

I AM: THE POWER OF CHRIST'S WORD

May 29, 2016

John 18:1-40

“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.” John 18:4-6

Repeatedly in the Gospel of John, the narrative of Jesus' life includes instances in which He identified Himself with the title “I am.” Often this is followed by a metaphor presenting a specific trait or action of our Savior. He said “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35), signifying that He is the source of all spiritual nurture. He said, “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25), testifying that He is the one who banishes death and restores life.

As noted in earlier messages, when Jesus said “I am,” He used the name by which Jehovah revealed Himself to Moses when He called Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egyptian captivity (Exodus 3:14). Jesus' use of the name proclaimed His oneness with Jehovah.

This message focuses upon an event in which Jesus used this title without a metaphor, where He stated “I am,” boldly claiming His identity as Jehovah, and demonstrated a power possessed by Jehovah alone, confirming His entitlement to His title.

The religious leaders of Israel hated Jesus and would soon demand His crucifixion. They paid Judas, one of Christ's disciples, to betray Him; petitioned Governor Pilate for military assistance to apprehend Him, and accompanied this force to Jesus' favorite place of prayer to take Him prisoner.

These efforts proved unnecessary, for Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen (John 18:4), stepped forward of His own accord and yielded Himself unto His captors. He first asked them who they sought, then answered, “I am,” identifying Himself as the one they wanted.

The arresting force, consisting of approximately six hundred armed Romans soldiers plus Jerusalem's temple guards, was driven backward and to the ground by the power of Jesus' affirmation, “I am.” All could see that He had the power to validate this claim and to confirm this identity. Hereby He warned them of the damning crime that they were undertaking. Further, He exhibited the truth of His identity, accompanied by the power of His word and of His name, so that all present could know who He was and whom they were seeking.

With such power, the multitude could not arrest Jesus nor take Him away. Only if He yielded Himself to them, laying down His own life, could they exercise any power against Him. The fact that they were able to take Jesus, and ultimately to crucify Him, can be explained only by Christ's own words: “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17.18).