this context This shows that it is the context that determines who the I am is referring to. The context clearly shows whether the words I am are referring to God or to human men the context does not leave the reader in any doubt or a position of having to assume who the words I am are referring to.

I AM: IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament the words I am comes from the Greek word (eimi) and refers to the first person singular and means:

- I exist or it is I.
- I have been or I was.

When I am, is used in the context of God's name it is used categorically (i.e., it is absolute, definite and forcible), but I am, is also used throughout the New Testament to simply mean me and I, The I am in the following verses show that the words I am often refer to human men.

- John said, "Who you think that I am? I am not he." (Acts 13:25).
- The centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy." (Matt. 8:8).
- Zacharias said to the angel, "Whereby shall I know this? I am an old man." (Luke 1:18).
- Paul said, "I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus. (Acts 21:39).
- By the grace of God I (Paul) am what I am. (1 Cor. 15:10).

In these verses the words I am refer to John the Baptist, a Roman centurion, Zacharias and Paul in fact the words I am are used in relation to Paul and his ministry over one-hundred times in the New Testament.

Jesus said:

- I am good. (Matt. 20:15).
- I am the bread of life. (John 6:35).
- I am the living bread. (John 6:51).
- I am not come of myself. (John 7:28).
- I am the Son of God. (John 10:36).
- I am Jesus whom thou persecutes. (Acts 9:5).
- I am the root and the offspring of David. (Rev. 22:16).

BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM

Since Jesus uses the expression I am in so many Scriptures it is stunning that certain religious groups would isolate Jesus words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:56-59) to mean that he was saying he was God, especially since the only Bible that make the assumption that Jesus was implying that he is God and capitalize the I am is the New King James Bible. The following six major Bibles do not make this assumption and therefore do not capitalize the, I am.

1. The New American Bible.
2. The American Standard Bible.
3. The King James Bible.
4. The New International Bible.
5. The English Standard Bible.
6. The Revised Standard Bible.

None of these Bibles capitalize the, I am the only Bible that does is the New King James Bible. So, if Jesus words, "Before Abraham was, I am" do not mean that he is God what do they mean and what was he saying? To find the answer to these questions lets shine a spotlight on the verses themselves.

- **John 8:56-59:** Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

Before: comes from the Greek word (prin) (pro) and can mean in front of or prior to, figuratively it carries the idea of being superior to or above another.

The phrase, Jesus Day (v56) could begin from his birth or his water baptism though to his second coming and through to eternity. Obviously, Abraham was not alive in any of these time periods to see Jesus Day, but Jesus is not telling the Jews that Abraham literally saw him, but referring to the fact God had promised Abraham that from his Seed would come a King to rule the world. Jesus words:

- Father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day.

Mean Abraham by faith saw the day when his Seed (the Christ) would come. Since the Jews highly esteem Abraham and hold him up as their father they were angry because Jesus was making himself greater than Abraham. Jesus was saying to the Jews even Abraham by faith saw his coming and his appearing and he was excited and full of joy whereas they in contrast want to kill him, the promised Seed of Abraham. It is recorded in the Old Testament that:

- Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple (Isaiah 6:1).

This is a vision it is in this same way that Abraham saw Jesus Day and rejoiced. It is not surprising that the Jews did not understand what Jesus was saying since they have not understood anything he said in this entire conversation.

NOTE: some teachers in certain Christian circles use Jesus words, "Before Abraham was, I am," to support the mistaken theory that Jesus is God, this is reading far more into Jesus words than what is intended. When a verse seems obscure or difficult to harmonize with the majority of Scriptures it should always be remembered that the rule of good Bible study is to always allow the meaning and teaching of the very clear Scriptures to supersede and take priority over the few that may seem to be obscure. A single verse and especially a single phrase should never be

allowed to overthrow the very clear teachings of the many other Scriptures concerning the same topic or overthrow the context of the entire chapter or the overall teachings of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. In summing it all up Jesus words, "Before Abraham was I am" mean the following two things:

1. Before the foundations of the earth and before Abraham existed, God purposed in his eternal mind that His Son would not only be the centre of mankind's salvation, but also the centre of Gods eternal plans for all eternity.
2. Though God has highly exalted Abraham as the father of faith Jesus is superior in position and importance and in every other way to him.

A FINAL NOTE

Since the teaching that Jesus is God has such a strong hold on much of traditional Christianity the following will encourage and comfort faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who maybe in some doubt and unsure of what to believe concerning the Father and the Son since it very clearly shows that even if Jesus was God no one has to know this to be saved to eternal life since there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states:

- We must believe that Jesus is God to be saved.

Nor is there one verse from Genesis to Revelations that says: -

- Whoever believes that Jesus is God the Son will be saved.

In total contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures throughout the pages of the New Testament that very clearly proclaim:

- We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved.

And that say:

- Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved.

Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God to be saved to eternal life Jesus, the apostles and Paul would have told us at least once in all their teaching concerning salvation, but all we hear from Paul, the apostles and Jesus himself is them saying that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved to eternal life.

Jesus himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God 'and' Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3).

For further information see the title:

- Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity).
- In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).