

The Wednesday Word, June 26, 2019: Jesus, The Great “I AM.”

John 8:58 “*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.*”

According to the Old Testament, the ultimate name of God is “I AM” (Exodus 3:14). This same “I AM” appeared in the New Testament calling Himself Jesus. It is no wonder then that many of the Jews, in those days, thought Christ to be demon possessed.

Others thought Him mad: No sane man could come up with the audacious utterances that flooded from the lips of this carpenter! The Jewish leaders knew fine well that when Jesus announced, “*Before Abraham was I am*” He was claiming to be God. Every Hebrew who knew his stuff was aware that the ‘I AM’ was none other than Yahweh ---the One True and living God who had spoken to Moses at the Burning Bush. But now this brash upstart of a Nazarene tradesman dares to walk around claiming to be Him.

The lead up to Jesus’ claim of being the Covenant God of Israel, the ‘I Am,’ is fascinating. The troubled Pharisees were, as usual, debating Jesus when Abraham was mentioned. One of their number as he, no doubt, sat stroking his grizzled beard, asked with a voice of disdain, and I paraphrase,

“Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead: who are you making yourself out to be?” (John 8:53).

Jesus floored them with His answer, claiming that Abraham had not only seen his day but also (*unlike the Pharisees*) had been glad. This was too much for the religious stalwarts of Jewish society. Was there no end to the carpenter’s impertinence? Indignant, they responded with no small degree of sarcasm saying, “*You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?*” In other words, you haven’t even reached retirement age buddy, and yet you claim to be old enough to have seen the Father of our Nation.

Then Christ proceeds to drop a bombshell by announcing, “*Before Abraham was I am.*” In the Greek, the words for ‘I am’ are in the present tense (Ego eimi): Literally, Jesus was saying, ‘Before Abraham was I am continually!’ The Jews knew exactly what He was saying. They knew Christ was claiming, once more, to be the eternal God. Jesus was saying, “I am eternal. I have no beginning and no end. ‘I AM.’ There never was a time when I came into existence for I have always been. I am the eternal God standing here in human flesh.”

Notice how the Jews knew exactly what Jesus was claiming. See how they took up stones and tried to kill him. Stoning was the standard way by which blasphemers were executed. This attempted stoning, therefore, is a vital piece of evidence for it demonstrates that the Jews understood full well that Jesus was claiming to be God.

So how say you? The ancient Jews knew what He was saying and were enraged. They knew that Christ Jesus, by the claim of being the I Am was declaring that He was neither a created being nor a good teacher sent by God, but rather He was announcing Himself to be the eternal Yahweh who exists from all eternity.

How long then will you halt between two opinions? If Christ Jesus is the Mighty God, worship Him, trust him and follow Him. If He is not, rank Him alongside the evil workers of history. If you say He is only the Son of God but not God, you make Him a blasphemer. Why in the world would you want to follow a blasphemer? You should, instead, count Him as one who has, in a sinister fashion, led countless numbers to their doom in a lost eternity. But whatever you do, do not patronize Him by saying He was a good moral teacher, but not God.

We must never forget when Jesus declared Himself to be 'I Am' He was declaring Himself as the Eternal self-existent One.

He was saying, "I am the One who has existence in Myself."

He was saying, "I am the one who made all things, and without Me was not anything made that is made."

He was saying, "I am the one who sustains all things and upon whom all things depend."

He was saying, "I am the one who decrees how long all things on earth continue for they continue only as long as I support them."

He was saying, "No one exists without my permission and power, and when I take away their breath, they die."

And that's the Gospel Truth!