

Before Abraham Was, I Am' John 8:58

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the profound truth of Jesus' declaration 'I am' and its implications for faith and redemption.

Scripture: Exodus 3:14, John 1:14, John 8:58, John 14:6, Romans 10:9, Philippians 2:9-11, Colossians 2:9, 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 1:3, Revelation 1:8

Topics: "Faith in Jesus", "The Divinity of Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound truth of Jesus' declaration 'Before Abraham was, I am,' highlighting the ignorance of the Jews who failed to see beyond their limited understanding of appearances. He explains that this statement encapsulates the essence of Christ's divine nature and existence, which is foundational for redemption and truth. Darby challenges listeners to recognize the significance of Jesus as both fully man and fully God, urging them to confront their beliefs about His identity. The sermon calls for a deep reflection on the mystery of godliness and the necessity of faith to grasp the truth of Christ's nature. Ultimately, it invites believers to embrace the reality of Jesus as 'I AM' and to live in the light of this revelation.

Transcript

The Jews were immersed, not in the truth of their system, but in the mere ignorance of acting on present appearances. This is a deep essential principle of error, which one has to watch - not seeing God and things according to His mind (which was exactly in question), but the mind of man in the things of God. Hence precisely the present state of the church. It was the grand question between Jesus and the Jews, the point in which Jesus has to be recognised, and in which faithfulness to Him rests, as in Him to His Father, in this respect. The Jews therefore said to Him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" They thought the sense of this the same, because they looked not beyond the outside. But, on man's ground, the Jewish reasoning was generally correct. It was utterly wrong morally, without conscience, therefore without God and that which God alone could teach. They now brought it to the point of the mere manhood of Christ - the point of their darkness. Our Lord, as the truth, could but give the light. "Before Abraham was [was born], I am." Ye know not My existence, My being. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." The great truth was told, the essential vital eternal truth, on which all hung, without which there could be no truth, nor coming unto man, nor bringing man back in redemption to God. For how could he be restored by that which was not? And this was true of everything save One. Should dust be a redeemer? Yet out of dust man was to be redeemed.

The great truth was declared. Lie there could be none against it. The necessity of the existence of the Saviour assumed the nothingness of all else - could be, not falsified, but only denied by violence. They might say it was blasphemy, and take up stones in their zeal for God, rejecting Him manifested. "Then took they up stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." The time of their iniquity was not come: His time was not come. But what circumstances! and with whom discussed! and what a truth! Do we believe it? Do we, I say, believe it - that Jesus (a man even as we are, save sin) was "I am?" All is told, if we believe Him thus dead and alive again; for therein is the redemption, and through this must He pass.

143 It is true, most simply true, the centre - wondrous, wondrous to us - of all the manifestation of God, and rightly in its glory to chosen sinners; lovely in its blessing to all sinners; deep therefore necessarily, in its condemnation of blind rejecting sinners. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world" - and yet, more wondrous still, "received up into glory." Thus, as to essential truth, He was "I am."

Then, as to the dispensation, the thing thus revealed, or rather discussed with the Jews, is the subject of John 8. The Lord is traced as the light of the world; as Son of man lifted up; all through as the Son in the power of life, in person as Son, up to this great revelation of "I am": the real truth and fulfilled of all Jewish hopes, and the basis of all common promises, and this as, and by, the word - the essential characteristic. I know of nothing that has so astonished my mind as this revelation of "I am," or the real thought that Jesus could say, "I am"; the connection of these - to man - inconvertible possibilities, and the concatenation in which all the dealings of God are brought out as fulfilled in it, while yet He remains truly God; and yet could say therein, "the Son of man, who is in heaven."

How manifest it is, that nothing but the gift of faith could, even in a single tittle, understand or know the truth in the Person of Jesus! while yet, by the perfection of its manifestation in the flesh, every soul was put under the responsibility to receive it as the true word of God, our God, in love. The broad penetrating fact, "I am," the all-embracing word, must at once close all controversy. We must be opposers or bow before the throne of God. We must stand in awe of Jesus. Well may it be said, "Kiss the Son!" Lord Jesus! what sort of subjection is this we owe to thee? We have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now our eyes see thee, we abhor ourselves. Oh! can we see this in Jesus? Have we seen it? None can see it out of Him. It is the truth only in Him. Surely we should move mountains if we believed it: yet it is simple truth.

Dwell on it, my soul! Jesus, that thou knowest, that stranger in the world among His own is "I AM." Henceforth let us be dead to all but this. I do indeed stand incapable of utterance. I do read and talk with Jesus, I watch Jesus in His ways, a servant, and, behold, He, even He, is "I AM," with whom I am, whose way I follow, whose grace I adore. Christ is the union of these two things: the man, the rejected man, whom I look at now with most thankful sympathy, and, behold, the presence of God! How low it lays men's thoughts, experience, judgments, notions! The perfection of God was there - God rejected of men. What can meet or have a place along with this? Let this be my experience. Glory be to God Most High. Amen. Yet to me it is Jesus; in truth it is "I am." Here I rest; here I dwell; to this I return. This is all in all. I can only be silent, yet would speak what no tongue can utter, and no thought can think before it. This we shall learn, and for ever grow in - more beyond us for ever, for here is God revealed in His essential name of existence - God revealed in man, in Jesus! I know Him, am familiar with Jesus, at home with God, honouring the Father in Him, and Him as one with and in the Father, yea, delighting to do it. But I say, do we believe it?

144 I do believe it all: and yet, as it were, believe nothing. I am as nothing in the thought of it, yet alive for evermore by it, blessed be God and His name. All shall praise Him so. Yea, Lord Jesus, God Most High, so shall it be. Lord Jesus! Thou art "I am," Thou art "I AM"; yet didst Thou take little children in thine arms; yet didst Thou suffer, die, and be in the horrible pit - yea, for our sins! Thus I know the mercy-seat: I know that there is no imputing sins to me, that I am reconciled to God, and that God is the reconciling One.

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