

“I AM”

A very dangerous attack upon Christian faith is gathering strength in these last days. About this attack, one of Satan's most subtle attempts to undermine our belief in Christ's ability to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind, Christ stated that if we fall for Satan's deceit, **we will be left without His Salvation**, so let us arm ourselves against this pernicious lie with the whole armour of God! Ephesians 6:12-17, 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore take up the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'

Satan is like a roaring lion and *we* are his main target, for he already has the 'Christian' world deceived, and our greatest need is for the sword of the spirit, which is the **word of God**, but it must be accompanied with the shield of faith and our diligent study, Hebrews 11:6, if we hope to avoid deception.

'But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that **diligently seek him.**'

The kind of faith we need is the trust of a little child in its parents, Mark 10:15, 'Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' A little child accepts all that its parents say, and we must have that same faith in the words of Jesus Christ. We must put aside the traditions of the Jews and the subtle arguments of the theologians and take His plain words and the words of His Apostles at face value. They are our only hope of overcoming this insidious undermining of our faith!

So, what is that belief and what is Christ' warning?

That false belief is that Jesus Christ had no prior existence before His begetting by God the Father in Mary. And Christ's warning is found in John 8:24, '**I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.**' Many versions do not even place the "he" in italics, which is vitally important because the actual Greek reads, "Therefore I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am you will die in your sins."

So why is this "I am" so very important? Of course, I have written recently about this subject in the article on this website, "The One God Issue", but I really didn't do more than mention those two words in passing, and I did not mention Christ's

dramatic warning at all! We are told who this “I am” is, in Exodus 3:14. ‘God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘ I AM has sent me to you.’” In the next verse, God adds, “This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations. NLT. No wonder Jesus Christ felt it was so important! Jesus wanted us to know that He was the One who spoke to Moses from the burning bush, the Eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and ourselves! He was the one who, together with the One who later became His Father, came up with the Plan of God and carried out Their Plan in the Creation!

Christ clearly wanted us to know that our sins cannot be forgiven if we do not believe that He pre-existed with the Father, and was the ‘hands on’ part of Creation, for only the Creator’s life could pay the price for the sins of His Creation.

Look at the context of John 8:24. Jesus had been explaining that He is the Light of the world, in verse 12, ‘Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” The Bible declares that God Himself is light, Psalm 104:2, ‘The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent.’ NIV, and Psalm 27:1, ‘The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?’ said David, but He is the light to *our* path, also, and we in turn must reflect that light to the world.

In John 8:23, Christ went on to say, ‘He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.” To be from above, He had first to be above, to have existed above, thereby confirming His pre-existence. What else could explain verse 58, ‘Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” The Jews knew exactly to whom Christ was inferring, and so picked up stones to stone Him for what they considered blasphemy, but to no avail. ‘So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.’ (Compare Leviticus 24:11-14).

Such was the power of those little words, ‘I AM’ that in the heightened tension of Christ’s arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, those sent by the chief priests to arrest Him, on hearing those words, fell to the ground in awe. John 18:3-6, ‘Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground.’

Isaiah 43:10, ““You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am *he*. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” Here we encounter the real difficulty of humanity to grasp Divinity, insofar that Jesus Christ said, ‘I and the

Father are one.” Satan relies upon this difficulty, to insert doubt in our minds, but we know that this is the One who became Christ because the same Lord, continuing in chapter 44:6, says, ‘Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: **“I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”** Now compare that with Revelation 1:17-18, ‘When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, **I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”**’

Who did the Apostle John see? He saw the One who died on the cross (stake) for us, our Lord Jesus Christ! This is why Christians need to diligently learn to put ALL the scriptures together, **“For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”** Isaiah 28:10.

Jesus Christ may have been born in Bethlehem, but his origins are from old, from the days of eternity. Micah 5:2, **“As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, even though you remain least among the clans of Judah, nevertheless, the one who rules in Israel for me will emerge from you. His existence has been from antiquity, even from eternity.”** ISV.

So, the scriptural warning Christ gave us in John 8:24, to take care that we do not lose our salvation for failing to believe His words “I AM”, the One who mainly dealt with Ancient Israel in the Old Testament, is truly a matter of eternal life and death; enough, I hope, to make anyone trust Jesus Christ and the Apostle’s words over any apparently contradictory verses. Amazingly I must have read over that scripture many times without taking it in, evidence that we will always continue to grow in grace and knowledge!

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