

The Great I AM: The Eternal God (4/17/2020)

The Jewish religious leaders, who desperately wanted to silence Jesus' words and put an end to Jesus' works, were in a debate with our Lord. They claimed to be descendants of Abraham and children of the heavenly Father. Jesus said, "You are slaves of sin and children of the devil." Why? Because they were acting like the devil, who is a liar and a murderer. They led the people astray with their lies and were seeking to murder Jesus. He said, "If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

This scathing condemnation infuriated the Jews. They said, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" The Samaritan charge was so ridiculous that Jesus simply ignored it. But he did say, "I am not possessed by a demon, but I honor the Father and you dishonor me...I tell you the truth, if a man keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews were shocked and said, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if a man keeps your word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" Did you notice? They twisted Jesus' words. He didn't say that believers would never taste death. He said believers would never see death. Of course, we all taste of death when these earthly tents of ours collapse. But believers will never see death. Why not? Because true death is eternal separation from God, suffering the everlasting pangs of the deepest darkness of hell. Because of Jesus' work, Christians will never see death. Rather, they will see their Savior Jesus in all of his glory throughout eternity.

Jesus said to them, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." The Jews knew the only way Jesus could have that information is if he had been there when Abraham walked on this earth. And so they scoffed, "You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth: Before Abraham was born, I am!" What a stunning, bold, and true claim. Jesus was claiming to be the I AM God who appeared to Moses in a burning bush some 1500 years before his incarnation through the virgin birth. He was claiming to be the I AM God who existed before Abraham, who was born around 2000 years earlier. Notice, he said, "Before Abraham was born, I AM." He didn't say, "I began to exist." Why not? Because he never had a beginning. He is the eternally begotten Son of God.

The Jews knew that he was claiming to be God. They considered his claim blasphemous. In the Old Testament, blasphemy was punishable by death. And so they picked up stones to stone him, but he hid himself, slipping away from the Temple grounds.

What comfort it is to know Jesus is the great I AM. He has been here protecting his people throughout every generation. He has carried his church through centuries of wars, floods, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis, pestilences, and plagues. He continues to carry his church today. He will continue to carry his church as together we face these uncertain times. Because no matter how uncertain the future is, one thing is certain: The great I AM is already there. He knows the future and will go with us into the future even as he has in the past.

Jesus, lead us on Till our rest is won;
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow, calm and fearless.
Guide us by your hand To our fatherland.

If the way be drear, If the foe be near,
Let not faithless fears o'ertake us;
Let not faith and hope forsake us,
For through many a woe To our home we go.

When we seek relief From a long-felt grief,
When temptations come alluring,
Make us patient and enduring;
Show us that bright shore Where we weep no more.

Jesus, still lead on Till our rest is won.
Heav'nly Leader, still direct us;
Still support, console, protect us
Till we safely stand In our fatherland. Amen.

After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read John 8.

Pastor Zuberbier