I AM

John 1:1-20:31

key verse 1:14

The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the father full of grace and truth."

This is the main Theme of John's Gospel. God became a man to show us his glory, his exact divine nature and character. The iconic 7 great I am passages paint a portrait of Jesus and show us that he is the fulfilment of all the Old testament prophecies about the coming messiah and saviour of the world. (Icon) It has been my great honour and privilege to serve these scriptures with thousands of tears of Grace, with great personal challenges and struggles and “from the fullness of his mercies we have all received one blessing after another.” The Theme of John's Gospel is found at the beginning and the purpose is found at the end. John 20:31 “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” So then we wrestle with the questions, who is this Jesus? What is my response to Jesus' “I AM” claims, and How can I live by faith and have life in his name?

Part 1 I AM

The setting was at the burning bush on mount Sinai where Moses met God personally. Exodus 3:13-15 “Moses said to God, “suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them “the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me,” what is his name? Then what shall I tell them? God said to Moses, “I am who I am, has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses “say to the Israelites: The Lord the God of your fathers-the God of Abraham, the God of Issac and the God of Jacob-has sent me to you. This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation. God calls Himself the “I Am” in Exodus 3. 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. When Jesus applies the title “I Am” to himself, he claims to be God (John 8:58). I tell you the truth Jesus said, “Before Abraham was born I Am.” Jesus is 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 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 picked up stones to kill him (8:59). The seven “I Am” statements in John might best be understood as falling under /and echoing/ this, ultimate indisputable 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.

Part 2 7 Great I Am Claims of Jesus

1) I Am the Bread of Life John 8:35 “I am the bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” The setting is on the shore of the sea of Tiberius, the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus had just performed a miracle. The feeding of the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 small fish. The crowd wanted to make Jesus King so that they would always have bread to eat. The Old Testament shadow type is found in Deuteronomy 8:2-3 “Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then/ feeding you with manna…to teach you that man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Exodus 16; Deut. 8:3; Ps. 78:23-25 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 point that 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. It’s not an earthly bread but a 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. God will provide what we need most, and we should raise our eyes in faith. Jesus takes the Old Testament background 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 a 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. A servant of God must believe his or her basic needs will be provided by Jesus. Jesus said “I am the bread of life.”

2) I Am the Light of the World. The setting was the feast of Tabernacles. Huge lamps were lit at the Temple commemorating the fiery pillar which led the way for the Israelites coming out of bondage in Egypt. Exodus 13:20-22 After leaving succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and in a pillar of fire to give them light so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people. In John 8:12 Jesus said “I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life.” John 8:12 Jesus ties the idea of being the light with his people following after him in the light, the light of God’s presence leading Israel in the wilderness via the pillar of fire. 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 as we walk forward. Jesus has the illuminating power to take away each one's personal darkness and depression. Jesus defeated the Prince of darkness,/ Satan/ by his death on the cross and his resurrection. Just as the Israelites were led by the pillar of fire 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. Jesus said “I Am the light of the world.”

3 I Am the door or gate & 4 / I Am the Good Shepherd. The setting is just after Jesus had healed a man born blind caring for and loving this person/ others despised and ignored and turned away from and/ who was victimised and abused by the religious leaders. In the old testament, God often refers to himself as a shepherd and the promised messiah would be a shepherd also. Micah 5:2”But you Bethlehem Ephratha though you are small among the clans of Judah out of you will come for me one who will be a ruler over Israel whose origins are from old from ancient times, He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.” In John 10:1-18, Jesus makes two of the I Am sayings together. v9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture. 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. 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus is both. the only way (door) a person enters into salvation/ 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 was (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. But the Pharisees are like the bad shepherds in Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23, leading them astray through false doctrine, prioritising themselves over the sheep, and abusing them. Through this metaphor, Jesus at once lumps the Pharisees into the camp of the false prophets and bad shepherds of the OT while claiming to be the true and good shepherd /those same OT passages promised (Ezek. 34:11-16, 22-24; Jer. 23:3-4). 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. Jesus said “I Am the good shepherd. Can you hear his voice calling “come home,come home.

5) I Am the resurrection, and the life 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. Jesus is the resurrection personified. 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, he 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. John 12:25-26 Jesus said to her,”I Am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. “Do you believe this ? Perhaps the hardest thing to really believe is that Jesus will bring us back after we die. However/ when we have resurrection faith our fears melt like snow on a warm spring day. We can give our lives for Jesus only with this faith. Then his life will be in us as we live and believe! Jesus said “I am the resurrection and the life.” Do you believe this?

6) I Am the way, the truth, and the life. The setting was in the Upper room at Passover feast while Jesus intimately taught his disciples/ just before he was taken away to be crucified. The disciples were deeply troubled because Jesus said he was going away. All the Jewish pilgrims had come to Jerusalem to God's house/, the temple. John 14:6 “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.” In the Old Testament there were many ways in which God prescribed for how the Jews were to 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 an avenue 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 replaced all prior things set up as temporary means by which man relates to God. All of these pointed to him. He is now here and able to accomplish salvation and redemption fully. Jesus is the only way to the father. Jesus makes us acceptable and able to come to God by washing away our sins with his own precious blood “and I will know my saviour when I come to him by the marks in his nail pierced hands.” When Jesus died on the cross the curtain of the temple was torn in Two from top to bottom. The temple was destroyed 40 years after the cross because we don't need it anymore. Oh come to the father through Jesus the son and give him the glory, great things he has done. but greater and higher and stronger will be our wonder, our transport when Jesus we see” Our anxieties are calmed and the things of this world grow strangely dim when we believe Jesus is coming back to bring us to our eternal dwelling places. Jesus said “I Am the way, the Truth and the Life”

7) I Am the true vine The setting is again in the upper room Passover feast. The old testament imagery comes from Issaiah’s two vineyard songs: Isaiah 5:1-7 (the desolate vineyard) & Isaiah 27:2-6 (the fruitful vineyard). John 15:5”I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I remain in him he will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing.” 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 fulfils 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 failed. “Apart from me you can do nothing.” Apart from Jesus the true vine we quickly wither and are fit only as firewood to be picked up thrown into the fire and burned. When we believe in Jesus we receive his nourishing life force and can do anything in accordance with his will because God is our friend and eternal business partner Jesus said “I Am the true Vine”

Part 3

Have Life in his name by Believing John 20:31 “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The great I Am passages paint a vivid portrait of who Jesus is. Even though we may confess our faith in Jesus and we met Jesus personally we will experience many challenges in our lives. If and when we wander away/ the great I Am verses hold the answers. If you find yourself thinking only about bread(money) and begin to starve spiritually, repent and believe I am the bread of life, then you will have life within you! If you become consumed with depression and see only darkness, repent and believe “I am the light of the world” then life will return to you and light to your eyes. When you are abused and mistreated and feel alone and scared, repent and believe “I am the good shepherd.” I will care for you. When you face physical death and your knees become weak thinking this is the end “repent and believe, “I Am the resurrection and the life ! When you are lost and don't know where to turn to,/when anxieties and sorrows like sea billows roll, repent and believe “I am the way and the truth and the life.” When you find yourself cut off from God because of sin, fall on your knees, repent and believe “I am the true vine” and you will have life and a restored relationship with Jesus. Jesus loves you, Jesus loves me. He leads us through many difficulties to teach us to trust him and live by faith. He loves you so much he even gave up his own life for you and no one can take you out of his mighty hand Amen ! We have a beautiful portrait of Jesus in the 7 great I Am verses. Cherish them in your heart and when we see Jesus he will be that same Jesus who went away, the same yesterday today and forever !