



# Cultivate

A Christ-Centered Way of Life

*... as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted, and built up in him and established in the faith... Colossians 2:6-7*

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## GETTING TO KNOW JESUS THROUGH THE 4 GOSPELS – PART 7

By Marius Gradwell

### The Seven “I Am” Statements in the Gospel of John

Before I showed how John selected these seven miracles specifically for their ability to help us believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be, and that by believing we might have eternal life.

In addition to these seven miracles, John’s gospel contains seven “I am” statements. Their focus is on what happens after we become believers. In this study, we will look at these seven “I am” statements to see what they will tell us. Here is the first one.

#### 1. The Bread of Life

*Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35)*

Jesus had recently fed the 5000. Incredibly some were still asking for a miraculous sign to help them believe He was who He claimed to be. They brought up the manna their forefathers had eaten in the wilderness (Exodus 16:13-18), and that established the context for this statement. I believe Jesus was saying the manna was meant to be a model of the Messiah. Whoever partakes of Him will never again know spiritual hunger. Like the manna, everyone who seeks Him will find Him (Matt. 7:7-8), but each of us must find Him for ourselves. No one else can receive Him for us, nor can we receive Him for anyone else. We all get a portion sufficient for our salvation. No one is lacking, none of Him is wasted.

As for our thirst, remember how Jesus told the woman at the well that the water He offered would cure her thirst forever. Pointing to Jacob’s well, before which they were standing, He said, *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* (John 4:13-14)

And then on the last and greatest day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, *“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”* By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. (John 7:37-39)

The Psalmist wrote, *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.* (Psalm 42:1) In Jesus, our spiritual hunger is satisfied, and our spiritual thirst is quenched. Once we have the Holy Spirit, our search for spiritual fulfillment comes to an end, and we never need any other sustenance. The God-shaped hole in our heart is finally filled.

## 2. The Light of The World

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)*

Literally, this means that those who join Jesus as one of His followers will not be ignorant of spiritual matters but will have the power of understanding especially of the spiritual truth that brings eternal life. When we take the time to learn and apply these truths in faith, we discover that the old saying is true. Whatever the spiritual question, Jesus is the answer.

- Are you feeling downtrodden or discouraged? Overcome by the worries of life?

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:4-7, 19).*

- Do you carry a burden of guilt because of your sins?

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9).*

- Do you have money problems?

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Luke 6:38). "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us, your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." (2 Cor. 9:11)*

- Or health problems?

*Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:14-16).*

I will say it again. Whatever the spiritual question, Jesus is the answer.

## 3. The Gate

*I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. (John 10:9)*

This is a reference to the Kingdom and recalls the words of Psalm 23:2, *"He makes me lie down in green pasture."* Salvation is found through Jesus, He is the gate to the Kingdom, and no one can enter except through Him (John 3:3, John 14:6). Having entered through Him, we will have the freedom to come and go as we please, dwelling in a state of peace in the midst of plenty. Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6).

#### 4. The Good Shepherd

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* (John 10:11)

No one expects sheep to be responsible for themselves. Owners hire shepherds for that purpose. A shepherd's job is to accept responsibility for the safety and well-being of his flock. Most shepherds only take that to the point where it would threaten their personal safety, rightly deciding that their life is worth more than that of a sheep. A few would be willing to risk their lives to protect their sheep, but our Shepherd knowingly and willingly died to save us, because there was no other way.

#### 5. The Resurrection and The Life

Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."* (John 11:25-26)

This is an amazing statement. The Lord had already said that whoever believes in Him would not perish but would have eternal life (John 3:16). Here he provided more detail, saying that even though a believer experiences physical death, he will still have life. He was referring to the resurrection of those who die in faith. And once again the Lord confirmed that the single qualification for eternal life is to believe that His death paid the entire price for our sins.

#### 6. The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Jesus answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6)

There is no other way into the presence of God than by accepting the Lord's death as payment in full for our sins. As Peter said, *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) Jesus is the only remedy God has provided for man's sin problem. He is the only way to eternal life. This is the truth of God's Word.

#### 7. The Vine

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* (John 15:5)

It is important to understand that salvation is not a fruit bearing event, so in this statement, Jesus was talking about our life after we are saved. Of course, a non-believer cannot bear fruit, and even after we are saved, believers are not automatically fruitful. But if we yield our life to Him, (Romans 12:1-2) and respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit He sent to guide us (John 14:26) we can bear much fruit.

If not, our lives will be unfruitful, because without Him we can do nothing of spiritual value. We will still be saved, but we will be of no more use to the work of the Kingdom than the unfruitful branches the gardener discards at pruning time. Paul confirmed this in 1 Cor 3:12-15. The unfruitful believer will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Fruitfulness is not a matter of success or failure from a worldly standpoint. It is a matter of motive. Many of us will see some of our greatest accomplishments burn in the fires of judgment because we achieved them with wrong motives, like self-satisfaction, or recognition from others, or even a desire to “make points” with God. Only those things that are prompted by the Holy Spirit and where our only motive is gratitude for all we have been given will survive. *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.* (1 Cor. 4:5)

In summary, let us put each of these seven “I am” statements in capsule form.

- Statement 1 tells us that Jesus is the One who spiritually sustains us.
- In statement 2 we learn that through Him we gain spiritual understanding and wisdom for living.
- Statement 3 explains that He has given us free and unlimited access to His Kingdom.
- Statement 4 shows how He did this by paying our entrance fee with His life
- In statement 5 we learn that He has guaranteed our eternal life with God.
- Statement 6 explains that He is the only one who can do this for us, and
- Statement 7 reveals that for the balance of our life on Earth, the things we do in His strength, out of gratitude for what He has done for us, are the only things that matter.

These are the seven “I am” statements in John. Like the seven miracles we reviewed earlier, they reveal the Gospel.