

FOWEY LODGE, 215 BLEAKHOUSE ROAD, HOWICK,
AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

A SERIES OF FOUR STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

PART 2 - KNOWING WHO IS LEADING US

First reread the instructions at the beginning of Part 1.

In the first study we saw how John introduced us to Jesus Christ as 'The Word' - the one who gives meaning to our lives. We then followed his series of signposts, miracles with a message, which pointed to the greatest miracle of all, that Jesus Christ having died on the cross for our sin was raised to life again three days later.

The Christian life then is a life of meaning and it is a journey that goes somewhere - with Someone. Jesus Christ has a plan for each of our lives and promises to be present in every moment of the day in every detail of the plan. But if someone is to lead us on a long and difficult journey it is most important to know who that person is and what He is like. The better we know Him the easier it is to trust ourselves to Him.

John has a special way of helping us know who Jesus really is. He uses a title 'I am'. At the end of John chapter 8 Jesus is explaining who He is to a group of Jews. His answer upsets them greatly. "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58) They are so angry they are ready to stone Him to death! Why? Is He just saying that He has been in existence ever since before Abraham who lived around 2,000 B.C? In that case He would have said, 'I was' not 'I am'.

The explanation is to be found back in Exodus chapter 3 when Moses meets the Lord and hears of the task God has given him to do. (Exodus 3:1-12) Quite understandably he, like us, wants to know who God really is. "Now they may say to me, what is His name?" "What shall I say to them?" (verse 13) God answers "I am who I am" and "I am has sent me to you." (verse 14) In choosing this title 'I am' He is telling us that He is alive, is personal, eternal and unchanging. That is great news. A God who was dead, a thing, temporary and unpredictable would not be worth knowing.

The Jews are furious with Jesus because He is claiming to be the eternal unchanging God who had revealed Himself to Moses. Again and again Jesus repeats that claim through John's Gospel. Each time He gives us some more information about His character and what He wants to do for us.

In this study, I want us to explore these claims. Again there are seven of them. They are to be found in chapters 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15 and 18.

Question 1 What is the first 'I am'? (6:35) Of what Old Testament story is Jesus reminding us when He makes this claim? (Exodus 16) What can we learn from that Old Testament story about what will happen if we have a daily relationship with Jesus Christ?

Question 2 What does the picture of bread teach us about Jesus Christ? What is bread made from? (Luke 8:11) What does bread do for us? In what sense are we to 'eat' Jesus Christ?

Question 3 Jesus pictures Himself as Living Bread right after another story about bread. (6:1-14) What happened in that story? How does Jesus' claim "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven" help to explain the message behind the feeding of the five thousand?

Question 4 What is the second 'I am'? (John 9:5) What miracle takes place in this chapter? How does the miracle help to explain Jesus' claim "I am the light of the world"? How are people blind in a spiritual sense? (II Corinthians 4:4)

Question 5 What spiritual lessons can be drawn from the picture of 'light'? How has John already told us something about this picture of Jesus? (John 1:4-9)

Question 6 How does Psalm 119:105 explain how Jesus as the 'light of the world' affects our daily lives?

Question 7 How does John 9:5 help to explain Matthew 5:14-16? Why should people give glory to God when they see our good works?

Question 8 John chapter 10 contains two 'I am's in one illustration. What are they? (10:7,9; 10:11) What can we learn from the illustration of this chapter? The sheepfold in Israel would be a circular stone wall with a narrow gap, the door, the only way in. At night when the sheep had been counted into the sheepfold the shepherd would wrap himself in his cloak and lie across the door. How does this explain the two pictures in the same story?

Question 9 What do these two 'I am's' teach us about Jesus' character and what do they teach us about His work for us? In what sense is Jesus our door and our shepherd? How do these pictures teach us about how He protects us from false teaching?

Question 10 Psalm 23 uses the same illustration. What more can we learn from it about the character and work of the good shepherd?

Question 11 Ezekiel 34:1-24 describes some bad shepherds or leaders and a good shepherd. How can we recognise bad leaders? What effect does bad leadership have on a group of Christians? (I Peter 5:1-4) The good shepherd is described as 'my servant David'. (David had by then been dead for 500 years). Jesus was David's heir. How does Jesus life and work fit the description in Ezekiel 34:11-24? (Luke 15:3-7, Matthew 25:31-46, John 10)

Question 12 What is the next 'I am'? (John 11:25) What miracle is described in this chapter? How does this miracle help to explain what Jesus meant by such a claim?

Question 13 Why, in the light of this story, was it essential that Jesus not only died for us on the cross but rose physically to life? What difference would it make to us if He had not risen from the dead?

Question 14 The Bible promises us resurrection life in two senses. What are they? How is the first sense (Philippians 3:10,11) a foretaste of the second (I Corinthians 15)?

Question 15 Three further 'I am's' are linked in a single sentence. (John 14:6) What are they? What three important ideas about Jesus Christ do they teach us?

Question 16 Some people say there are many ways to God. Can this be right in the light of these 'I am's'? Why do you suppose that Christians were sometimes described as 'those belonging to the way'? (Acts 9:2)

Question 17 If Jesus is The Truth what should we be searching for when we study the Bible?

Question 18 Why is it important that Jesus is not only The Truth but our life?

Question 19 What is the next 'I am'? (John 15:1-5) How does this picture teach us about what is meant to be our relationship with Jesus Christ? What do we have to do to be 'fruitful'? What does God do if we are not?

Question 20 What is the fruit of the spirit? (Galatians 5:22,23) Was anyone in the Bible ever always like that? How can we be all those things? (John 15:4,5)

Question 21 Isaiah 5 is the Old Testament story on which Jesus bases His claim in John 15. What is the meaning of Isaiah's parable? (Isaiah 5) How does it help to explain John 15?

Question 22 What effect does 'abiding in Christ' have upon our prayer? (John 15:7)

Question 23 After the six 'I am's' Jesus uses the title one last time in this Gospel. What are the circumstances? (John 18:5-8) What was the effect of this claim on His hearers? (John 18:6) What should be the effect on us of all His claims to be the 'I am' of the Old Testament"

Question 24 Sum up in one paragraph what the 'I am's' of John's Gospel have taught you about who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us and can be in our lives today. Now in your own private diary or notebook write down what Jesus Christ actually means to you personally at this time. Add in your own words what, in the light of this study in John, you want Him to become in the next twelve months. Then review in a month, three months and twelve months to what extent this is happening.