



Jesus on Jesus

**Diocese of Bunbury
Study Notes
2023**

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Introduction to 'Jesus on Jesus'

Jesus is the foundation of our faith and of all that we do as Christians. We want to make sure that our foundations in Jesus are strong. Do we really understand who Jesus is? Do we have a life-giving relationship with him? How does this relationship impact our lives?

Who is Jesus? Many have debated this question over the years. Several religions include beliefs about Jesus; some New Age followers add Jesus to their mix of ideas; others doubt, despite the strong historical evidence, that Jesus even existed.

But what did Jesus say about himself? Jesus knew exactly who he was and communicated it frequently to his listeners. Whether they wanted to hear what he had to say about himself was another matter. Just as some people today take offence at what Jesus said about himself, people did then too. Jesus' claims about himself were, and still are, controversial.

Before we consider the 'I Am' statements of Jesus we need to be aware that even the phrase "I Am" was controversial. When Moses had his encounter with God at the burning bush, Moses asked God his name. God replied "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you". (Exodus 3 v 13-14) When God calls Himself the "I Am" in Exodus 3, it's a pivotal moment. God reveals Himself to His people and comes to redeem them out of exile and lead them into a new life. God's name discloses who He is and what He is like. He is the I AM, the eternal, unchanging, self-existent one, infinite and glorious in every way, and above and beyond all created things. He is God.

Jesus didn't appear out of nowhere and start a new religion. Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and foreshadowing and he knew it. In John 8 v 58 Jesus applied the title "I AM" to himself. He claimed to be God. Not a helper to God or a great teacher, but the divine, eternal, pre-existent, infinite, perfect Being. He is Israel's God. The Jews knew taking on this title was making such a claim, which is why they immediately pick up stones to kill him (John 8:59).

It is not a coincidence that the 'I Am statements' begin with the words 'I Am'. Each time Jesus says these words they are a signal to his Jewish listeners that Jesus was identifying himself as God. The Gospel of John records 7 "I Am" statements by Jesus. Each statement – eg "I am the Bread of Life" – is also a reference to events or prophecies in the Old Testament. Jesus' Jewish listeners understood these references well – but do we? We need to understand some of these references to really get to grips with the "I AM" sayings and why they are so significant. For this reason there are two scripture passages in each study – one from the Old Testament and one from the Gospel of John.

The aim of these studies is to understand Jesus' claims about himself in the light of the Old Testament prophecies and to consider what they mean for us today as followers of Jesus. The picture language Jesus used is vivid and memorable. His statements are also challenging and unequivocal. If we embrace these claims we too risk scorn and rejection, just as Jesus was by many. Yet these statements are the very foundation of our faith. Let's build on the strong foundations of Jesus Christ!

How to use these studies

Different people prefer to learn in different ways, so there are options for how you may like to use these studies.

- 1) Try what is called 'The Swedish Study Method' on the following page. It is a simple format, with just three questions which you can apply each week to the Bible passages recommended at the start of each week's notes.

OR

- 2) Use the questions that have been written for each week's study.

OR

- 3) Mix and Match the two methods.

You may also like to look at the following resource if you would like to dig a bit deeper.

indycrowe.com/2019/02/13/the-7-i-am-statements-of-jesus-ot-background-nt-meaning/

As always, I would love your feedback on what worked, or didn't work well for you and/or your groups.

Enjoy getting to know Jesus better!

Yours in Christ Jesus

Verity Murray

Swedish Method of Bible Study

Have a pen and piece of paper or notebook handy

1. Read the recommended Bible Passages
2. Write down:

- **Light bulbs:** This should be something that ‘shines’ from the text—whatever impacts you most or draws your attention. Things that really strike you as significant or new.
- **Question marks:** Anything that is difficult to understand in the text, or a question you'd like to ask the author if you could.
- **Arrows:** Anything that has a personal implication or application for your life or your convictions.

2. Once you have done this exercise, set aside some time to talk together with a friend or in a small group about what you have read.

- Start by praying that God would help you to learn and grow together and encourage each other.
- Then share the bits of text you each put a light bulb next to and explain to one another why.
- Next share your question marks. If you feel like you can answer each other’s questions, do that. But if they are curly questions, maybe one or both of you can commit to doing some research and coming back to them at your next session.
- Finally, share your arrow applications, and pray together about those and the other things you have learned.

Optional:

You could print out copies of the Bible passages and draw the symbols of the lightbulbs, question marks and arrows next to the relevant places in the text. This is especially helpful for anyone who doesn’t like to write too much.



Week 1: I Am the Bread of Life

Background: Exodus 16 describes events when God's people, the Israelites, were living in the desert, having escaped slavery in Egypt but not yet having a land to call their own. The passage in John 6 comes shortly after the story of the Feeding of the 5,000. Some people were keen to see Jesus do that miracle again!

Read Exodus 16 and John 6 v 25-69

1. What connections do you see between these two stories?
2. How is the bread that Jesus gives different to the manna given in the desert?
3. How did the people respond to the manna in the desert at first?
4. How did Jesus' listeners respond to his words "I am the bread of Life"?
5. How do you respond to Jesus words?
6. In what ways do you experience Jesus as the "Bread of Life"?



"...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord " Deuteronomy 8 v3

Week 2: I Am the Light of the World

Read Exodus 13 v 17-22 and John 8 v 12

1. What connections do you see between these two bible passages?
2. Jesus talks about being the light in several places in the gospel of John and the author also refers to Jesus as “the light of men”. Read the following passages and consider:
 - a) What blessings come from the light?
 - b) Why do some people resist the light?
 - John 1 v 4-13
 - John 3 v 19-21
 - John 9 v4-5
 - John 12 v 35-36
3. In John 12v36 Jesus says, “Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light”. What do you think it means to be a son or daughter of light? (see also Matthew 5 v14)
4. Jesus said, “whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life”. How do you experience ‘the light of life’ as you follow Jesus?



“I . . . will make you
a light for the Gentiles,
⁷ to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.
Isaiah 43 v 6-7

Week 3: I Am The Good Shepherd

Read Ezekiel 34 v 1-16 and John 10 v 1-27

1. What connections do you see between these two passages?
2. Who are the 'hired hands'/the "Shepherds of Israel" who only take care of themselves?
3. How is Jesus different to these shepherds?
4. How did Jesus' listeners respond to his words in different ways and why?
5. What is your experience of Jesus as your Good Shepherd?

I Am the Gate

Jesus makes a second 'I Am' statement in John 10 v 8-9:

"I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep . . . I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture."



The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

(Psalm 23 v 1)

Week 4: I Am The Resurrection and The Life

Read Isaiah 53 v 10-12 and John 11 v 17-27

1. Isaiah 53 emphasises Jesus' death and suffering. What references are there to his resurrection?
2. What is the benefit to those who believe in Jesus according to John 11 v 25-26?
3. How do you respond to this claim?
4. What difference does the promise of eternal life make to how you live now? (see also 2 Corinthians 5 v17)



²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15 v 1-22)

Week 5: I Am The Way, The Truth and The Life

Background: John 14 v 1-14 is part of a long speech that Jesus gives to his disciples the day before he died, during the last supper. Jesus tried to explain that he was going to 'his Father's house' and would not be with them much longer. The disciples were confused and afraid.

Read Isaiah 35 v 8-10 and John 14 v 1-14

1. Jesus says that he is The Way to the Father. What evidence is there in these passages that this is for both now and for eternity?
2. Relationship with the Father through Jesus also results in a way of life. What are some of the characteristics of this way of life? (refer to both scripture passages)

Read John 8 v 31-37

3. What does Jesus say here about the truth?
4. How do we access this life and freedom? (John 14v 11 and 12 and John 8 v31)
5. How do you respond to Jesus' claim that "No one comes to the Father except through me?"
6. The first Christians were known as 'Followers of the Way'¹. What does it mean to you to be a follower of 'The Way'?



¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." (Acts 4v12)

¹ Acts 9v2, 19v23, 22v4, 24v22, 24v14

Week 6: I Am the True Vine

Read Isaiah 5 v 1-7 and John 15v 1-21

In the Isaiah passage the vineyard is a metaphor for God's people Israel.

1. Compare the vines in the two scripture passages.
2. What fruit is God the Father (the 'gardener') looking for? (refer to both passages)
3. What enables the followers of Jesus to produce good fruit where the people of Israel failed?
4. How will some people respond to those who are 'in the vine' and why? (John 15 v 18-21)
5. What is your experience of being in the vine? You may wish to consider some, or all, of the following:
 - What fruit are you producing? (v16)
 - Have you experienced pruning? (v2)
 - How do you remain in Jesus' love? (v9)
 - What joy does it bring you? (v11)
 - What reviling are you facing? (v18)
 - How are you loving and being loved? (v17)

Jesus told a powerful parable about a vineyard, which reflects the themes in Isaiah 5. You can read it in Matthew 21 v 33-46



Conclusion

6. How would you summarise the overall message that Jesus is trying to convey through his controversial "I AM" statements?