I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: AN “I AM” STATEMENT OF JESUS

David C Taylor, Jr, Liberty University
I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: AN “I AM” STATEMENT OF JESUS

David Taylor, Jr.
BIBL 323: Gospel of John

December 10th, 2012
I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: AN “I AM” STATEMENT OF JESUS

Introduction

The Gospel of John contains eight “I AM” statements of Jesus. “I AM” is the term God first used of Himself when speaking to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). By using this statement, Jesus was aligning Himself with God.

One specific use of the statement in John comes in chapter 8 verse 12. Jesus states that He is the light of the world. His claim showed and declared that He has come to take away darkness from the world and give them the light of life. The statement showed His power, and His Deity and His relationship with the Father.

“I AM the Light” in the Old Testament

To understand what Jesus meant in John’s Gospel, one must look at the Old Testament context of the name “I AM”. Israel had been in bondage to Egypt for 430 years with no hope of deliverance (Ex. 12:41). However, a servant of the Lord was rising up and his name was Moses. Moses had left Egypt due to killing an Egyptian and he settled in Midian (Ex. 2:11-22).

While Moses was tending flocks, he came across a burning bush in the desert. God spoke to him and Moses asked what should be told to the Hebrews when they asked who sent him. God told him to say “I AM” (Ex. 3:14). God was very specific about His name and what He was to be called.

Verse 14 uses the Hebrew word היה (pronounced hyh) and has the meaning of “to be.”¹ This word is the root word for YHWH, the proper name for God. YHWH is the personal name of God that is used throughout most of the Old Testament Scripture.² The statements in John’s

---

² Ibid. 210
Gospel would show the relationship Jesus was claiming to have with the Father. That relationship is one of equality; He and the Father are one.

God was not only called “I AM” in the Old Testament, there are several instances when God is referred to as “Light” as well. Psalm 36:9 says that it is because of God’s light that we see light. God also led the Hebrews through the desert by a pillar of fire (a light source) by night in Exodus as well.

John 8 shows that Jesus is the light of the world. The World was in darkness, but He had come to illuminate and eliminate darkness. Darkness had entered into the world in Genesis chapter 3 when Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit in the Garden of Eden. However, John 1:5 shows us that though darkness entered into the world, it never had the chance to defeat light. God had ordained Christ to overcome evil from the beginning.

**Events Surrounding the Statement**

Leading up to John 8:12, Jesus had been approached by the Jewish leaders with a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. The Pharisees and scribes were planning to set a trap for Jesus and hoped that they would be able to charge Him on how He handled the situation. According to Ryrie, Jesus faced two problems. If He was lenient with the woman He would alienate the legalists, but if He supported death, He would alienate the many who did not support that punishment.

Jesus showed once again that He would not fall into any trap of the Pharisees’. This was not intended by the Father to happen to Him. He began to write on the ground with His finger

---

(John 8:6). It is not known exactly what Jesus wrote on the ground, however, some suggest that it was a listing of sins committed by the accusers.⁶

When He finally addressed them, He advised that the person without sin should cast the first stone (John 8:7). Obviously none of them were without sin as all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23) and one by one they left (John 8:9). By taking this approach, Jesus avoided both of the problems that would come if He had simply given a judgment.⁷ He asked the woman where her judges were, none were to be found (John 8:11). He then told her to go and sin no more.

Jesus then said to the Pharisees, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 ESV). The Pharisees condemned Jesus saying that He was bearing witness for Himself (John 8:13). It was not accepted among the Jewish leaders that a man could give witness for himself.⁸ Jesus explained that it is the law of man that claims two must bear witness. He then said that it is not His law, He is under a different law, the law of the Father (John 8:18).

**Revelation of Christ’s Deity**

The statement, “I am the light of the world,” shows that Jesus is Deity. His claim ties Himself to how God was spoken of in the Old Testament. Isaiah 60:19 says that the LORD or YHWH or “I AM” will be your everlasting light. Based on this, Jesus is claiming to be YHWH. Light is also a symbol of God and His holiness.⁹ This statement would have been a clear indicator to the religious leaders that He was claiming to be the Christ.

---

⁸ Towns. 81
Rabbis also used the term “Light” to describe the Messiah.\(^\text{10}\) If they recognized the Messiah to be named Light, they would have recognized that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah Himself. He is also specific as to which light He is referring. He is not just light; He is the light of the world. He is the one that will shine through the darkness of sin. He is the true light (John 1:9). He is the light for which they had been waiting. Yet, they chose to reject Him time after time in the gospel accounts.

Jesus makes the statement of being the light again in chapter 9. Here He is healing the blind man and his claim shows that He has power over sickness and disease, power over the body.\(^\text{11}\) This is power that only Deity could possess.

The Greek for “I AM” in John 8:12 is ἐγώ εἰμί which is transliterated ego eimi.\(^\text{12}\) It is this phrase that is used by Jesus for each of the “I AM” statements in the Gospel of John. Ego Eimi shows Jesus’ relationship to the Father which, in turn, shows His Deity.\(^\text{13}\) Towns claims that in this discourse Jesus claims Deity by being the deliverer from sins.\(^\text{14}\)

**Conclusion**

Jesus’ statement, “I am the light of the world,” shows His Deity. It shows Jesus as related to the Father in the Old Testament. It shows Jesus as YHWH. It shows Jesus as the light in the darkness of this world that was created in Genesis 3. It shows that He is all-powerful to heal the sick, and shows His power over the will of the Jewish leaders. It shows His power over the statutes of the Law. The light of the world shows that Jesus is the only answer to darkness in


\(^{11}\) Towns. xiii


\(^{14}\) Towns. 83
this world. He is the only answer for everything that plagues the world, the only answer, the only perfect Messiah.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


