

Lesson 1 - I am that I am (Exodus 3:14)

The writer of the Gospel of John whose purpose was to motivate belief in Jesus, in truth, the Christ, the Son of God opens up this narrative with eternity. The statement “in the beginning...” is the same phrase used in Moses account of where time began. “In the beginning” takes us to a different dimension in time and place. The reader is “here and now” and locked into the present with all the emotions of physical life and existence. Yet, John takes us back to the beginning, where there was an idea a concept that was not limited to time and place, but was greater than and beyond mortality.

Moses, in his interchange with Jehovah, asks, who shall I tell the children of Israel have sent me? What is his name? God responds, “*I am that I am . . . I am sent me to you.*” The teacher of Israel, Nicodemus (John 3:10) came to Jesus by night to gain insight into the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus understood very well that Jesus could only have God’s fellowship because of the miraculous signs he performed (John 3:2) and Jesus knew what brought Nicodemus to him that night. Jesus said, “. . . *no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.*” (John 3:3). Seeing is equivalent to understanding the nature of and we who are tied to physical life and mortality struggle with a “*Kingdom that is not of this world*” (John 18:36). Elevate your thought process Jesus told Nicodemus, “*I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?*” (John 3:12). Nicodemus had to consider the qualifications of this Rabbi, “*No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.*” (John 3:13). Remember the cure for physical death; think about the solution to spiritual death, “*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*” (John 3:14-15).

What a fantastic story! This Jesus who was, who is, and is to come (John 1:1, 2; 1:14; 21:22; Rev 1:4) came to earth from heaven and claimed to be the same “**I am**”(I am the bread of life – John 6:35; I am the light of the world – John 8:12, etc). Can you explain this claim? Do you see the nature of the kingdom of God? “*The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.*” (John 3:8) Think carefully about what is meant by the statement, “I am”. Isn’t this the essence of who we are? I didn’t create me. But, I am. I know I exist and I have emotional reactions to my environment. I am here now and I may not be here tomorrow, but I know I am more than just here. I have been influenced by those who have lived and are gone and what I do now will affect the future if I’m gone tomorrow. The fact that I am proves there was something beyond what I know now and will know tomorrow. I am a being that lives and strives for a better life. Why is this so? “*He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*” (Eccl 3:11). “*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*” (2 Cor 4:18) This is the appeal of John’s Gospel to those who did not personally witness the Son of God, “*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*” John 17: 20, 21) “*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” (John 20:29)

Do we see Jesus for who he was, is, and what he means to us today regarding life and living?

Questions:

1. The contemporary artist Neil Diamond composed and released a popular song in March, 1971 "I am I said". One of the lines states, "I am I said, To no one there, And no one heard at all not even the chair, I am I cried, I am said I, And I am lost and I can't even say why, Leaving me lonely still." Explain how this song relates to Nathaniel's decision to follow Jesus (John 1:44-51)

2. List the seven "I am" claims of Jesus found in the book of John:

- a. John 6:35 _____
- b. John 8:12 _____
- c. John 10:7 _____
- d. John 10:11 _____
- e. John 11:25 _____
- f. John 14:6 _____
- g. John 15:1,5 _____

3. The gospel of John is unique from the other gospels because it does not explain Jesus' birth, but rather it claims that Jesus had always existed. This is explained in John 1:1-14 and is also addressed in John 8:48-59. Explain what Jesus meant in his discourse with the Jews when he said, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58)

4. Describe the perspective that is required for a person to see the Kingdom of God and understand the true nature of Jesus (John 3:3, 12; 18:36; 2 Cor. 4:18).
