

I am that I am
John 18:1-6

We began John 18 with a look at Jesus and the Kidron Valley and then spent two weeks looking at Judas. We begin this evening with verse 3 and move on to the Garden betrayal. We won't, however, get beyond verse 5 because of an incredible statement that Jesus makes.

V 3 – Judas was motivated because the devil had possessed him to complete the betrayal.

John 13:27 - *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."*

Who came to arrest Jesus? v 3a – "Some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees"

What did they bring? V 3b – "lanterns and torches and weapons"

They should have brought more people and more weapons.....

V 4a – *"Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him..."* –

- We could spend hours on this verse talking about God's omniscience and how it applies to our lives.
 - Everything in life is 'Father-filtered.'
 - To God, the end is as certain as the beginning, the future as present as the past.
- Or we could talk about the love of God.
 - God who planned salvation before the world began (Eph 1:4), before giving the law, knowing that we would break it, and knowing the cost of the life of his own Son to redeem us, all before anything was ever made.
 - At a marriage altar, we say, "In sickness and in health, in riches and in poverty, in life and in death" but we really don't know what that looks like. Jesus did.
 - Jesus is indeed the personification of 1 Corinthians 13:7-8 – *"Love bears all things....endures all things. Love never fails."*

V 4b – Ever the faithful shepherd, Jesus stepped forward, in between the arrestors and his disciples

V 5b – John reminds us that Judas was with them

5a – "I am he". V 6 – *"They drew back and fell to the ground."*

- *I am the bread of life* – 6:35
- *I am the light of the world* – 8:12
- *I am the door* – 10:9
- *I am the good shepherd* – 10:11
- *I am the resurrection and the life* – 11:25-26
- *I am the way, the truth and the life* – John 14:6
- *I am the vine* – John 15:9

And now...

- *I am he* – John 18:5 & 6

That little construct, “*I am*,” occurs over 300 times in Scripture, the first in Gen 15:1 and the last in Rev 22:16.

Genesis 15:1 - *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”*

Revelation 22:16 - *“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”*

- The Greek Ἐγώ εἰμί, that John records, is an emphatic form of the copulative verb εἰμί in which is simply a verb joined to a noun, adjective, or adverb.
 - John is my friend
 - John is happy
 - John is at home

It’s a form of description. “Who is John?” “What is John?” “Where is John.”

Jesus also said it another way –

John 8:24 – *“...unless you believe that I am [he] you will die in your sins.”*

John 8:58 – *“...before Abraham was, I am.”*

- In the OT, many people used the expression as a matter of self-identification (Gen 23:4, 30:2, 1 Samuel 20:17).

But God, in particular, used it of himself in Exodus 3:14 - The Hebrew phrase - אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*'ehye 'ăšer 'ehye*).

Exodus 3:14 - *Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God [Elohim] of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"* ¹⁴ *God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."*

The Hebrew phrase "I am who I am" - אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*'ehye 'ăšer 'ehye*), literally means, "I was, I am and I will be."

It is very similar to Jesus's expression of self in -

Revelation 1:8 - *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

There is no question in that text that Jesus is equating himself with the God of Exodus 3:14.

But in the next verse, God said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

The "I am" there is a normal expression of being, like, "I am watching the sheep," or "I am walking down the road."

But when God uses it, it is the ultimate statement of self-existence, self-sufficiency, and immediate presence.

In other words, when God uses the copulative verb, he answers the noun, adjective, and adverb of it all. He tells us who he is, what he is and where he is.

1 - Who made God? No one. God has always been. He alone is eternal.

Psalm 90:1-6 – *Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. ² Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. ³ You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!" ⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. ⁵ You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: ⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.*

2 - On what does God depend? Nothing. God is the only independent thing in all creation.

Isaiah 66:1-2 - *This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is where I rest my feet. So do you think you can build a house for me? Do I need a place to rest? ² I am the one who made all things. They are all here because I made them," says the LORD.*

3 - Where is God? God is simultaneously everywhere.

Psalm 139:7-13 - *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," ¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*

(These foolish adults, behaving like little children, who are now publicly interrupting church services and sporting events to endorse abortion, have no idea of the eternity that is involved in their protests.

It is like **Psalm 2** – *"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." ⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶ "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." ⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." ¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."*

The Supreme Court is not our ultimate refuge because it is not 'supreme.' The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the true Supreme Court.)

The implications of God's "I am"ness is inexhaustible. In the very least, it means that God is completely sufficient, unchangeable, and sovereign.

An illustration of this is found in –

Exodus 5:1-2 - *Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'"* ² *But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."*

This means that William Earnest was incorrect when he wrote

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.*

And that Paul Anka was incorrect to write, and Frank Sinatra was incorrect to sing –

*For what is a man, what has he got?
If not himself, then he has naught
To say the things he truly feels
And not the words of one who kneels
The record shows I took the blows
And did it my way.*

Our only hope is to abandon all hope of self-sufficiency. This is what it means to ‘repent,’ to turn from self and to God, casting ourselves on his mercy and grace.

Is it any wonder than that -

John 18:6 - *When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.*

One day, the nations themselves will do so.

Speaking of the valley of Kidron, let’s think about the Valley of Gehenna, (the transliteration of the Hebrew “Gehenna.”

The Kidron Valley is northeast of the city but Gehenna is located south of Mt. Zion, joins with Kidron but bordered the land between Judah and Benjamin.

- In the OT, this valley was used as a location for child sacrifice to the pagan god Moloch (1 Kings 23:10). During the Babylonian invasion, mounds of dead human bodies were piled in Gehenna (Jeremiah 7:32).
- In Jesus’s time, the Hinnom Valley, or Gehenna, was utilized as the city garbage dump and sewer.

It was so well known and horrific that Jesus employed it to describe Hell.

Matthew 18:9 - *"It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than with two eyes to be thrown into the Gehenna...."*

Luke 12:5 - "...fear the One who, after He has killed has authority to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, fear Him."

Isaiah 66:22-24 - The LORD says, "I will make a new world—new heavens and a new earth—that will last forever. In the same way, your names and your children will always be with me. ²³ Everyone will come to worship me on every worship day; they will come every Sabbath and every first day of the month. This is what I, the LORD, have said. ²⁴ "Whoever goes out of the city will see the dead bodies of those who sinned against me. The worms eating those bodies will never die, and the fires burning them will never go out. It will be horrible to anyone who sees it."

Conclusion: Who is God to do this? By what right does he do these things? He is the same God who allowed himself to be taken in the Garden of Gethsemane. The God who made all things, controls all things and is bringing all things to an end he ordained before anything was. He is our God. And he is "I am."