

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

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The I Am's Of Jesus (No. 2)

On different occasions during His earthly ministry Jesus would make a statement beginning with "***I Am,***" and then specify that to which He was alluding. In last week's bulletin we compared John 8:24 and John 8:58 wherein Jesus said "***I Am***" with Exodus 3:14 wherein God told Moses to tell the people "***I AM has sent me to you.***" Herein the eternity of God is referenced. Hence, inasmuch as God is the eternal "***I AM,***" then the same designation also depicts the eternity of Jesus. Both God the Father and Jesus are thus "*from everlasting to everlasting,*" Ps. 90:2. Having affirmed the eternity of Jesus, we then noted three "***I AM***" sayings of Jesus, namely that Jesus said "***I Am The Bread of Life***" (John 6:35), "***I Am the light of the world***" (John 8:12; 9:5), and "***I am The Door***" (John 10:7-9). We now consider the other "***I Am***" saying of Jesus,.

"I Am The Good Shepherd."

In John 10:11 Jesus said "*I am the good shepherd. The **good shepherd** gives his life for the sheep.*" Then again we note John 10:14 wherein Jesus said "*I am the **good shepherd**; and I know My (sheep), and am known by MY own.*"

These verses, in context, belong to that portion of Scripture in which Jesus gave and then explained the parable of the sheepfold. This parable presumes a shepherd-flock relationship, and in the metaphor used here, Jesus portrayed Himself as the shepherd of the flock. In our society, because of our different environmental conditioning, it is hard for us to appreciate the role of an eastern shepherd. Theirs was a demanding work. They were exposed to the extremes of heat and cold. At times, they encountered such wild beasts as wolves, lions, panthers, and bears, and occasionally their lives were endangered by robbers. This was not a job for a hireling whose sole interest in the job was how much he could earn for himself!

But in calling Himself "***the good shepherd,***" Jesus intended for us to learn something greater than just eastern shepherding customs. Jesus herein spoke of His Own death in which He would lay down His life for the sheep, and of the time when there would be one fold and one shepherd. Furthermore this one fold would include "*other sheep*" (John 10:16) in addition to those of Jewish nationality. In other words, this "*one fold*" would consist of both Jews and Gentiles united together and heeding the voice of the "*good shepherd.*"

To fully understand John 10, one has to continue reading through the book, and even into the book of Acts. In John 19 we read of the crucifixion of Christ, the "***good Shepherd,***" as He

literally gave His life for the sheep. In Acts 2 we read of the establishment of Christ's church which at first consisted of Jews only. In Acts 10 we read of the conversion of Gentiles, and then in Acts 20:28 the church is called "*the flock of God*," and we are informed that it was purchased with the blood of Christ. Hence, in the book of Acts, as signified in the New Testament church, there is indeed the one fold, consisting of Jews and "*other sheep*," generally called "*Gentiles*" in the New Testament.

Christ, then, is "*the good shepherd*." The New Testament church is the sheepfold. And the "*other sheep*" are those who heard the shepherd's voice in preaching the gospel, and followed through in humble obedience to His will.

"I Am The Resurrection and the Life."

In John 11:25 Jesus said "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*" The background of this particular "*I Am*" is this: Two sisters, Mary and Martha, and their brother, Lazarus, lived in Bethany. They sustained a close relationship with Jesus. On one occasion while Jesus was away, Lazarus became critically ill and his sisters sent for Jesus. But Jesus did not arrive until after Lazarus had died, and was buried.

As Jesus returned and drew near Bethany and the house where the grief-stricken sisters of Lazarus lived, they received news that He was returning. Martha went out to meet Him. Jesus said to her, "*Your brother will rise again.*" Much faith was evident in Martha's reply, as she said, "*I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*" Then Jesus said to her, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live*" (John 11:25).

In calling Himself "*the resurrection and the life*" Jesus, among other things, declared that He is the giver of life. Based on John 5:28-29, we learn that in that last day, when Jesus returns, all the dead will hear His voice and shall come forth, some to the resurrection of life and others to the resurrection of damnation. And even in John 11:44, Jesus demonstrated His power over physical death by raising Lazarus from the grave.

However, in John 11:25 wherein Jesus "*I am the resurrection and the life*," He was primarily referring to His power over spiritual death. This is evident from His statement that "*he who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*" Those who are spiritually dead, or "*dead in trespasses and sins*" as Paul expressed it in Eph. 2:1, can be made alive spiritually.

It is well to note, however, that when Jesus said "*he who believes in Me...shall live*," He used a word which includes and incorporates the obedience that accompanies true faith as it is pictured in the New Testament.

"I Am The Way, The Truth, And the Life"

I call your attention to an oft-quoted and very meaningful passage of Scripture — John 14:6 wherein Jesus said unto Thomas, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*"

In the preceding verses where Jesus made reference to the many mansions in His Father's house, He said to His disciples "*I go to prepare a place for you.*" Then He made to them a promise saying: "*I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, (there) you may be also.*"

It seems that the disciples had difficulty understanding the spiritual nature of the kingdom. This is implied on numerous occasions. For example, in Mark 10:37, James and John requested of Christ that they be privileged to sit one on His right hand, and the other on His left hand in His glory. Such a vain request as that was surely made in contemplation of an earthly kingdom. Hence, in John 14:5 Thomas said to Him, "*Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?*" It is most likely that he was wondering where on earth, or in what earthly city existed the royal and regal home to which the Messiah was about to depart.

However, as Jesus said in John 18:36, His kingdom is "*not of this world.*" Hence, when He talked about going to His "*Father's house,*" He referred to the place where God, the Father, was — which of course is heaven, and concerning which Jesus is "*the way, the truth, and the life.*"

Being "*the way,*" Jesus is our medium of access to the Father, as Paul so clearly taught in Eph. 2:18. Being "*the truth,*" He stands opposed to all falsehood, either secular or religious. Being "*the life,*" He is its Author and Source, and being "*the truth,*" He has stated the conditions upon which life is to be attained.

But note please, the sobering statement following His claim to be "*the way, the truth, and the life;*" He further said, "*No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" You will never find a more narrow statement than that, and it was uttered by Jesus Christ!

Conclusion:

In John 6:15 Jesus said, "*I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*" Being "*the bread of life,*" He is both the giver and sustainer of spiritual life to those who come to Him in scriptural obedience. In John 8:12 Jesus said "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*" If He is, as stated, "*the light of the world,*" then those outside of Christ are in spiritual darkness, and should they die in that condition they will forever be banished from the light of His presence. In John 10:7 Jesus said, "*Most assured, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.*" Being as it were "*the door,*" those who desire to be saved must enter in accordance with the plan which our Lord has ordained. In John 10:14 Jesus said "*I am the good shepherd, and I know My (sheep), and am known by My own*" Inasmuch as He is the good shepherd, to be saved we must be a part of that relationship which is called "*the flock of God,*" and according to Acts 20:28 that is the New Testament church. In John 11:25 Jesus said "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live*" This implies, among other things, that if we in that last day desire to be raised unto everlasting life, our faith in Christ must express itself in true obedience. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" Hence, from this we learn that those who know and obey the truth, which is the Word of God, enter into Christ, the way, and possess the hope of eternal life through Him.

And, finally, we call your attention to John 15:1 in which Jesus said, "*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*" Then in the verses that follow, Jesus gave the parable of the Vine and the branches, and taught that the individual child of God is the branch. Hence, inasmuch as the branch is the individual, and Christ is the vine, it is apparent that the person who is herein approved is the one who is in Christ, and is bearing fruit in that relationship. In Gal. 3:26,27 we learn that the believer who is scripturally baptized is the believer who is in Christ, "*the true vine.*"

Surely, from these “***I am***” sayings of Christ, it is evident that every accountable person needs to be “*in Christ*.” Dear friend, are you “*in Christ*?” If not, why not? —B. Witherington
