

# “I AM”

## SAYINGS IN JOHN’S GOSPEL

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### 1 THE BREAD OF LIFE

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry” (6:35)

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (6:51)



### 2 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (8:12)

“While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (9:5)



### 3 THE GATE OF THE SHEEP

“Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.” (10:7)

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.” (10:9)



### 4 THE GOOD SHEPHERD

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (10:11)

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” (10:14)



### 5 THE RESURRECTION & THE LIFE

“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” (11:25-26)



### 6 THE WAY & THE TRUTH & THE LIFE

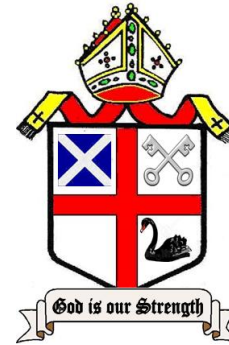
“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” (14:6-7)



### 7 THE TRUE VINE

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.” (15:1)

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (15:5)



# The Anglican Herald

The Anglican Catholic Church in Western Australia

*Special Edition*

## The I AM sayings of Jesus in John’s Gospel

There are seven I AM sayings recorded in St John’s Gospel. Each of these sayings is a description Jesus gave of himself and they help us better understand the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

Since the 1780s the first three books of the New Testament have been called the Synoptic Gospels because they are so similar in structure, content, and wording that they can easily be set side by side to provide a synoptic comparison of their content.

John is not “excluded” from the synoptic Gospels! The Gospel of John simply is not written in a style that makes it synoptic to the other three Gospels. ... John’s Gospel focuses almost entirely on the Divinity of Jesus. John wants people to understand that Jesus and God are one.

The Gospel of John is the latest-written of the four biographies of Jesus that have been preserved in the New Testament. ... The purpose of this gospel, as stated by John himself, is to show that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ, the Son of God, and that believers in him might have eternal life.

**John’s purpose** for writing the gospel: *“these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* John 20:31

The following are brief comments about these I AM sayings. I have borrowed much from other sources.

## 1) I Am the Bread of Life

*Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."*

*John 6.35*

**Synopsis:** Jesus enters a dialogue with Jews who had followed him because of his miracles—including the recent feeding of the 5,000—and yet they missed the reality behind them (he is the Divine Messiah). More important than solving their physical hunger for food through bread, Jesus offers himself as the Bread of Life to fulfil deeper longings and an eternal need.

There is more to the bread from God than the bread itself. It's not earthly bread, but heavenly bread. It comes from above—from God—and comes down to us only by his grace and goodness. We need more than physical bread and we need it from someone other than ourselves. God will provide what we need most, and we should raise our eyes in faith.

Jesus takes this Old Testament background to bread for God's people and he claims to be the bread of life. He explains the bread in the wilderness of Exodus was only a temporary provision, and that it points to true and eternal bread from heaven God would later give. This bread is now before the Jews. The manna pictures Jesus, who is sent from God, comes down from heaven, must be taken by faith, who must be eaten/fully taken in, and who gives life.

## 2) I Am the Light of the World

*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

*John 8.12*

**Synopsis:** Light is one of the most prominent themes in John's Gospel. The world is lost and hopeless in darkness (John 1:4-14). The darkness cannot change its condition. Light must enter and invade. One cannot see or lead others in the darkness, so light is necessary to guide us and walk forward. John picks up light from a rich OT heritage and shows how Jesus is the light.

I would strongly recommend that you read the whole of John's Gospel. We can learn so much about just who Jesus is as we read this divinely inspired writing. I believe that if John's Gospel was the only scripture we had it would be sufficient for us to recognise the truth that Jesus is the Son of God and the only one who can grant us the gift of salvation and eternal life.

## John 1.1-14

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

These opening verses in John's Gospel make absolutely clear what John is proclaiming concerning Jesus of Nazareth. When John saw the empty tomb on that first Easter morning, he was at first hesitant. He did, however, enter the tomb and saw that Jesus was no longer there. If John was not convinced at that moment, he was certainly convinced when Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room where they had gathered together. John witnessed the risen Christ and he has given us his wonderful testimony written in what we call the fourth Gospel.

We must also be convinced and sincerely accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus.

*Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations".*  
*Exodus 3.13-16*

**Synopsis:** When God calls Himself the "I Am" in Exodus 3, it's a pivotal moment in redemptive history. God reveals Himself to His people and comes to redeem them out of exile and lead them into a new life. God's name discloses who He is and what He is like. He is the I Am, the eternal, unchanging, self-existent one, infinite and glorious in every way, and above and beyond all created things. He is God.

## I AM

***Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."***  
*John 8.58*

When Jesus applies the title "I Am" to himself, he claims to be God (John 8:58). Not a helper to God or a great teacher, but the divine, eternal, pre-existent, infinite, perfect Being. He is Israel's God. He is much greater than Moses because he is the God of Moses. He has life in himself and he can give life to us. The Jews knew taking on this title was making such a claim, which is why they immediately pick up stones to kill him (8:59).

The seven "I Am" statements in John might best be understood as falling under and echoing this initial, ultimate claim of Jesus. He is God, and he is the God of Israel. All the OT and God's redemptive acts were pointing to the coming of Jesus as the God-in-flesh, the true and better Israel, and the fulfilment of all the OT types and shadows.

Based upon the fact that in John 8:12 Jesus ties the idea of being the light with his people following after him in the light, the most likely OT background in mind here is the light of God's presence leading Israel in the wilderness via the pillar of fire (Exodus 13-14). Just as the Israelites were led by the pillar of fire (light) in the exodus and saved from the Egyptians as they crossed the Red Sea, so also Jesus says those who follow him (light) will have life.

A secondary OT background of the image of light is found in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6. This light has to do with the salvation of the nations, and it is probably the primary reference in other passages like John 12:35-36, 46.

## 3) I Am the door or gate & 4) I Am the Good Shepherd

*I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. - I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*  
*John 10.9&11*

**Synopsis:** In John 10:1-18, Jesus makes two of the I Am sayings together. He claims he is both the door through which the sheep enter as well as the Shepherd who knows the sheep and lays down his life for them. The metaphor of the door does not have the rich OT background as shepherding imagery does. But, Jesus is both the only way (door) a person enters into the people of God and the one who gives his life for the life of sheep, whom he knows and protects. He is the one who gathers the sheep and cares for them (shepherd) and he's also the means by which they enter and are kept safe (door).

We should recall that Jesus is talking to the Pharisees in this conversation. The claims to be a good shepherd and Israel's true shepherd were (in part) a rebuke against them. As the influential teachers in Israel, they should have led the people to truth. They should have put the people before themselves. They should serve God's agenda rather than their own. Jesus comes not to pile burdens on, but to relieve them and carry them himself. Jesus comes not to scatter the sheep but to gather them. Jesus comes not to devour the sheep, but to defend them. Jesus comes to seek out, rescue, heal, and feed the sheep. He will do so because he

loves the sheep and they belong to him. This is proven and accomplished by him giving up his life for his sheep.

## 5) I Am the resurrection, and the life

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." John 11.25-26*

**Synopsis:** Similar to other I Am statements, Jesus doesn't just talk about what he can do or give, but who He is. He doesn't just give bread (like Moses), but he is the bread. He doesn't merely reflect light; he is the light. So also, in John 11, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

The OT background isn't as clear here as other statements, but most commentators believe Genesis 1-3 is partially in view. God is the Creator and Life-giver, granting life to creation and breathing life into Adam. However, the first Adam chose sin which brought about death for mankind and brokenness for the creation. Jesus comes as the second Adam, righteous and blameless in all his ways, comes to undo what Adam did and reverse the curse (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15). Where Adam brought about death and decay, Jesus gives life and restoration. He provides not only resurrection and life to individuals who believe in him, but for the entire world.

While many of the Jews wanted things from Jesus without having to receive and believe in Jesus, the offer of Jesus is himself. He doesn't give bread and allow people to reject submission to and belief in him, nor does he offer to give life apart from that life being found in him. These are free and gracious gifts, and they come only in and through Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life. He is the second Adam, bringing resurrection and life where the first Adam offered us only death.

## 6) I Am the way, the truth, and the life

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14.6*

**Synopsis:** It's likely Jesus is here contrasting himself to the many ways in the OT that God prescribed for how the Jews could

approach and relate to him. The systems of the sacrifices, temple, the curtain, tabernacle, and other means of worship were temporary "ways" to God. As the NT makes clear, these things in and of themselves did not cleanse or make people acceptable to God, but they were avenues by which God's people could walk in faith and follow after Him (see Hebrews 8-9).

Jesus contrasts himself to anything before him they thought led them to the Father. He is the only one who provides the way to the Father, but he is also at the same time the full revelation of the Father (truth). Jesus is telling them there's nowhere else to look; nowhere you need to look or can look to find the true path to God. Jesus is that one way and that one path. He offers what Israel looked for and needed, and he replaced all prior things set up as temporary means by which man relates to God. All of these pointed to him and accomplished limited things (such as only making people ceremonially clean but not truly clean), and he is now here and able to accomplish salvation and redemption fully.

## 7) I Am the true vine

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser." John 15.1*

**Synopsis:** Here in the last I Am statement, Jesus speaks of a vine, a common OT symbol for Israel (God's people). The language of the unfruitful branches is tied to Israel as the desolate vineyard in Isaiah 5, but Jesus says the people of God have life and fruit now by being in him, as pictured in Isaiah 27:2-6. Jesus is not simply saying Christians are fruitful by resting in him (though this is true), but he's making the redemptive-historical claim he is the new Israel.

He both fulfills Israel's destiny (because Israel never could) and is the one in whom the people of God find true, flourishing, fruitful life. He is the true and better Israel, succeeding where they failed, bringing flourishing life and fruit where they dried out and offered nothing on the vine.

**The following section connecting Exodus 3.13-16 with John 8.58 is of great importance. There can be no doubt that Jesus is claiming to be the I AM and thus he declares that he and the Father are One.**