

I AM...HE!**Read John 18.1-40**

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I / INTRODUCTION: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

1 / We are now coming to the end of John’s Gospel account. The next three chapters [18, 19, 20] will be John’s account of Jesus’ arrest, trials, crucifixion, and resurrection.

2 / There is a thing called “A Harmony of the Gospels,” in which all four Gospel accounts are written out side by side in four columns on the page. Where the Gospel accounts include the same narrative, they will be written out side-by-side. Where one Gospel account includes details the others don’t, those column spaces will be blank for those Gospels that don’t have them.

3 / I’ve added this note because John doesn’t include a lot of details the other Gospels do: like Jesus’ agony prayers in Gethsemane, much of the accusations made against Him before the chief priest and Herod, etc...

4 / However, John also includes many details of events and conversations that the other three Gospelers don’t: like, for example, in His two appearances before Pilate.

5 / Which leads me to say that John especially focuses on his primary purpose he has been following all throughout his Gospel: **Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but 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 20.30-31.**

6 / So when John includes what he does write, and doesn’t include what he doesn’t, he is keeping to his main purpose and focus for writing this whole Gospel: **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.**

7 / Which brings us to the main point of this lesson...

II / “I AM...HE!”

1 / When Jesus identified Himself to the band of enemies who had come to arrest Him, He simply said, **“I AM...HE!”** [see vv 5-8] This is not just His saying, ‘That’s who I am.’ Jesus is using the same self-identification He has used at least seven other times that John records in this Gospel [see Lesson 10]. We call these expressions: **“The ‘I AM(s)’ of Jesus.”** [He also used another form of this same self-identification in Jn 4.26.]

2 / **“I AM”** is the Name of Yahweh that He revealed to Moses at the burning bush / see Exodus 3.14. In other words, this is the Name that God gives Himself. So when Jesus said all of His **“I AM”(s)**, He was saying **“I AM God!”** ... And this goes back to the main purpose for John’s writing his whole Gospel as we discussed above.

3 / So what we will do here in this lesson is simply show how John weaves this evidence of the Deity of Jesus Christ throughout every description of every event he records here in **chapter 18** ... and on to the end of his Gospel.

III / vv 1-11 / “I AM...HE!” BEFORE HIS TRAITOR & THOSE WHO CAME TO ARREST HIM

1 / After Jesus had finished the words of His Farewell Discourse and His prayer He prayed to the Father, they crossed the Brook Kidron on the east of Jerusalem and began their ascent up the Mount of Olives. There was a garden there, Gethsemane [olive press], and Jesus entered the garden with His disciples. Though John doesn’t record it, this is where and when Jesus prayed His agony prayers to commit Himself to the death He had come to die [see Matthew 26.36-46; Mark 14.32-42; Luke 22.39-46].

2 / John gives us an all-inclusive description of Jesus’ Deity in that phrase in v 4: **“Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to Him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?”** This is

another demonstration of Jesus’ Deity – His knowing of everything that was going to happen. How did He know? Because it had been pre-planned from eternity and prophesied for 4000 years in the Old Testament Scriptures.

3 / Speaking of OT prophecies, we must add here also that just like this moment of time and history is what Jesus has been calling ‘My hour’ [ch 2.4; 13.1; 17.1], so also Satan is acting and working in his ‘hour.’ This goes back to the very first Gospel promise in the Bible, **Genesis 3.15**. This is the ‘hour’ when the Promised Savior will crush the serpent’s head. But it is also the ‘hour’ of ‘the power of darkness’ when Satan will bruise Messiah’s heel. See **John 13.27; Mark 14.41; Luke 22.53**.

4 / **Jesus, of course, knew Judas would betray Him because He is the “I AM”** see **ch 13.21-30**. Judas had earlier left the Passover meal to go out into the night to conspire with the religious leaders to betray Jesus over to them. They now have made their way to the garden where Judas has told them they will find Him. There is a mixed band in this arresting party: leaders from among the chief priests and Pharisees [these are the main antagonists and accusers who have dogged Jesus all of His ministry; members of the Temple ‘police’ who enforced compliance with their civil, religious, social laws; and Roman Soldiers. There may have been as many as 200-600 soldiers [that’s what the word ‘band’ indicates], and they are all carrying lanterns, torches – and are armed with weapons.

5 / John doesn’t record it, but Judas had given the soldiers a signal: he would kiss the One they were after. He did.

6 / Whether it was before or after Judas’s betrayal kiss, we don’t know; but Jesus takes the initiative to ask them who they are seeking. When they answer, “Jesus of Nazareth,” Jesus then declares: “**I AM...HE!**” Once again, He declares His Deity. He claims to be God Himself.

7 / The effect is that all the arresting party fell backward and to the ground. Was this just surprise, shock, or astonishment that Jesus would so voluntarily identify Himself? No! It was His Glory that confronted them. It was His Deity that knocked them backward. As John has told us earlier: “**And we have seen His Glory, Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth**” [ch 1.14]; and “**This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His Glory. And His disciples believed in Him**” [ch 2.11]. There was a supernatural manifestation and emanation of Glory that burst and proceeded forth from Jesus when He announced Himself as ‘I AM...HE!’ It produced this physical effect on His enemies. Kind of like a shock-wave of Deity and Glory.

8 / When Jesus repeated this same ‘I AM...HE!’ the second time – after they stumbled back onto their feet – what He is demonstrating is that even though He was surrendering Himself to His enemies, He knew that He was the One who was in charge of the situation.

9 / When Simon Peter drew his dagger-sword from under his cloak and slashed at the high priest’s servant, he didn’t intend to take off just his ear. Most likely, he made a horizontal slashing stroke, intending to slash his throat or take off his head. Malchus probably ducked his head sideways, and Peter cut off his ear. Jesus again demonstrated His “I AM” power by instantaneously healing the wound / **Luke 22.51**.

IV / vv 12-27 / “I AM...HE!” BEFORE THE COUNCILS OF THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS

1 / The arresting party and soldiers take Jesus first to the house of Annas. John is the only Gospeler who includes this detail. Annas was not in the high priest office that year; but Annas was the ‘godfather’ of this high-priestly family and father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest. So Annas has to sanction everything that the high priest’s office does. So, when John calls Annas ‘the high priest’ [v 19], it means ‘high priest emeritus’ or even ‘high priest de-facto’ even though his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was actually holding the office that year.

2 / **John 18.24** states that **Annas then sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest**.

3 / Again, John doesn't include the details of the accusations, mockery, and charges they came up with against Jesus. But you can find those accounts in **Matthew 26.57-68; Mark 14.53-65; Luke 22.54-65.**

4 / What they charge Jesus with here in their Jewish religious courts is different than the charges they will bring against Him when they present Him to Pilate. You will find the most pointed account in **Matthew 26.63-66.** They specifically asked Jesus whether He claimed to be ‘the Christ, the Son of God’?

5 / When Jesus replied that the day would come when would **see Him, the Son of Man [Daniel 7.13-14], sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven,** they understood very clearly that Jesus was claiming what He had been claiming all along during His ministry: that He, Himself, is the Messianic ‘Son of Man’ prophesied in Daniel, and that He, Himself, is the Christ, the Son of God. In other words, Jesus was proclaiming: **‘I AM...HE!’** That He is God.

6 / So there! The crime was committed in the eyes and judgment of the Jewish leadership:

BLASPHEMY! This is their echoing charge that they explicitly expressed in **ch 5.16-18.**

7 / After hearing this **‘I AM...HE!’** declaration, the high priest put on a fake show of righteous indignation ... being offended on God's behalf at Jesus' usurpation of God's Deity. **Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”**

8 / It was during this series of mock hearings before the Jewish religious council that Simon Peter denied three times that he even knew Jesus ... much less had any association with Him. This, too, was an **I AM...HE!** moment because Jesus had foretold and warned Peter just a few hours before this that he would deny Him [**ch 13.36-38**]. After Peter denies Christ for the third time and the rooster crowed as Jesus had warned him, Peter is stricken, crushed, devastated at what he has just done. And Jesus had warned him just a while ago that he would. That's when Luke records in **Luke 22.60-62: But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.**

V / vv 28-40 / “I AM...HE!” BEFORE THE ROMAN GOVERNOR PILATE

1 / It is here in this section, when Jesus appears for the first time before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, that Jesus makes some very remarkable statements regarding His Deity. He will proclaim **“I AM...HE!”** especially about His being the King of the Jews...

2 / Keep in mind that Jesus had two appearances before Pilate. John here compresses both hearings into one account because he has one point to make: that Jesus Christ, as God in the flesh, is the true Son of God and King of the Jews.

3 / This first appearance before Pilate is described here in ch 18.28-38. [Then Jesus will be shuffled off to make an appearance before Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee (Luke 23.6-12)]. Herod will send Jesus back to Pilate for the second appearance and Pilate's final concession to the Jews to crucify Jesus [John 18.39 – 19.16].

4 / It is most interesting to note in ch 18.28 that the Jews, here on the eve of Passover, didn't dare step onto the Gentile Pilate's property because doing so would make them ‘ceremonially defiled and impure’ and they wouldn't be permitted to partake of the Passover festivities and services. BUT they have no conscience against calling into Pilate, requiring him to get up from his bed and sleep, and come out to pass judgment against the Lamb of God who would be offered later that morning as God's Divinely-appointed Passover! What two-faced hypocrisy! And yet, here again, we see the activity of Satan and his ‘hour’ and ‘power of darkness’ blinding their hearts and minds to prevent them from seeing the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! **see 2 Corinthians 4.3-6.** We still face the same power of Satan working in the hearts and consciences of unbelievers as we proclaim the Gospel to them.

5 / Pilate asks them what charges they are bringing against Jesus – so serious enough as to warrant this middle of the night impromptu trial? The Jews answer: **“If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.”**

6 / Pilate then scolds them for bringing to him a case of internal Jewish law. **“Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.”** ‘Why are you bothering me with your internal religious squabbles?’

7 / In their internal councils, they had charged Jesus with the capital offense of blasphemy. But blasphemy means nothing to Pilate. That is not in his jurisdiction.

8 / Their response to Pilate gets to the root of the evil and murderous intentions in their hearts – conspiracies and plots to kill Jesus that had been festering and stewing for at least the last two years.

Listen to them! **The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death!”** There it is!

They must have Jesus killed ... and the Roman law did not permit them to execute capital punishment. Yes, they would occasionally stone someone for breaking their ‘laws,’ and the Romans would look the other way just to appease the Jews and keep the peace.

9 / BUT, again, Jesus could not be killed by stoning! Why? Because the plan of God all along was that Jesus would be crucified! All the prophecies of the Old Testament are prophecies that are descriptive of crucifixion. And the Jews didn’t crucify their capital offenders – they stoned them to death.

10 / **And besides, Jesus had prophesied Himself that He would be crucified! Matthew 20.17-19: And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way He said to them,** ¹⁸**“See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death** ¹⁹**and deliver Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and He will be raised on the third day.”** So Jesus must not only die for our salvation, but He must be crucified ... and at the hands of the Gentiles [Romans]. And here He is! **This is yet another illustration of Jesus’ Deity – His fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures and His own predictions that it would be this way!**

11 / The Jews had made charges against Jesus in Pilate’s hearing that Jesus claimed to be ‘The King of the Jews.’ Imbedded in these accusations presented to Pilate are charges of treason against the occupying Romans. Now that involves Pilate big-time. Pilate’s responsibility as governor of Judea was to keep them subject to Caesar and the Roman rule. [More on this in the next lesson, **ch 19.12-16.**

12 / In fact, Barabbas and his comrades were in prison for execution at some later time precisely for this crime of treason and insurrection [see **Luke 23.18-19**].

13 / This accusation prompted Pilate to question Jesus: **“Are you the King of the Jews?”** It was at this juncture that Jesus began to expound to Pilate that true nature of His Kingdom and Kingship. This was Jesus’ way of saying to Pilate: **“I AM...HE!”** Yes! I am a King. But my Kingdom is not like your-all’s. For now, my Kingdom is not earthly, political, military, and composed of a civil society. My Kingdom is spiritual. I rule people’s hearts and lives. **If my Kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my Kingdom is not from this world.** [This also gives us some clearer understanding why Jesus rebuked Peter in Gethsemane for retaliating with physical force when he cut off Malchus’s ear – and then healed Malchus.]

14 / Jesus delivered His **“I AM...HE!”** to Pilate with these words: **Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”**

15 / So, to everyone who encountered Jesus, not only during these last events, but all throughout His lifetime and ministry – Jesus’ unvarying and unwavering proclamation was: **“I AM...HE! I AM God, the Son of God, the promised Christ and Messiah – the Savior of the world! The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is here in Me! Repent and believe in the Gospel!”**

DO YOU BELIEVE?