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Three Steps of "I Am"

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Three Steps of "I Am"

Abstract

"Jesus lived out the antithesis 'I am' by deflecting attention, avoiding defensiveness, and slipping away from unnecessary confrontations."

Posting about giving God the glory during the Lenten season from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/three-steps-of-i-am/>

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Comments

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Three Steps of “I am”

 inallthings.org/three-steps-of-i-am/

Eric Forseth

*The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” “I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.” At this they exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?” Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” **“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”** At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. John 8:48-59 (NIV)*

Avoid defensiveness, believe and obey His word, and give God the glory. Perhaps three simply stated implications of this ‘I am’ Scripture passage but Jesus characteristically lived a unique life in pushing back on cultural norms by doing the simple opposite of what was anticipated.

Initially in this verse, the Jews were challenging the deity of Jesus Christ. Essentially by asking Jesus whether he was a Samaritan or ‘demon’ possessed, this inquiry was asking Jesus if he was crazy (v49). ¹ Normal cultural practice when someone accuses you of being crazy would elicit a defensive reaction and a verbal backlash. Instead, Jesus responds calmly with “I am not crazy” (demon possessed) and suggested the best path to resolve confrontation is to deflect attention away from one’s self. He did this three times in the following manner of, “I am not seeking glory for myself,” (v50), “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing” (v54), and Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds (v59). Culturally, we often are challenged to participate in verbal or physical confrontations. Jesus lived out the antithesis ‘I am’ by deflecting attention, avoiding defensiveness, and slipping away from unnecessary confrontations.

The second implication of this passage is to obey and believe in God’s Word. “Whoever obeys my word will never see death” (v51) and “I do know him and obey his Word” (v55) were two clear illustrations of this challenge. Culturally, the Pharisees and Sadducees were in constant conflict with others because they attempted to outline every possible ‘legalistically’ way to live. The codes of conduct they developed were enormous and binding. A cultural opposite of this trend can be found in I Kings 6:12, if you follow **my** decrees, observe my laws and keep all **my commands** and obey them, I will **fulfill** through you the promise I gave to David your father. A second opportunity to believe his Word is found in John 3:3 when Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” Obediently living out his commands and believing in his saving grace is the second ‘I am’ of this passage.

The third opportunity of this passage is highlighted in the theme of giving God the glory. Jesus responded to errant accusations by giving God the glory in the verbal comments of “I honor my father” (v49) and “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing-My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me” (v54). A cultural norm in Jesus’ time and today is to seek personal glory versus giving God the glory. Jesus’ attempt to redirect culture was

found in the 'I am' claim ever since Abraham. He was clearly stating this was God's plan for a long time and not his plan.

Two unique actions during Lent include what do we need to 'put off' and what are we called to 'put on.' Using scripture and Jesus actions as a compass, we are all challenged to put off defensiveness, avoid developing codes of living outside of God's Word, and foregoing giving one's self the glory. We are called to practice during Lent and throughout the whole year of 'putting on' antithetical cultural practices of peaceful confrontation, obedience to his basic commands, and giving God the Glory. During this Lenten season and in the coming months, ask for an infusion of his redemptive grace to live outside of cultural norms.

Prayer: Lord, simply transform our lives to put on a new self of no pretense, expand our obedience to your decrees, and a gracefully guide us to focus our attention on giving you the glory. Forgive us when we are in the way of your intended purposes of being the 'I am' for yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Footnotes

1. Patterson and Kelley, New Testament Commentary. Holman Publishing Group: Nashville, Tennessee, 2011, p. 223. [↩](#)