

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
CHRISTOLOGY: JESUS CHRIST
PART 10

This morning we are in part 10 in our study of Jesus Christ. And as I have said, this is a foundational truth, if we don't get who Jesus is and what He has done for us we are lost in our sins, separated from God! We have looked at His attributes and we have seen that Jesus manifests the same attributes of God the Father, ones that only God can manifest and thus, Jesus must be God. We have looked at the humanity of Jesus and we saw that in the Incarnation Jesus was fully man and fully God. We have seen that there are extra Biblical accounts that speak of Jesus, showing us that what the Scriptures have said are true, that this was not some made up story. We have looked at the claims of Jesus that He is God. And we are presently looking at the seven **"I AM"** statements that Jesus made in the Gospel of John.

And, as I have said, that is the whole point of John's Gospel, so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, He is the Messiah, He is Almighty God! So far we have looked at the first four **"I AM"** statements that Jesus made. We have seen in John 6:35 that Jesus is the bread of life. In John 8:12 and 9:5 we have Jesus telling us that He is the light of the world. In John 10:7-10 He tells us that He is the door. And last time we looked at John 10:11 as Jesus tells us that He is the good shepherd! And keep in mind that all of those statements open up with the **"I AM!"** In other words, Jesus is claiming to be the voice from the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3, Almighty God!

This morning we will finish up looking at the last three of these “**I AM**” statements that Jesus made. And, like I have said, when Jesus says “**I AM**” He is saying that He is the voice from the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3, He is Almighty God! Before we get to our study this morning, let me share this with you. We are told,

H. A. Ironside was occasionally interrupted during his sermons with the objection that there were hundreds of religions, and that no one could determine which was the right way. Ironside would answer by indicating that he knew of only two religions. “One,” he would say, “covers all who expect salvation by doing; the other, all who have been saved by something done. The whole question is very simple. Can you save yourself, or must you be saved by another?”

- Source unknown

That truly is the bottom line. Apart from Christ we can do nothing to save ourselves and in Christ we can only receive that free gift of life that is found in Christ. We must be saved by another; we must be saved by Jesus because there is salvation in no other name, no other person, no other way. And so this morning, we are going to look at these last three “**I AM**” statements that John gives us in his Gospel. We will look at John 11:25 as Jesus will tell us, “**I AM the resurrection and the life.**” We will look at John 14:6 as Jesus tells us, “**I AM the way, the truth and the life.**” And lastly, we will finish up looking at what Jesus tells us in John 15:5, where He says, “**I AM the vine.**” So with that said, let’s begin looking at these last three “**I AM**” statements of Jesus!

4. THE DEITY OF JESUS

THE SEVEN "I AM" STATEMENTS MADE BY JESUS

E. I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE – John 11:25

The fifth “**I AM**” statement that Jesus makes is found in John chapter 11. Let me give you some background information to set the stage for what Jesus is going to say. As John chapter 11 opens up we find out that the friend of Jesus, Lazarus is sick and when Jesus finds out He says that Lazarus is going to die!

Jesus, knowing that His friend is dead, stays two more days in Bethabara, which was some 20 miles away from Bethany, where Lazarus was, the friend of Jesus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. So by the time Jesus arrives in Bethany, Lazarus has been dead for four days!

When Jesus arrives Martha runs out to see Jesus, while Mary remained in the house, being comforted by family and friends. With that said, let’s begin reading in John chapter 11, starting in verse 21 as we look at this fifth “**I AM**” statement made by Jesus, **“Now Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.’ Jesus said to her, ‘our brother will rise again.’ Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’ She said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.’”** John 11:21-27.

Just picture in your mind what is going on here. Obviously Martha is upset, her brother has died and she knows that Jesus has healed people before and yet, He is too late. He got word in plenty of time and maybe that is why we see the disappointment Martha has in the late arrival by Jesus and even maybe a little rebuke by Martha.

And please understand that Martha has not given up on Jesus but she is not confident that He can raise her brother from the dead. Why do I say that? Because in verse 39, when Jesus tells them to roll the stone away from the door of the tomb, Martha says, **“Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.”** Not a lot of confidence there!

And in verse 24 Martha does what many of us do from time to time. Martha fell back on a theological truth that she knew and in doing so she is missing the point that Jesus is making. I wonder how often we do that? The Lord speaks to our heart about something as you read His Word and you just can't believe it is true, that it is for today, that Jesus is speaking to you. Just as He was speaking to Martha, He speaks to us, don't close Him out or negate what He wants to do like Martha had done!

You see, Martha believed in resurrection life just as Job did. In the oldest book of the Bible listen to what Job has to say regarding resurrection life in Job 19:25-27 where we are told, **“For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”**

What is Job talking about here? Job is talking about resurrection life! He is telling us that even after he has died and his body has gone back to the dust of the earth, he will be raised up and in his body, resurrection body, he will see God face-to-face. Now that may seem almost unbelievable that Job would make a statement regarding the resurrection of life that long ago, but he did. This is what Martha was speaking of regarding her brother Lazarus, that his body will be raised one day but not today!

And please understand this. Job believed in resurrection and not in reincarnation. It is important to know that we are not recycled, not reincarnated till we reach some spiritual level of god-hood. Notice what Acts 1:10-11 says, **“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”**

You see, it does not say that the same spirit of Jesus will come back. Many believe that the spirit of Jesus has indwelt many of the learned men. Back in 1986 full page ads ran in newspapers across America and these ads were announcing that Christ is here and his name is Maitreya, and they believe that in him dwells the same spirit that indwelt Christ. Wrong! We are told in Acts that it is the **“SAME JESUS”** not the spirit that indwelt Jesus that will return. And here is the thing we need to remember, just as Christ was bodily resurrected from the dead, we will also be resurrected bodily from the dead. Our assurance rests in the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. For Martha, she was looking to the end of the age for this resurrection life and listen carefully to what Jesus has to say regarding this.

We see here in this fifth of seven great “**I AM**” statements made by Jesus these powerful words, “**I am the resurrection and the life.**” Death is something that many people fear. They don’t want to die so they do everything possible to keep on living, not to age and in the end, you know what happens, they still die! Regarding immortality, Woody Allen once said, “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying.” We see people today having their bodies frozen until a cure for whatever disease they have can be found and then they can be thawed out. What about freezer burn? How foolish and there is no hope in that.

Jesus goes on to say, “**. . . He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?**”

Yes, there will be a resurrection of our bodies but don’t miss the point. Jesus is saying that for the believer, we don’t die! I know, all of you have known Christians that have died, so what I am saying here? What is Jesus saying here?

A believer does not die; the end of these physical bodies is not the end of life for us. What happens is that we just move our residence from these bodies of flesh to a new body that the Lord will give to us in heaven. There is no soul sleep. There is no annihilation. For the Christian, to be absent from the body, physical death, is to be present with the Lord!

Notice also that Jesus says that some who live will never die? What is Jesus speaking of here? I think He is speaking of the Rapture where believers will be caught up to be with the Lord. They will not physically die but be caught up to heaven with the Lord prior to the start of the Tribulation Period.

The question Jesus asked Martha and is asking us regarding this resurrection life that is only found in the *Great I AM* is this, “**Do you believe this?**” People want that everlasting life, they do not want to die and yet they refuse to believe that Jesus paid in full our debt of sin on the cross of Calvary and thus, they will die in their sins. Will there be a resurrection for those that refuse to believe? You bet there will but it is not a good one. They will spend eternity apart from Christ in the Lake of Fire because they refused to believe the work that Christ has done for them. And folk’s, this belief for the Christian is not empty. It is a belief that is then seen in our actions, our obedience to the Lord.

Let me share with you the confidence we have in this resurrection life that Jesus is speaking of here in John. Paul picks up on this and listen too how he drives this point home in I Corinthians 15:20-23. Paul wrote, “**But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.**”

Paul has given us the facts of Christ’s resurrection, the eyewitness testimony, and now here he is just restating that fact that Christ is risen! And then he speaks of this resurrection and he is showing us an order that takes place in this resurrection.

To illustrate this point he uses the Feast of Firstfruits, which was a Jewish feast that took place on the day after the Sabbath following Passover. At this feast, which took place in the spring, they would bring a sheaf of grain and wave it before the Lord and it represented a fruitful harvest that was to come as they gave to the Lord. (Leviticus 23:9-14).

Now here is the awesome thing. Jesus rose from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits and thus, as Paul said in Romans 6:5, **“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”** It is as Trapp said, “As in the Firstfruits offered to God, the Jews were assured of God’s blessing on the whole harvest; so by the resurrection of Christ, our resurrection is insured.” It is as Paul said in Romans 8:23, **“Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

Paul continues on and shows us that through Adam we have all be born into that sin nature and with it came spiritual death, separation from God. But Christ has come to give us life once again as Paul said in I Timothy 2:4-6, **“who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”**

Now please don’t come to the wrong conclusion that Paul is saying or speaking of some kind of universal salvation, where everyone is saved in the end. That is not at all what he is saying here in Corinthians. Listen carefully to what he does say, all who are *IN* Adam will die and all who are *IN* Christ will be made alive! Thus, if you are not in Christ, if He is not your Lord and Savior, then you will not enter into that eternal life with Him, your spirit will remain dead because we have all been born in to Adam and thus, we need to be born again! You will not experience that resurrection life that Jesus is speaking of if you reject Him, if you are not born again!

So let's look at this resurrection order. First we see that Christ is the beginning, He was the firstfruits and there is coming a bountiful resurrection from the dead. The word "**coming**" is PAROUSIA in the Greek and in general terms it speaks of a person's appearance. But when it is spoken of Christ, it relates to His second coming, as Matthew 24:27 tells us, "**For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.**"

Now for some, they have a hard time with Jesus being the firstfruits because we read in several instances in the Bible of people who were raised from the dead long before Jesus was! So how could Jesus be the first? Think about it for a minute, they died and were resurrected once again in their physical bodies that eventually died once again but Jesus was raised in glory, He received a new body that will never fade away and that is what we are waiting for in our own lives.

Thus the order is as follows: Jesus is the start, He is the firstfruits of the harvest that is coming. Then there is the harvest of the saints which has an order: From Pentecost till the Lord comes in the Rapture all the dead and those who are alive will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and we will receive our new bodies. (I Thessalonians 4:16).

Next are those who come to Christ during the tribulation period and are martyred for their faith, they will receive their resurrected bodies at the end of the Tribulation Period. (Revelation 20:4). The Old Testament saints some feel will receive their resurrected bodies here at the end of the Tribulation Period while others feel it will be at the time of the Rapture. (Daniel 12:2).

Lastly, those who are born during the Millennial Kingdom and those who enter into the Millennial Kingdom after the Tribulation, those who survive the Tribulation Period and are saved will get their resurrected bodies at the end of the Kingdom Age, after Satan's short rebellion. There is an order!

It is as Jesus said, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"** John 11:25-26. Make no mistake about it, Jesus is the resurrection and the life and you must believe in Him to enter in!

F. I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE – John 14:6

In John chapter 14 we see the sixth of these "I AM" statements that Jesus made. And here we see Jesus speaking of His departure, that He is going away and while He is gone He is going to be preparing a place for our spirits and souls to dwell in, our mansions or resurrected bodies. You see, these tents of flesh will fade away, they will fall apart, but Jesus has a mansion for us to live in that will never fade away, it will never fall apart, it will be eternal.

And then Jesus tells His men that they know where He is going and the way to get there, they know. And Thomas, not afraid to speak up when he was unsure of what Jesus was saying, and asked Jesus, **"Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"** From this I get the impression that none of them knew what Jesus was talking about and only Thomas was brave enough to ask the question.

And here is the sixth “**I AM**” statement made by Jesus in John 14:6 where we are told, “**Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**” That is pretty straight forward; there is no room for multiple interpretations of what Jesus is saying here!

And yet, how often do we hear people say that we are narrow-minded. We are intolerant of other views. They say that we are so dogmatic about Jesus and salvation. And the list can go on but what they are saying is that they believe all roads lead to God, there are many ways to God, many spiritual truths to this eternal life! And here is the problem they have. We are not too narrow-minded, Jesus is!

Now, let me say this. Just because something is exclusive, just because a person is narrow-minded, does that make it or him wrong? Absolutely not! Let me give you an example to show you what I mean. Most of you have been on an airplane before but you may not be aware that before that plane takes off, the pilot must go through an extensive “pre take-off check list.”

What if this pilot was not so narrow-minded? What if this pilot was more open and he did not feel that there was only one way to fly an airplane? What if this pilot did not believe that the operating manual was the only truth in flying that plane? What if he just did what he wanted, however his spirit moved him that day, would you get on that plane? Absolutely not and the reason is simple, he refuses to follow the rules that have been set to fly that plane and because of that, there is danger, death, and not life if you go up in the air with him!

Now let's apply that to what Jesus has said here. When Jesus said that "**I am the way**" He is not just saying that he is a person who is showing the way, pointing people in the right direction. What Jesus is saying is that He is personally the way! Think of it like this. We are told,

The following account comes to us from E. Stanley Jones. He told of a missionary who lost his way in an African jungle. He could find no landmarks and the trail vanished. Eventually, stumbling on a small hut, he asked the native living there if he could lead him out.

The native nodded. Rising to his feet, he walked directly into the bush. The missionary followed on his heels. For more than an hour they hacked their way through a dense wall of vines and grasses. The missionary became worried: "Are you sure this is the way? I don't see any path."

The African chuckled and said over his shoulder, "Bwana, in this place there is no path. I am the path."

- Today in the Word, May, 1996, p. 24

That is the point that Jesus is making here, that He is the way, the only way and you can't get to heaven apart from going through Him! That means no church, no religious activities, not this or that is part of the way, Jesus is the way! But how do we know that this is right, that this is the truth?

That brings us to the second statement that Jesus made here and He is not just the way, but He is also **“the truth.”** Again, please pay attention to this. Jesus is not just saying that He tells the truth. There are people who speak the truth all the time, but that is not the point here, for Jesus would be like other people then. Does Jesus tell the truth? Absolutely, but again, that is not the point. Jesus is saying that He is the truth. He is the embodiment or personification or representation of truth! Why would we as Christians look to any man, to any religion and not to Christ who is truth? That is foolish and yet many do and their faith is shipwrecked because of it. They have listened to the lies of the Devil, the doctrines of demons instead of the truth that is found in Christ!

Here is the problem today, many do not believe in absolute truth and when I speak of absolute truth I am speaking of what the Word tells us, what the Bible has to say, what Jesus is speaking to us because He is truth. We are told,

In the survey taken in early 1991, interviewees were asked, “Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: There is no such thing as absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct.” Only 28% of the respondents expressed strong belief in “absolute truth,” and more surprisingly, only 23 percent of born-again or evangelical Christians accepted this idea!

What a telling revelation! If more than 75 percent of the followers of Christ say nothing can be known for certain, does this indicate, as it seems, that they are not convinced that Jesus existed, that He is who He claimed to be, that His Word is authentic, that God created the heavens and earth, or that eternal life awaits the believer?

That's what the findings appear to mean. If there is no absolute truth, then by definition nothing can be said to be absolutely true. To the majority, apparently, it's all relative. Nothing is certain. Might be. Might not be. Who knows for sure? Take your guess and hope for the best!

- James Dobson, December 1991 letter,
quoting George Barna,
What Americans Believe

Think about this. Way back in 1991 these statistics are from and more than likely that number is even worse today among so-called born-again Christians. Back then 75% of born-again Christians did not believe in absolute truth, which tells me they do not believe what Jesus is saying here, that He is truth, absolutely! And you know what happens when you don't know the Truth, when you discredit or ignore Christ who is the truth? Listen carefully,

Once the Devil was walking along with one of his cohorts. They saw a man ahead of them pick up something shiny. "What did he find?" asked the cohort.

"A piece of the truth," the Devil replied.

"Doesn't it bother you that he found a piece of the truth?" asked the cohort.

"No," said the Devil, "I will see to it that he makes a religion out of it."

- Klyne Snodgrass, *Between Two Truths -
Living with Biblical Tensions*, p. 35

You see, that is exactly what we do. We say no to Jesus being the only way because we do not believe that He is the truth and thus, we come to our own conclusions, we make our own religion and that leads to death! How do I know that? Because of what Jesus says next, that He is “**the life.**” Again, please listen to what Jesus is saying here. He is not saying that He is alive, which He is, but that He is the source of all life! Jesus is the source of life; physical life, spiritual life and eternal life!

People are looking for life, that abundant life and they try to find it in all kinds of things but you will never find it in things, you will find it in the person of Jesus Christ! That is the bottom line and if you think about it, this just makes sense. Look at athletes who make millions of dollars a year to play a sport and yet, they will renegotiate their contract for more money, a few million more a year, why? Because they are not satisfied with the life that they have and they are trying to find that abundant life apart from Christ and it is not working!

What I want you to notice here is that Jesus did not say, “I am A way, A truth, and A life.” He claimed to be the ***ONLY WAY***, the ***ONLY TRUTH*** and the ***ONLY LIFE!*** Now there are some who disagree with this and I will share with you one such response. This person writes on his web page regarding this verse here in John 14:6,

This verse has always nagged at me because it is so often used to “prove” that Jesus Christ is the ***ONLY*** way to God. Instinctively, I’ve disagreed with this for as long as I can remember. In my opinion, it is one of the most destructive verses in the Bible because it has been used throughout the ages to justify intolerance and many more unpleasant ways of treating those who are not “Christians”.

Obviously, I have a huge problem with this because it is so utterly un-Jesus-like (to me, anyway). To use this verse as anything akin to “proof” that would justify exclusivism is in my opinion extremely simplistic.

Additionally, it assumes many things . . . not the least of which is the unquestioned authority of the community or individual who wrote the Gospel of John. Many traditional scholars attribute authorship of the Gospel of John to the “beloved disciple” of Jesus - John of Zebedee. But this is not anywhere close to being factual. John of Zebedee was apparently beheaded by Agrippa I in 44 CE, long before the Gospel of John was written (sometime around 100 CE). [Not true, John wrote Revelation toward the end of the first century!]

Without knowing really who wrote the Gospel of John, my tendency would be to read what the writer(s) wrote and reflect upon it . . . and see in which ways the wisdom points to God, and in which ways it does not. Of course, one can debate endlessly about such things as the meaning, the interpretation, and the authority of Scripture. At some point, you have to simply agree to disagree. I accept that. . . .

Keep in mind, though, I am not an exclusivist. I am a universalist. I believe that there is one Creator of the universe. I believe the Creator reveals truth and enlightenment in different ways to different people in different cultures in different worlds in different galaxies at different times.

- <http://cameltranslations.blogspot.com/2005/11/john-146.html>

So let's say that this verse does not teach that Jesus is the only way, even though we are told in the last part of this verse, "**No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" To me that is pretty clear and let me say this. The reason he does not accept that Jesus is the only way is because he wants to believe that all roads lead to God, there are many paths to God, many roads to travel and all will get there one day! Wrong!! But again, let's see if there are other Scriptures that show us that Jesus is the only way.

In Acts 4:12 Peter tells us, "**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**" I think Peter is pretty clear here. Where else can we find salvation apart from Jesus Christ? There is no other place, no other person, there is only Jesus!

Paul tells us in Romans 10:9-10, "**that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**" Again, Paul is very clear on this, that salvation is found with the confession of our sin and our belief in the One who has saved us, Jesus!

In Colossians 1:19-22 Paul tells us how we have made peace with God. He wrote, **“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”** We have made peace with God through the shed blood of Christ on the cross of Calvary and apart from appropriating that into our lives by faith, we are not at peace with God but we are at war with Him!

And here is a warning and the an admonition by Paul in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”** The world will rip you off because they do not know the way. The world will rip you off because they do not have the truth. And the world will rip you off because the life they give leads to death. Apart from Christ we will never see the Father and you may accept that or reject that but you can't say the Scriptures don't teach that, that is just foolish!

Let me close this sixth **“I AM”** statement by Jesus with these words from J. Vernon McGee. He wrote,

“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” He made a dead–end street of all the cults and “isms.” He says the *only* way to God is through Him. That is a dogmatic statement! Years ago a student out at UCLA told me he didn’t like the Bible because it is filled with dogmatism. I agreed with him that it is. He especially selected this verse and said, “That’s dogmatic.” I said, “It sure is, but have you realized that it is characteristic of truth to be dogmatic? Truth has to be dogmatic.”

I had a teacher who was the most dogmatic, narrow–minded person I’ve ever met. She insisted that $2 \text{ plus } 2 = 4$. It didn’t make any difference what you had two of - apples or cows or dollars - she always insisted that $2 + 2 = 4$. She was dogmatic. I have found that the bank I do business with operates on the same principle. Only in my case it is $2 - 2 = 0$, and they are dogmatic about it. Friend, let me say to you that one of the characteristics of truth is its dogmatism.

Now, not all dogmatism is truth - there is a lot of ignorance that is dogmatic. However, that which is truth has to be dogmatic. When I ask directions to go somewhere, I do not want my directions from a man who isn’t sure and doesn’t know exactly how to get there. I want my directions from one who knows exactly where I’m to turn and how many blocks I’m to go. As I said to this young student, “Millions of people for over nineteen hundred years have been coming to Christ on the basis of His statement, ‘I am the way,’ and they have found it is accurate, that it has brought them to heaven. Why don’t you try it? The Lord Jesus says you are not going to get to heaven except through Him. Why not come through Him and make sure?”

When Jesus said, “**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me**” He meant it. May we not be confused or distracted by those who love to confuse people, may we look to the way, the truth and the life, may we look to Jesus!

G. I AM THE VINE – John 15:5

The seventh and last “**I AM**” statement made by Jesus is found in John 15:5, where we are told, “**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**” Here’s the thing. Jesus not only gives to us life but He also produces fruit in our lives if we are abiding in Him!

You see, if a branch of a grape vine is not attached to the vine itself, it will not produce fruit; it will just die because it is unable to get the nutrients it needs to produce the fruit, to produce the grapes! The same is true in our spiritual lives. We need to be attached to Jesus, to abide in Him and as we do we will naturally produce fruit!

Now let me ask you this one question since spring is here. Let’s say you have an apple tree at your house and for that branch to produce apples it needs to be attached to the trunk of the tree, which it is. Now as spring is here you see flowers on the tree and by the time fall rolls around there is fruit on that tree, it has produced apples. Now during that time did you every see that tree doing this, “I have to produce apples. Grunt and groan and grunt and groan!” No, and if you did, see me afterward, we need to talk.

No, the fruit is just produced naturally because the branch is abiding in the tree and like I have said; fruit will naturally be produced in our lives as we abide in Christ. We don't have to force ourselves to produce fruit and if we try, that will never work. You see, Christ will not accept anything we do apart from Him! "You mean my work at the Salvation Army is for nothing?" If you are doing it apart from Christ it is!

Now what is this fruit that Jesus is speaking of here? In Romans 1:13 Paul tells us that fruit is seeing people saved. Paul put it like this, "**Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.**"

Then in Romans 6:22 Paul tells us that some other fruit that we can produce is holiness. Paul put it like this, "**But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**"

Also, in Romans 15:28 Paul speaks of our giving being another kind of fruit that can be produced in our lives. He wrote, "**Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.**"

And we are told in Colossians 1:6-8 of another kind of fruit that is produced in our lives as Paul speaks of fruit being the help we bring to others. Paul put it like this, "**which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.**"

Also, in Hebrews 13:15 we see that the praise of our lips is another kind of fruit that is produced in our lives. Again Paul said, **“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”**

And lastly, in Galatians 5:22 Paul speaks of this beautiful fruit that is produced in our lives and that is the fruit of the Spirit which is love! Paul put it like this, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.”**

What about joy, peace, longsuffering and-so-on? Notice that it is the fruit of the Spirit not fruits. These others are descriptions of love, what it produces in our lives, how that love is seen in our lives. Thus, outside of Christ we can do nothing that He will accept as fruit unto Him! But in Christ there is all this beautiful fruit that can be produced in our lives as long as we abide in Him!

The key, of course is abiding in Christ as I have said, but some don't like that, some want to do their own thing. But as this story shows us, why not attach yourself to the one who can give you life and allow good fruit to be produced in you. We are told,

Much as Kaiser Wilhelm of the First World War has been criticized and that his Christian home life was an example to his people. Frequently the emperor gave proof of his religious sentiments. Hardly a speech did he deliver without some religious reference. One incident in his life is typical. The Kaiser was discussing a passage of the New Testament with a university professor. The passage was the well-known one: “I am the vine; you are the branches.”

The professor was attempting to deny the divinity of Christ. The Kaiser asked him: "Have you ever said to your students: "I am the vine; you are the branches?" "No sir," was the answer. Do you think that any professor before your time has spoken thus? Again the answer was in the negative. "Do you think that in the future professors will so speak to those grouped at the foot of their chairs?" "Certainly not," replied the professor.

"Well, then," the Kaiser went on, "since never has master spoken nor can he speak as Christ has spoken, I believe not only that Christ as a real man, but also a real God."

- Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, 2712

No one has ever spoken like Jesus and made the claims that Jesus made and even if someone did, no one would be able to prove them to be true as Jesus did! The bottom line is this. What separates Jesus Christ from all the other religious leaders and teachers throughout history is that they were just men claiming to have *A* way to God, where Jesus claimed to be God, the *ONLY WAY* to the Father and heaven. You can remove Buddha from Buddhism, Mohammed from Mohammedism, Confucius from Confucianism and nothing would change, because those religions aren't built on their leaders. You see, it is built upon their teachings, but not on them personally. But remove Jesus Christ from Christianity and it ceases to exist. Because Christianity is inextricably linked to and built upon the Person and work of Jesus Christ!

Look at what we have seen in these seven “**I AM**” statements that Jesus made here in the Gospel of John showing us that He is Almighty God. He starts out in John 6:35 and He tells us, “**I AM the Bread of Life.**” He is the source of our spiritual health and as we partake of Him He will give to us that abundant life. Then in John 8:12 and 9:5 Jesus said, “**I AM the light of the world.**” In other words, He will guide us in this dark world if we would only look to Him! Then, in John 10:9 Jesus said, “**I AM the door.**” In other words, there is no other way to enter into the sheepfold, or into eternal life except through Him! He goes on in John 10:11 and says, “**I AM the good shepherd.**” Here we see that our Shepherd, Jesus Christ will lead us to where He wants us to go, He will watch over us and protect us and warn us of the dangers that are out there. In John 11:25 Jesus says, “**I AM the resurrection and the life.**” In other words, eternal life is only found in Him. In John 14:6 Jesus makes these powerful remarks, “**I AM the way, the truth and the life.**” That is the bottom line; there is no other way, no other truth and no other life than that which is found in Christ! And lastly, in John 15:5 Jesus said, “**I AM the vine.**” We need to abide in Him if we want to produce real fruit, lasting fruit, abundant fruit.

As I close this morning let me leave you with this story to think about. And as you listen you will see how true this is. We are told,

Anyone who has ever used a computer spell checker has seen some of the insane recommendations a spell checker will make for seemingly common words that, for some reason, were not included in the checker's dictionary. A Lutheran bishop, James Rave, was writing a column focusing on the need to lift up the name of Jesus in the marketplace. When he had finished typing the words into his word processor, he ran a spell check. The program stopped at the word "Jesus" with the comment, "Does not exist." This prompted a later column in which the bishop reminded his readers "Jesus does not exist in anybody's vocabulary, including a spell checker's, until you intentionally insert it."

- Steve May, The Story File, pp. 44-45

I pray that you have inserted Jesus into your life. That you have clearly seen He is Almighty God, the second person of the Holy Trinity who has come to pay in full the penalty for our sins. That He is the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world. I pray that as God does a spell check of your life that you are in Christ because if you are not, then you will not exist with Him!