



# The Reminder

Westside church of Christ  
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## Understanding the Bible - 17 “I Am” - Part Two

By Maurice Barnett

Jesus had not existed in the *physical body* of Jesus of Nazareth before the world was created. It is thus obvious that the one who was in the beginning with God is the preexistent person known as *the Word*. It should also be obvious that there are two distinct persons spoken of in John 17:5. Was God a deceiver, attempting to leave the impression with the disciples, and us, that there was just one person that was both Jesus of Nazareth and God, Himself? To use such deceit amounts to a lie and that makes God a liar and consequently not worthy to be trusted on anything.

But, let's see how *I Am* connects with the related statement in Exodus 3:14 –

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

Jehovah's Witnesses, as do others who deny the Deity of Jesus, insist that the phrase here, “I am that I am” (*heyeh asher heyeh*), should be understood as, “I shall become what I shall become” or “I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be.” Others are even further off base. That's playing loose with word usage to prop up a doctrinal theory. God is eternal and does not change. Malachi 3:6 says, “*For I, Jehovah, change not.*” Of Jesus it is said, Hebrews 13:8, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever.*” He isn't talking about the human form of Jesus but rather the spirit who inhabited that body. The statement of yesterday, today and forever simply declares what “I Am” says elsewhere. “I shall become what I shall become” is directly contrary to that.

In Exodus 3:14, the Hebrew verb of *being* shows action. The fact that it is *imperfect* shows action from

past time that continues. “That,” (*asher*), can be translated as *that* or *who*. So, the phrase, “I am that I am,” or even “I am who I am,” wrapping up past, present and future in one present tense statement, *I am that I am*. It does not matter about the point of time in eternity. At whatever time it may be, He is. It is not “I was,” nor “I will be,” nor “I shall become” but *I AM*. To add to the facts of the case, note in the same verse that God says that Moses is to tell Israel “I AM (*heyeh*) hast sent me unto you.” Remember now, *heyeh* is on both ends of the sentence I AM that I AM. He did not say that Moses was to tell Israel that “I AM that I AM has sent you” nor “I shall become has sent you” nor “I was” nor any other like combination. It is just “I AM,” *heyeh*—past, present and future wrapped up in one declaration. Seeing that this statement is made by Jehovah God about Himself, why would any believer in God want to explain away the force of this declaration of His eternal existence? Well, they do that because they recognize the association of the language with Jesus in John 8:24, 58 and they don't want to accept that Jesus is Deity!

In Exodus 3:6, in the same context as verse 14, God told Moses, “*I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.*”

“I am” in this passage is from another Hebrew word, *anokiy*, a first person, personal pronoun. This statement from Exodus is quoted by Jesus to the Sadducees in Matthew 22:32. The three patriarchs mentioned were already dead when God said that to Moses at the burning bush. It is not, “I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Jesus used our familiar phrase, *ego eimi*, in Matthew 22:32 to express it. It is an inspired translation of Exodus 3:6 by

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Sunday - 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Wednesday - 7:30 p.m.  
Ladies Class - Monday 9:30 am

the Lord, Himself. It is used by Jesus to educate the Sadducees about the nature of spirits that continue to exist after death. Just so, John 8:58 declares that *I Am* referred to Jesus, not just before the death of Abraham, but *before the birth* of Abraham. So, we must understand the continuous, present tense nature of the phrases in Exodus 3:6, 14, a declaration of Jehovah's eternal being and consequently, Jesus' as well.

Oneness advocates then shift the argument to the *Septuagint*, a translation from Hebrew to Greek before the first century. The *Septuagint* translates the phrase in Exodus 3:6 as *ego eimi* and in verse 14, first, as *ego eimi ho on*, I am the one who is, or I am the being one and then as just *ho on*, the being. No one knows why they did this. They first translated *heyeh* as *I am* and in the same sentence translated the *same term* as *the being one*. Though there is no grammatical *necessity* for doing it that way, *it still presents God as the eternal one*. Oneness advocates do not have a case here.

Let's switch now to the other end of the Bible, Revelation 22:13 and then verse 16—

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end....I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star."

Jesus identifies Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. In Revelation 20:11-15, John saw a great white throne and one who sat on it judging all mankind and having control over death and Hades committing the ungodly to the lake of fire, the second death. The identity of the one on the throne is clear from the fact that Matthew 25:31ff, Acts 17:30-31, and other passages, show that it is Jesus who will be that judge. Then, Revelation 21:3 says that John heard a great voice out of the throne before mentioned. In verse 6, the voice says, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.*" Now slip back first to Revelation 1:17-18 and then to 2:8—

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and lived again."

It is the resurrected and glorified Jesus. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Yet, this is the same claim made for Lord God, the Almighty, chapter 1, verse 8! In these passages where it is said "*I*

*am...*," the phrase is *ego eimi*. Predicate nominatives are supplied in the text but do not detract from the present tense of *ego eimi*. It is a claim for Deity in both the Old and New Testaments, for God in the Old and Jesus in the New. Isaiah 44:6 and then 48:12-13—

"Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God."

"Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called: I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. Yea, my hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spread out the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together."

Here is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, who is the first and the last. Take note also that His hand laid the foundation of the earth and spread out the heavens.

It is the one who became Jesus who was the agent for the Godhead in creation, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:13-18, Hebrews 1:6-13.

The Jews understood what Jesus was claiming in John 8:58 because they took up stones to kill Him. Why did they do that? They did it for the same reason as in chapter 5:17-18 when He called God His own father, making Himself equal with God and in 10:30-33 when He said "*the Father and I are one.*" The Jews saw only a human standing before them and did not understand His true nature.

Jesus asked them why they wanted to stone Him. They said, "*...for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.*" That is exactly what the Jews thought in John 8 when He said that before Abraham was born, I am, and took up stones to throw at Him. They understood it to be a claim that He was Deity, and *they were correct in that conclusion.*

Jesus said it in John 8:24, "*Except ye believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins.*" In verse 28, this declaration of identity is made again. If some insist on adding someone's opinion of a predicate nominative to that sentence, instead of being ambiguous about it with supplying just the pronoun, "*he,*" let's use the predicate nominatives *the Bible uses.*

"*Except ye believe that I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the creator of all things, the eternal one, Jehovah of hosts, equal with God, you will die in your sins.*"

Now, that clearly states the truth and is what we are to believe about Jesus. Jesus was not the Father but He was as much God as was the Father.

## TODAY

### PRAYERS

Michael Banks  
Steve Johnson  
Maurice Barnett

### SONG LEADER

John Wilson

### LORD'S TABLE

Don Herman  
Jerry Acosta  
Brent Haugen  
Joe Davis

### SCRIPTURE READING

Christian Wilson

### SERMON

Maurice Barnett

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bobby Banks

## WEDNESDAY

## SINGING

## NEXT WEEK

### PRAYERS

John Wilson  
Matt Allen  
Bobby Banks

### SONG LEADER

Michael Banks

### LORD'S TABLE

Doug Seyk  
Alex Durazo  
Michael Baker  
Joe Davis

### SCRIPTURE READING

Gordon Myers

### SERMON

Maurice Barnett

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bobby Banks