

Lecture 38 – The Gospel of John

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

Key Terms

εγω ειμι (I am), glory, Thomas

Objectives

- *To list and evaluate the use of several “I am” statements in John’s account
- *To analyze Thomas response to Jesus after the resurrection

Lead Question

In light of the entire context of John’s Gospel, what is his purpose in writing this account? (go beyond a mere restatement of John 20:31)

The Gospel of John (cont.)

V. The “I Am” Sayings of John 5-11

A. Greek data

1. Emphatic εγω appears 29 times in Matt., 17 in Mark, 23 in Luke, 134 in John. In synoptics most are emphatic, as in “I say to you.” Of 34 uses of εγω ειμι, 23 are in John.
2. Not all uses of εγω ειμι have special meaning. See Luke 1:19.

B. εγω ειμι is Jesus’ diction, in all four Gospels.

1. No close parallel in pagan literature
 - a. Matt. 14:27, Mark 6:45-50. Walking on water, Jesus says, “εγω ειμι”
 - b. Mark 14: 62 also reads, “Are you the Christ? —“εγω ειμι.” Parallel in Luke 22:70
 - c. Luke 24:39, He assures His disciples, “See my hands and feet, εγω ειμι.”
 - d. Matt. 24:5, Mark, Luke, false prophets will come saying εγω ειμι.
2. Septuagint (LXX) translation of OT uses εγω ειμι plus description, yielding new titles for God.
 - a. εγω ειμι appears with predicates, e.g. Gen. 17:1, “I am El Shaddai = the Almighty.”
 - b. Exodus 3:6 “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Also “I am who I am” (3:13-4), Greek: εγω ειμι ο ων. See also Isa. 45:5,18, Hos. 13:4.
 - c. Isaiah uses as εγω ειμι a divine name, equivalent to Yahweh. Isa. 43:25 LXX reads “I am, I am who blots out sins. This can be read as self-identification, “I am he, I am he who blots...”
 - d. Isa. 51:12 reads, “I am I AM who comforts you.” Also 52:6

Conclusion: “I am” is a name of God in LXX. So in εγω ειμι sayings Jesus speaks as God.

C. John 6-11, “I am” + bread, (water), light, door, shepherd, resurrection, life, way, truth and life

1. Most “I am” sayings in John appear in public conflict, in debate about his ministry/identity.
2. They show Jesus fulfills promises to Israel. He directs longings and needs to Himself.
 - a. Jesus is life giving bread, not Torah (Sirach 15:3, 24:19-21)
 - b. Jesus is light, not Torah (Ps. 119:105)
 - c. Jesus is the door and the way; Torah was the way (Deut. 5:32-33)
 - d. Jesus is the shepherd; God and OT leaders were (Ps. 23, 78, 80; Ezek. 34, 37)
3. They usually interpret signs, though two are in private teaching
 - a. Upon feeding 5000, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life.”
 - b. Before and after healing man born blind, He says, “I am the light of the world.”
 - c. After caring for the man born blind, Jesus says, “I am the door, the good shepherd.”

d. After raising Lazarus, He says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

D. Absolute use of "I am" in several cases (optional)

1. John 8:24, "You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am." Also 8:28, 8:58
2. 13:19, "I tell you this now, so that when it does take place, you may believe that I am."
3. At His arrest, Jesus says "I am," for self-identification and soldiers collapse, 18:1-6.

VI. Resurrection and the Life (John 11), The Penultimate Sign, Leading to Determination That He Dies.

VII. Excursus: John and Synoptics: 90% of John Lacks Direct Parallel in Synoptics. (optional)

A. John supplements info synoptics give regarding life of Christ. Jesus' ministry lasted nearly three years; the disciples knew Jesus before their formal call; Jesus ministered in the south.

B. Interlocking testimony: These supplements explain several features of synoptics.

1. Why did Jesus say at His arrest that He had been in temple courts every day (Matt. 26:61)?
2. How could He expect to be killed by the Jewish leaders if they had not known Him?
3. How was Jesus charged with threatening to destroy the temple (26:55)?

C. John gives theological justification for synoptic themes (cf. John 13-17). Example: Jesus casts out demons in the synoptics, but the theology of the demonic is in John.

D. Synoptics resolve some enigmatic passages in John

1. Birth narratives, John 1:1-14. Yet details and terms are so different that they probably had independent access to same tradition.
2. Conclusion: John is like other Gospels in both history and theology, but different in perspective.

John 12-21 - The Book of Glory

I. John 11 and 12 as Transition from Signs to Glory

- A. The resurrection of Lazarus is the penultimate sign
- B. It produces resolve and virtual warrant for Jesus' arrest (11:47-57)
- C. Meal at Bethany
- D. Triumphal entry in John. Blind enthusiasm
- E. Jesus predicts His death (12:20-50). This is the long-awaited hour.
 1. By it the Father is glorified
 2. By it the Son will draw all to Himself
- F. Judas' betrayal provides the mechanism (13:18-30)

II. Private Instruction of "His Own" in Chapters 13-17

A. Jesus washes the disciples' feet

1. Social context
2. Theological context
3. The disciples' attitude
4. Jesus' attitude
5. The disciples, horrified at the resolution of the impasse
6. Peter objects, then acquiesces
7. An example, an enacted parable. Emphasis on Jesus as example on their last night

B. Trait of John: to provide a theological explanation for things described/mentioned in synoptics.

Examples: conversion, demons, prayer, miracles, perseverance

C. How the believer perseveres

1. Jesus as example
2. Trust
3. Prayer
4. Prepared for persecution
5. Holy Spirit
6. The Word
7. Community life (unity)

- D. Excursus on unity - a virtue at the top of the second tier of Christian virtues
- III. Trial and Crucifixion in John (some details from John discussed above)
 - A. Trial and crucifixion fulfill John's prologue
 - B. John's eyewitness testimony to resurrection
- IV. Role of Thomas in Theology of John
 - A. Context
 - 1. The empty tomb as mystery
 - 2. Thomas misses first appearance to other 10.
 - B. Thomas in the book of John - pessimistic, loyal, obtuse, honest
 - C. The faith and unbelief of Thomas
 - 1. "Doubting" is too mild a term
 - 2. Jesus meets Thomas. Described in most vivid language
 - a. The knowledge
 - b. The invitation
 - c. Did Thomas touch?
 - 3. Thomas, not quite the skeptic he imagined!
 - D. Thomas' confession
 - 1. Exclamation and proclamation
 - 2. The climax of John's Christology cf. 1:1, 14; 5:23
 - E. Thomas' confession in the theology of John
 - 1. Jesus approves and rebukes.
 - 2. Jesus looks to the next generation.
 - 3. Blessed are those who believe, without seeing.
- V. The Purpose of John
 - A. The goal of his selectivity
 - B. Faith
 - C. John's burden, our responsibility

Thomas is often criticized by modern believers for his lack of faith, who draw from the story the moral, "Don't be a doubting Thomas." Defend Thomas as a faithful disciple.