

The "I AM" Of Scripture

NKJV John 8:21-24 Then Jesus said to them again, "**I am going away**, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." 22 So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?" 23 And He said to them, "**You are from beneath; I am from above**. You are of this world; **I am not of this world**. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that **I am He**, you will die in your sins."

KJV John 8:21-24 Then said Jesus again unto them, **I go my way**, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. 22 Then said the Jews, will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. 23 And he said unto them, **Ye are from beneath; I am from above**: ye are of this world; **I am not of this world**. 24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that **I am he**, ye shall die in your sins.

The difference in the way Jesus refers to himself in the English translations of verse 21 may not seem important. The "I go" compared to "I am going" may seem to convey the same thought until you study the word "am" in the passage.

The word "I" is the same Greek ego. But the Greek word for "am" is not in the text for Verse 21. That Greek word is εἰμί, pronounced *i-mee'*, and literally means past, present and future existence. In short, "I am eternal" which can only be interpreted as a pronouncement of deity. That concept is not intended in the thought of going somewhere and therefore is not included in the Greek text. The translators have included the "am" to aid understanding of the passage to modern readers. In most cases of adding words to clarify meaning, the translators do help our understanding. But in this passage the addition detracts from the meaning of the next three verses.

Jesus is identifying Himself as the Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* Matthew 1:23 identifies Isaiah's prophecy pointing to Jesus as *"Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."*

Verse 23 then carries the meaning that those He was talking with were born of the manner of and inhabitants of the earth while He was eternal and an inhabitant of Heaven, though temporarily inhabiting a physical body on earth. He further emphasizes the fact that He is not of this world.

Verse 24 is a statement that they should believe everything the law and prophets had to say about the messiah referred to Him. He is the prophet spoken of by Moses, He is the King promised through David, and He is the priest after the order of Melchisedec.

By the time He gets to verse 58, the statement of His eternal existence should be clear in any language.

"Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.""

Note what Vincent says; "It is important to observe the distinction between the two verbs. Abraham's life was under the conditions of time, and therefore had a temporal beginning. Hence,

Abraham *came into being, or was born* (γενέσθαι). Jesus' life was from and to eternity. Hence the formula for *absolute, timeless* existence, *I am*"

The ancient Jews not only believed that the Messiah was superior to and Lord of all the patriarchs and angels, but that his divine nature existed with God before the creation, and that the creation was directly affected by him.

In Exo 3:14; The "I AM THAT I AM" is used in context with "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The meaning was clear to the Hebrew people in Egypt: I was their god then, I am your God now, I will be your God in the future.

In Isaiah 43:13, 44:6, 46:9, 48:12 the literal translation of the Hebrew is "I HE" (no word for am) and is combined with concepts that can only refer to God.

"None can deliver out of My hand."

"I am the First and the Last."

"...I (*am or be*) God, there is no other; I (*am or be*) God, there is none like Me,"

As the final book of scripture begins, the identification of the speaker makes the same reference to His eternal existence and all powerful nature.

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

If Jesus were just a man, like the rest of human kind, the statements He makes to the Jews of that time would be lies. But, if He is more than a man, more than just a prophet, and is the all-powerful law giver and judge of all mankind, what will His next appearance be like. His final words to us are found in Revelation 22:20 "He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Can we say as John did, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"