

BIBL 323 – D12 LUO

I AM Paper

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

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In today's world, the words I am are used with no great significance. We use it to answer questions like, "Are you Thomas Hutto? I Am.", "Are you going to the movies? I Am.", and "Who is the team leader? I am." On January 17, 1929, Elzie Crisler Segar created the animated figure "Popeye the Sailor Man" which became a very popular figure for the newspaper comic strips and later became one of the most popular Saturday morning cartoons across movie screens and television sets across America.(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popeye>) This cartoon portrayed a weak sailor man who was in love with his dream girl, Olive Oyl but was unable to win her affections by his weakly stature. His adversary was Brutus, who was very big and strong. However, spinach was Popeye's answer to gaining the strength he needed to defeat Brutus and win over the woman of his dreams. One of the most used saying Popeye used in every cartoon was "I yams g what I yams!" Even in cartoons, "I am" is used without great significance or without regard to its deeper meaning. According to Dr. Elmer L. Towns in Theology for Today pg. 44, "Jesus Christ affirmed His deity: (1) He applied Himself the statement of Jehovah, 'I am' (John 8:24). This affirmation is taken from the root word for 'Jehovah'. 'I am that I am' (Exod. 3:14-15; John 4:26; 18:5-6)." He also added that "the Jews did not misunderstand His claim. They knew that Jesus was claiming full deity, and they tried to stone Him for it." The significance of Jesus using the words "I Am" means that Jesus claimed to be equal to the God of the Old Testament and thus marking His claim of deity or as Dr. Towns says in John: Believe and Live pg. XIV, "the self-existence One". In fact, when He used these words, He claimed to be God in flesh, the God-man.

In John 14:6, Jesus tells His disciples "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; No one comes to the Father except through Me." (HCSB) According to Towns in A Journey Through The New Testament pg. 191, the setting of this statement was in the upper room after the Passover

service. “Jesus taught what is known as ‘The Upper Room Discourse’ using the Socratic method of teaching (Towns)”. Jesus was teaching His disciples what they were to do after He was gone. He taught them that “they should love one another; as I have loved you.” (John 13:34 HCSB) However, the disciples became confused and distraught because they didn’t understand why Jesus was speaking of Him not being there. Jesus then tells them “¹ Your heart must not be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also. ⁴ You know the way where I am going.” (John 14:1-4 HCSB) Even after saying this they still found themselves perplexed until Thomas spoke up and said, “Lord, we don’t know where You’re going. How can we know the way?” (John 14:5 HCSB) Thomas asked the question not because he didn’t trust Jesus, I believe he asked this question because of his grief in knowing that Jesus was leaving them. All of the disciples were eager to understand. However Jesus used the “I AM...”, (John 14:6) to assure them that He is in complete control. After this He also assures them that because they knew Him and believed in Him, that they already know “...the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”(John 14:6 HCSB)

After looking at the significance of the words “I AM” and seeing the events surrounding the words of Jesus, “I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life; No man comes unto the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6), let us now take an even deeper look as to the significance of what Jesus was actually saying and how the statement relates Him to God as revealed in the Old Testament.

First, Jesus claims to be “the Way”. Leon Morris in Jesus Is The Christ pg 118, states “that by ‘the way’ he means ‘way to God’.” There is no other possible way to get to the Father.

According to John MacArthur in Hebrews: New Testament Commentary pg 109 , “The priest of ancient Israel were appointed by God to be mediators between Himself and His people. Only the high priest could offer the highest sacrifice under the Old Covenant, and that he did only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).” He adds, “All the sins of the people were brought symbolically to the Holy of Holies, where blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat as a sacrifice to atone for them. As no other human instrument could, he represents God before the people and the people before God.” Hebrews 4:14 say,”¹⁴Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus the Son of God—let us hold fast to the confessions.” (HCSB) By Jesus claiming to be “the Way”, He is claiming to be the mediator between God and man. He is the sacrifice needed for the sins of the entire world. The Old Covenant is satisfied through Jesus and Jesus alone. He is our Great High Priest.

The second part of this “I AM” statement by Jesus is “the Truth”. Morris says on pg 119 “Truth is not the teaching about God transmitted by Jesus but is God’s very reality revealing itself – occurring!-in Jesus (Bultmann).” In today’s world, relative truth is being personified as a means to please our own fleshly desires. We say, “What may be true for you might not be true for me.” However, Jesus did not speak relatively in this manner. He stated an absolute. Absolute means that there is no room for negation and no room for argument. His truth is absolute. How do we relate Jesus’ statement of “the Truth” to God as revealed in the Old Testament? In the Old Testament, God promised the children of Israel “the Promised Land”. However, Moses did not live to lead them into the Land that God promised nor to see the promise fulfilled. Upon Moses death (Joshua 1), I would imagine that the people probably thought that all hope was lost. They probably felt that the promise was lost. However, God’s promise to them was absolute truth. God’s promises are not as perceived notions or hopeful

endeavors, but God's promises are already accomplished and absolute. You can trust Him with everything you have. He is absolute truth. God gave Joshua the direction and promise to take the land promised to them. God tells Joshua ⁶ "Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance." (Joshua 1:6 HCSB) God kept His word.

The third part of Jesus' "I AM" statement is "the Life". Morris says on page 119, "It is He alone whose life is unique, self-existent like the life of the Father (John 5:26 HCSB). He is the life, and the source of life to others (John 3:16 HCSB)." Jesus is the only life that leads to a life of abundance in peace, joy and contentment. Nothing else can compare to the life Jesus gives both physically and eternally. He is the source of true life. Listen to what John says, ¹ "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴ Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men." (John 1:1-4 HCSB) Now, how does this statement relate to God in the Old Testament? Well, let's look at one more passage into the New Testament. 1st John 5:7 says ⁷ "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." (NKJV) From these few passages, we will see that Jesus not only the life before the beginning, but that all things were created by and for Him, both physically and eternally. He was, is and always will be the keeper and giver of life. This means, that Jesus was there when the world was formed. (Gen. 1:1 HCSB) Jesus was also there when God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. (Gen. 2:7 HCSB)

In conclusion, John 14:6 "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life; No man can come unto the Father except by Me." (HCSB) Jesus communicates Himself not only as God as revealed in the

Old Testament, but He reveals His deity as being God in flesh. In revealing that He is the One and Only mediator between God and man as our Great High Priest, and in revealing that He is trustworthy for the sake of all mankind, and in revealing that He and He alone is the sustainer and giver of life who has always been; He proves His deity and His sovereignty above all things.

And by that, He is the only way into heaven. His final words in John 14:6 are that “no one can come unto the Father except through Me.” Apart from Jesus, there is no other way into heaven.

Jesus left no room for argument or as Josh McDowell said in More Than A Carpenter pg. 22, “wobble room”. He quoted C.S. Lewis, former professor at Cambridge University and once an agnostic, about the claims of Jesus. “I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic-on level with the man who says he is a poached egg-or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” I believe what Dr. Johnny Hunt, Pastor First Baptist Woodstock and President of the Georgia Baptist Convention, said in a 2009 Xtreme student event in Gatlinburg, TN., “ Jesus is not the best way into heaven; He is the One and Only Way.”

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