

## Jesus said, "I AM" (Part 2)

Recently I heard from Robin, the young man in the Philippines that Gospel Workers Ministry is supporting as a worker in God's cause there; in fact, it's those of you who support this ministry that are supporting him, because some of the funds we receive are passed on to him, and I just found out he not only preaches, but he also sings, and he's got a really nice voice. And so, to begin with this morning I'm going to allow you to hear him sing a song that I hope will touch your heart as it has touched mine. The song is appropriately titled, "He Touched Me."

This morning I'd like to continue with part two of the sermon titled, "Jesus said, I Am", and the reason I want to talk more about this is because many people who believe that Jesus is not every bit as much God as the Father is are going to die in their sins, and I know these are strong words, but that's what Jesus Himself said, and we'll read that in just a few minutes. Now I'm not talking about those who are honestly ignorant about these things, but those who are willfully ignorant and are teaching others about another Jesus that the Bible does not teach.

Some years ago, I think sometime in the early 90s, there was a teaching going around within the great advent movement that stripped Jesus, at least to some degree, of His divinity, which made Him somehow a lesser God than the Father, and lately there seems to be a resurgence of this teaching, or various forms of it, and so that's why I thought it would be a good idea to elaborate a little further upon this subject again this month. It seems like every fanaticism comes and goes and comes again, and that's the way it is with this false teaching that needs to be exposed for what it is, an attempt of the devil to take from Jesus the subjects of His kingdom.

By the way, most of the time those who teach this false idea about Jesus, also teach that the Holy Spirit is not a personal being, but some kind of influence that proceeds from the Father and the Son or various forms of that, and I was considering doing a sermon or two about that as well, but Pastor David Berwick has already started a short series about the Holy Spirit that I thought was excellent, so I suggest you contact him at His Marvelous Light Ministries and I'm sure he would be glad to send you his DVDs. He can be reached at (717) 746-6280.

I can't express to you how important it is that we understand the truth about Jesus' true identity, but I'm going to do my best to present it to you because I don't want anyone within the hearing of my voice to die in their sins, and neither do I want anyone's blood on my hands because I failed to present this subject in its proper light. I've received information about this subject several times lately from individuals that would like me to accept their falsehood about Jesus, and I thought to myself, this needs to be addressed so people can make an intelligent decision about an issue that could cost them their salvation if they get caught up in this erroneous teaching. So here we go.

Remember the vision Ellen White had where she said she saw a narrow pathway that led to the city of God, and about the Advent people who were on that pathway? You can read all about it in *Early Writings, pages 14, 15*. She said there was a bright light set up behind them at the

beginning of the path, and that this light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble, and if they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. Remember that?

This vision, and it's the very first one she had, by the way, is a good example that the light behind them would lead them progressively, it's very important that we understand this, lead them progressively as they moved along and would correct any errors which they held or would come up against as long as they stayed on the path and kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, and for us to go back now and believe the errors that the light corrected as the advent people progressed along the pathway is to backslide from truth to error, and would be akin to falling off the path down into the dark wicked world below.

There were many beliefs early on that had to be corrected as new light came, and that's the way it should be. As I mentioned last time, many of the thought leaders in the early Advent movement believed that somewhere way back in the eons of time, Jesus had a beginning; it's called Arianism, and many of them held this belief because that's what the churches they left to join the Advent movement believed, and unfortunately there seems to be a growing number of Adventists today who want to go back to some of these false teachings because they believe the pioneers had it right, and that we ought to follow them, and Uriah Smith, one of the most prolific writers within Adventism, as far as I know, went to his grave believing some form of Arianism, and since Ellen White endorsed his book, *Daniel and the Revelation*, many believe that what he wrote was 100% truth and that he was akin to a prophet, when it's not 100% truth and he wasn't a prophet; in fact he fought some of the teachings of the prophet and her husband on more than one occasion. In the end, from what I've read, I believe he became reconciled to the prophet, but just be aware that not everything he taught was correct. His book is very good on the whole and worth reading, and we don't want to throw it out just because it has a few problems, but just know that some of his ideas were his own and cannot be supported by the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy, and in particular the subject we're discussing this morning.

Now let me tell you something else you may or may not know. Ellen White also endorsed the Bible, but at the same time she said, "learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition", but just because of that, we don't throw out the Bible, do we? No! Why? Because she also said "the Holy Spirit is given as a guide in understanding the way to life therein revealed." And so, any errors we might find don't have to cause us trouble, because the same Holy Spirit that lit up the pathway in Sister White's vision will also correct any error we come up against if we diligently study those Scriptures. You can read about these things in ***Early Writings*, page 220**. Because of difficulties in translation, this is one of the reasons we need to be thorough Bible students and seek the aid of the Holy Spirit when we come across some of these changes learned men made in an effort to clarify what they mistakenly believed.

By the way, this is not our subject this morning, but did you know there is not a Bible translation anywhere that is 100% perfect? That's right, even the old King James Bible has its problems, and I'll probably get in trouble for saying that, but it's true. Notice what Ellen White wrote in **Letter 32, 1899**, "The manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have been preserved through the ages by a miracle of God." Not the Latin, but the Hebrew and Greek. She didn't say that about any English translation of the Bible, but of the manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. That means we are not supposed to make any English translation of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures the standard by which to judge whether or not certain troublesome texts should be interpreted the way Bible translators translated them. Does that make sense? The manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are the standard.

If we find something that doesn't sound just right when we read an English translation of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, we are to go to the Hebrew and Greek for clarification, and that's not all that hard to do today with a good Bible concordance that gives the meaning of words in the original Hebrew and Greek along with other tools that are available to us. I tell you these things, not to destroy confidence in your translation of the Bible, but just so you are aware. Ninety-nine percent of the time there's no problem, but there are occasional, and I would say unintentional, mistakes that have slipped in that may need additional study and clarification, and I'll be giving you an example of this in a few minutes.

A translation is the process of changing words from one language to another, and in that process unintentional mistakes sometimes happen, and sometimes there is no equivalent word that will replace a word from one language to another, and as I already mentioned, sometimes mistakenly held beliefs get in the way of rendering the translation correctly; and so, Bible translators do their best to make a translation make sense, but sometimes they just confuse things instead. So if the manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are the only manuscripts that have been preserved by a miracle of God, then that's the real Bible that can be relied upon when difficulties in translations arise, and that's all the time I'm going to devote to that today. Just something for you to think about and consider as you read and as you study.

Now, getting back to our subject. Even though our Advent pioneers may have believed various forms of Arianism, I've not been able to find even one reference in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy that would confirm what many of them believed early on. As light shown along the pathway, the light corrected the false notions the pioneers had about who Jesus is as the Advent people progressed along that pathway, and why now would we want to go backward instead of forward toward the Holy City? But that's exactly what some are doing in the full blazing light of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy truth on this subject and a few others. Some of the pioneers may have had a legitimate reason for believing the way they did at the time, but there is no legitimate reason to follow in their missteps today when it comes to the true identity of Jesus, friends, because we have inspired information that they may not have had access to. We can get on our computers and easily find what inspiration says about this and any other subject in just a few minutes. The pioneers couldn't do that, and so what excuse can we give for not clearly understanding the truth?

The whole idea of Arianism stems from the fact that there is God the Father, and Jesus the Son, and in a father son relationship the father had to be here before the son, and there had to be a time when the son didn't exist or there would be no need for a father. But if we carry this thinking to its logical conclusion, then where did the Father come from? Wouldn't he also have to have a father? You see, this is finite human reasoning, and because we are finite human beings, this is why people get tripped up in their thinking when it comes to this subject. But when it comes to God, we are dealing with the infinite and human reasoning must give way to faith in what inspiration plainly teaches and not where human reasoning would take us.

Now, to begin with I want to share a statement with you from *The Desire of Ages, page 530*. You may already be familiar with this statement, but maybe you haven't thought about it in depth before. Let me quote it to you exactly, and then we'll talk about what it means. Here's what it says, "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived." Then it goes on to say, "The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life." Did you get that? The divinity of Christ that is "original, unborrowed, underived" is our assurance of eternal life. And so, how important is it for us to understand these things? It's eternally important, isn't it? And if we get all mixed up about the true identity of Jesus, then it can affect our eternal destiny unless we get our thinking straightened out. What we need to do is the same thing the Advent believers that moved along the pathway did, and reject mistakenly held beliefs and accept the light that came to them as they progressed along.

So what does "original, unborrowed, underived" mean? Well, the word "Original" means Jesus has no origin. Origin is the root meaning of the word original. In other words Jesus had no beginning, plain and simple! "Unborrowed" means He didn't receive life from someone else, because He is Himself the source of life. You can read that in **John 1:4**. And "Underived" means He is not of the same material substance as the Father, that's a Catholic belief and the basis for the false doctrine of the trinity, as well as the false teaching floating around in Adventism today.

The word "Substance" is defined as, "that which subsists by itself", and in that respect the Father and Son are of the same kind of substance, because they both subsist separately by themselves, and they are separate beings that have always existed without receiving life from the other. All of us are derived, or descended from our parents and carry their material substance, or their DNA and pass it on to our offspring, and our parents from their parents and so on, but Christ was "underived", that means He didn't descend from anyone else, except as He was born a human being 2000 years ago, but today we're talking about His existence prior to that. Like the Father and the Holy Spirit, Christ has no origin, and that is beyond our finite comprehension, and if we try to explain this away because can't understand the infinite and are harboring false ideas and teaching them to others, then we are going to die in our sins unless we come to a right conclusion about this. Let's read what Jesus Himself said in the gospel of **John chapter 8**.

And while you're finding your place there, let me give you a little background without reading the whole chapter. Early one morning, having spent the night at the Mount of Olives, Jesus came to the temple to teach the people. It was then that the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery and tried to trip Jesus up, but instead He exposed them to themselves by writing their sins in the sand, and they all went away one by one from the oldest to the youngest. Then sometime later Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees once again and telling them about His oneness with His Father, and of course they didn't believe a word He said. Then He told them that soon He would be going away and where He was going they couldn't come. Then they began to make sport of Him by saying, is He going to kill Himself and that's why we can't go where He's going? Then Jesus told them plainly that they were from beneath, but He was from above, and later on He told them plainly that they were of their father the devil. And so, they didn't like Jesus very much; in fact, they were even now plotting His death.

Now I want you to notice what Jesus said in **verse 24**, because it's very important. Jesus said, “**I said therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am *he*, you shall die in your sins.**” Now earlier I read to you about learned men who had in some instances changed the words of the Bible, thinking they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, and the verse we just read is a good example of this. You'll notice that the word “*he*” is italicized, which means it's not that way in the manuscripts of the Greek Scriptures that the prophet said have been preserved by a miracle of God. Italicized words are inserted here and there throughout the King James translation in an effort to clarify the meaning, and I'm thankful they italicized them, because otherwise we wouldn't know they were added, but most people just gloss over these words thinking they're just as inspired as the rest when they're not. Sometimes they're helpful and sometimes they're not, and in this case it detracts from what Jesus was trying to convey to the Pharisees and even to us today who read these things.

If you drop the italicized “*he*” it would read the way Jesus intended it to read when He said, “**If you believe not that I am, you shall die in your sins.**” Now the Jews knew exactly what Jesus meant when He said “**I AM**”, in fact we'll see that a little further down in the chapter. He was stating plainly that He was the God of the Old Testament, the Creator, and God Almighty, and that He was life; original, unborrowed, underived, and they didn't like it and thought He was speaking blasphemy.

Then in **verse 28** Jesus is still speaking to the Pharisees, and notice what He says a second time. “**Then said Jesus unto them, when you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know that I am *he*, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things.**” Again, drop the italicized “*he*” and you have Jesus telling them plainly that they would realize He was the great “**I AM**” when he was lifted up upon the cross of Calvary, and they did, but of course they rejected Him nonetheless, even though they knew in their hearts that they had crucified the Messiah.

I remember reading something about this years ago, that they knew Jesus was who He said He was, but they still rejected Him. Sorry I don't have a reference for you. But so strong is human pride, that even though many of them knew they were wrong, they couldn't bring themselves to admit their folly. Even though it would cost them eternal life, they would stick to their guns at all cost to themselves rather than humble themselves and repent of their evil deeds. Pride is a terrible thing, brothers and sisters. Pride was the reason for Lucifer's fall, and look at all the other angels that fell with him. This tells us that pride in one individual always takes others down with them, and that pride leads to the unpardonable sin, of which they became guilty.

Now let's look at the third time Jesus referred to Himself as "I AM" in **verse 58**. "Jesus said unto them, **Verily, verily, (He's stressing the point here) Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (And how do we know that the unbelieving Jews finally had enough of His claims to be the great "I AM"? Verse 59)**. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

Jesus said, "**If you believe not that I AM, you shall die in your sins.**" I didn't say that, Jesus did! And so I say to you now, those of you who are putting forth the false idea that Jesus is not God Almighty; the great I AM; the One who has no beginning but has always existed and always will, and One who is and has life, original, unborrowed, underived; unless you come to your senses and accept and promote the truth about Jesus, you are going to die in your sins, because you are making a mockery of the plan of salvation by promoting a god that is inferior to the task of saving your soul and the souls of those you're misleading.

The Godhead gave its very best to secure your place in God's eternal kingdom, and to deny that by proclaiming an Arian view of the Saviour will not get you there. Your false teaching is a violation of the first commandment, because you are placing an inferior god, which is another god, before the true God.

When Jesus gave the Ten Commandments upon Mount Sinai, because He was the God of the Old Testament, He said, "You shall have no other gods before me." In other words, even here Jesus is implying that not only are we not to place the made up gods of this world before Him, but we are not to place the other members of the Godhead before Him and think of them as superior to Himself. Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit are equally God, and we do disservice to them by thinking otherwise. But wait a minute; in **John 14:28** didn't Jesus tell His disciples that "The Father is greater than I"? Yes, but that's in the context of His human life and the fact that He took a subordinate position to save us and give us an example of relying upon a power outside of ourselves to live the Christian life, and not that He is somehow a lesser God. So my hope and sincere prayer is that you will progress with the light as it has moved along the pathway that leads to the city of God and not reject the light that will lead you to a place you don't want to go.

There's plenty of other evidence from the Spirit of Prophecy to show conclusively that Jesus is who He claimed to be when He rebuked the scribes and Pharisees who were promoting another

gospel and another Jesus, and I'd like to read you a few excerpts from the book *The Faith I Live By*, pages 46-48 and then we'll define some of the words we'll be reading. Here's what it says, "Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. . . In speaking of His pre-existence (**that is, before He was born into this world as a babe in Bethlehem**), Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. . . His divine life could not be reckoned by human computation. The existence of Christ before His incarnation is not measured by figures.

"Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent."

Now, one of the definitions of the word "equal" means identical. If you have two numbers that are the same, they are of equal value. And so, the Father and the Son have no problem with being the same in character and with the same attributes, yet distinct persons. One is not jealous or covetous of the other, they just have different job descriptions. Just because Jesus willingly took a subordinate position in the Godhead in order to save us doesn't make Him a lesser God, it just endears Him to the human race.

Then there's the word "Pre-existent", which simply means He existed before He became human, and to be "Self-existent" means He has always existed independently of any other being. That's why **Philippines 2:6** says Jesus "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He didn't have to steal or borrow life from an outside source, because He already had it of Himself.

Then there's the words "God essentially", which means Jesus is God absolutely, unquestionably, and positively. The Spirit of Prophecy also said Jesus is God in the "Highest sense"; what does that mean? It means that there is not one member of the Godhead that is higher than Jesus. The three members of the Godhead don't consider that one ranks higher than the other, and they are all involved in the salvation of mankind.

Now think this through with me for a minute. If Jesus "Existed from eternity", that means He has no beginning and will have no end. That's something our finite minds cannot comprehend. We can't wrap our heads around eternity, it's impossible! It's kind of like space. I can remember as a young child thinking about space being limitless, it's mind boggling. I used to think, "Well, maybe there's a brick wall out there somewhere and that's where space ends", but then I got to thinking, "I wonder what's behind the brick wall." And so you see, there is no end to space and there is no end or beginning to Jesus. He will be alive as far into the future as He has been here in the past, because He's eternal.

The word "Infinite" is also used to describe Jesus, which means "Having neither beginning nor end of existence." That's pretty self explanatory, isn't it? You can't be infinite and have a beginning. Being infinite means you've always been here and you always will.

Then there's the word "Omnipotent" that's applied to Jesus, which means "All powerful." In other words, there is no other member of the Godhead that is more powerful than Jesus, period! Jesus is God Almighty, friends! And so are the Father and the Holy Spirit, and there's no quarreling between them about who's the greatest, so why should we finite human beings quarrel about it? Just accept it and don't try to explain something farther than it's been revealed.

If Jesus was birthed out of the Father way back when, as some are teaching today, then we would have to throw out the Spirit of Prophecy and ultimately the Bible, and there's nothing better the devil would like. **1 John 5:12** says, "He that has the Son has life." That means that the divinity of Christ is our assurance of eternal life! And unless the divinity of Christ was "Original, unborrowed, underived," as we read earlier, we would have no assurance of eternal life! If Jesus is not and has not always been eternal, then neither could our future life be eternal, because we get it from Him.

Let me continue with a few more statements from *The Faith I Live By*, page 48 as we wind down. "The incarnation of Christ is the mystery of all mysteries. Christ was one with the Father, yet . . . He was willing to step down from the exaltation of one who was equal with God that He might accomplish His purpose of love for the fallen race, **(And so yes, in some ways Jesus is no longer equal with the Father, but are we going to fault Him for taking a step down and voluntarily giving His life to save us? How have things changed for Jesus? He will always retain His humanity, which means He cannot be everywhere present like He used to be, but through the Spirit He can be, and don't ask me to explain how that happens, because I can't. Secondly He will always be imperfect in His physical form because He will always bare the marks of the crucifixion. But friends, does that make Him a lesser God somehow? It goes on to say)** He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. How wide is the contrast between the divinity of Christ and the helpless infant in Bethlehem's manger! How can we span the distance between the mighty God and a helpless child? And yet the Creator of worlds, He in whom was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, was manifest in the helpless babe in the manger. Far higher than any of the angels, equal with the Father in dignity and glory, and yet wearing the garb of humanity! Divinity and humanity were mysteriously combined, and man and God became one." And that oneness with humanity is permanent. He loved His creation so much that He decided to be one of us forever, and that's a long, long time, in fact it's for eternity.

And do you know what? It's God's ultimate plan for you and for me to experience this mysterious combining of divinity and humanity. Not that we'll become the same as Jesus, but for man and God to become one. That's what Jesus prayed for in **John 17**, and this mystery begins when we accept Jesus as our Saviour, and it will last for all eternity if we are faithful unto death, or until we're translated without seeing death if we're still alive when He comes to take us to our heavenly home. And God forbid that we should frustrate that plan by making Jesus out to be a created being, or one who was born sometime way back in eternity, which is itself an impossibility once you understand that eternity has no beginning.



And here's one more thing I want you to think about. As you know, the phrase "only begotten Son" occurs in **John 3:16** and a few other places. That phrase is translated from the Greek word "Monogenes" and "Monogenes" is variously translated into English as "only", "one and only", and "only begotten", and it's this last phrase, "only begotten", that causes problems in some peoples' minds, and false teachers have latched onto these two words to try to prove that Jesus was either created or given birth sometime before He was born in Bethlehem. They see the word "begotten" and say that this word can only refer to someone who had a beginning, and they're right, but what they fail to see is that the word "begotten" is an English translation of a Greek word, and as such we have to look at the original meaning of the Greek word and not transfer the wrong English meanings into the text. Because remember, it's "the manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures that have been preserved by a miracle of God." And besides, if we believe that Jesus was begotten sometime before He became human, then that would contradict the many times in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy that state plainly that He was not.

So what does "Monogenes" mean in the Greek? Well, "monogenes" is a combination of two words: "Monos" which means "Only" or "Alone", and "Genos" which means "of the same nature, kind, sort, or that which has no duplicate." This is the meaning in **Hebrews 11:17** where Paul refers to Isaac as Abraham's "only begotten son." But we know that Abraham had more than one son, don't we? Therefore, it's the uniqueness of Isaac among the other sons of Abraham that allows for the use of the Greek word "monogenes" in that context.

The second definition of "monogenes" is, "being the only one of its kind or class, unique or special in kind." In other words, Jesus was unique and one of a kind, and a better translation rather than "only begotten" would be simply that Jesus was the "Only unique Son", but not "Only begotten" as it's falsely applied to Him before His human birth. Now let me be clear, and this is key, so listen carefully. The word "Begotten" is fine when applied to the birth of Jesus into this world, but when applied to His preexistence into this world, it's not fine, because it gives a wrong meaning of Christ's divinity and robs us of our Saviour. And so, the word "monogenes" has nothing to do with origin at all, but the word "begotten" does, and that's the difference, but an important one. All "monogenes" means is that there has never been another person like Jesus, period. He is unique and one of a kind.

The reason the correct translation is important here is because the mistranslation "only begotten" as applied to Christ's preexistence has been used to support false teachings about the true identity of Jesus. For instance, Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus is merely a begotten and created being. In their own translation of the Scriptures they refer to Jesus as "A GOD", But not "The God." And likewise, the Mormons teach that "only begotten" means Jesus originated by birth from God the Father and was the spirit brother of Lucifer before He was born into this world. If that's not blasphemy, I don't know what is! The Mormon scholar James Talmage, in his "Articles of Faith," says that Jesus was the firstborn "among the spirit-children of Elohim." Elohim, say the Mormons, is God the Father and Jesus is Jehovah, and all this confusion is

because of the word “Begotten.” And so, you can see how important it is to understand this clearly.

But here's the bottom line of all the various false teachings about Jesus and what they all seem to have in common. Somewhere way back in the eons of time the Father gave birth to Jesus, and that's essentially what some of the Advent pioneers believed and what many are still trying to promoting today. But here's the truth: the phrase “only begotten” as applied to Christ's preexistence actually and totally denies the deity of Christ, because deity is unbegotten. Jesus is not some mythological figure that became a god through His birth by some other god, but is God essentially.

If we understand the word “monogenes” in all its fullness, it includes not only the “monos,” that Jesus is the only Son of God, and we already discussed when that happened in last month’s sermon, but it also includes the “genos,” that He is the only one of His kind, the unique One, the UNBEGOTTEN, the unparalleled, the irreplaceable, the incomparable, the unequaled, the matchless, the non-duplicable. That's my Jesus, and He's yours too if you'll have Him as such. If not, then you will be in danger of receiving the same condemnation Jesus gave to the scribes and Pharisees when He said, “If you believe not that I Am, you shall die in your sins.”