

I am sayings of jesus
in johns gospel
religion essay



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The aim of this assignment is to exegetically discuss the 'I AM' sayings of Jesus within John's Gospel, state their significance to salvation. Jesus used symbolic language in talking about Himself and His relationship to people. According to Tenney the reason for Jesus using symbols was to illustrate various aspects of His ministry. John uses symbols to point to the heavenly reality revealed in Jesus. In light of this Butler states that the word 'symbol' does not appear in the Bible however, both the Old and New Testament are rich in symbolic language.

Authorship

The author of John's Gospel is not mentioned by name, but 'early Christian sources indicate this Gospel was written by John, the disciple and son of Zebedee, one of the twelve disciples who was at the Passover meal with Jesus. John referred to himself as the beloved disciple and eyewitness of the events of Jesus' life. He identifies himself as, "this is the disciple that testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21: 24). John's Gospel includes seven 'I AM' sayings revealing God as manifested in Jesus and His relationship with Israel. God's name I AM reveals His identity, His status, and His character, and was given to Jesus so that He can reveal God's glory to mankind,' in the world where many claim to be gods and saviours.

The Bread of Life

This is the first of John's sayings where he uses the metaphor to reveal Jesus as life-giving food. As a whole the passage challenges the Galileans to believe in Jesus' heavenly origin and incarnation so that they may have

eternal life now as well as at the end-time. John describes Jesus as the Son of Man, who is the true food that gives imperishable life; this teaching was a testing to see whether the hearers would decide to follow Christ or reject Him. After Jesus had satisfied the hunger of five thousand people from multiplying five loaves of bread and two fishes; they had become hungry again and asked Jesus to tell them about the spiritual truth about the food that nourished each of them.

Milne claims that the Galileans had materialistic agenda and a lacked the awareness of the needs of the heart. ' For them God's blessings are a free food supply and a political Messiah who would rid them of their hated Roman leaders. Their concern is with what they can do to help the cause along.' They demanded another miracle to prove His claim to give eternal life. They thought that believing could come only by seeing miracles. Jesus points out to them that if they spend their present and future life working to gain material things and ignore the food available to them in Jesus, they will perish.

The people challenged Jesus claim that He had sole authority by God to give them imperishable food. They then began to cite Scripture to Jesus by saying, ' it is written that our forefathers ate manna that was given to them as food from heaven by Moses (Exodus 16: 31). The point they were trying to make here is that the manna eaten by their forefathers had a heavenly character. Jesus responded by correcting their misinterpretation of the scripture, and stated that the manna had not come from Moses but from God, his Father. Whereas the manna (food) God supplied in the wilderness through Moses was perishable it gave physical life and satisfying physical

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hunger and was only for the people of Israel. The bread God gives through Jesus is the true imperishable bread and is the gift of life for the whole world.

The people asked Jesus to give them this bread always, they did not understand what it was they were requesting. They did not know the spiritual significance of the food given nor that Jesus Himself is that food, but assumed that Jesus was speaking of some kind of supernatural food that would be available whenever they felt hungry. This then prompts Jesus to finally say, ' I am the bread of life, who ever comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'

John states that they were focussing on the gift without recognising the giver, and saw Him as a wonder worker. Jesus is the imperishable food, He is the source of life imparts life to humans, and to receive this life one should come to Him in faith not by works. Jesus' concern is to confront them with their errors and point them to the true way to find life from God, they only need to believe and rely on Him and on Him alone as the one the Father has sent as a sacrifice for the sin of the world.

The Light of the World

The second saying of Jesus claim to be the true Light of the people of God, not only of Israel, but of the whole world. Within this passage it gives two ways of life on earth which is dominated by two opposite forces light and darkness. John uses ideas that were current in his time to proclaim that anyone who believes in Jesus and obeys Him cannot be controlled by evil, and because Jesus is the Light darkness cannot overcome Him. In chapter (8: 24) Jesus conflict with those who were in darkness because of their sin and

unbelief, illustrates an ongoing conflict between light and darkness and further justifying His claim as the Light of the world'. What he is saying here is that only He can lead people out of darkness into light, out of their delusion into truth, and from death by giving the light of life. Whoever follows Him will never walk in darkness but have the light of life. From this Jesus is saying that He has a unique relationship with the Father and He is the revelation of the one and only God, who is light and salvation. Jesus is the Light of the world in the sense that He is the radiance of God's glory in the world, and bearer of the light of God. In (Isa 49: 6) He is also recalled as the Servant of the Lord who would be a light for the Gentiles who will bring salvation to all mankind.

The Good Shepherd and the Door

This passage contains two metaphorically I AM sayings whereby Jesus declares himself to be the Good Shepherd and the Door. Here he promises protection and a way of salvation for his followers. Firstly by taking on the role of Shepherd Jesus reveals himself as the Christ and Shepherd King, who leads his people with compassion, protecting and caring for them while providing a sense of belonging to himself and God. As the shepherd goes before the sheep they in turn humbly follow Him, trusting and obeying His words and not the words of those who oppose Him.

Secondly Jesus points out that there is only one door into the sheepfold, implies that He is the only door to Salvation. By proclaiming that He is the 'door' for the sheep, Jesus is saying that He is the only way by which one can experience God and His love; the only one through whom heavenly secrets and divine life are imparted to those who obey Him, He is their protector and

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the means by which they obtain spiritual nourishment, He is the only way of communication between heaven and earth. In addition to this Jesus claims that thieves and robbers who came before Him can never enter the sheepfold to mislead the sheep (people). Here Jesus is referring to the Pharisees, the Jewish leaders, who exercise authority over the people of Israel by misinterpreting the Law to

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their own advantage; and the leaders who attempt, to win the loyalty of the people before Christ came in the flesh. He says, " Like thieves, they approach was secret and crafty, and like robbers they were engaged in violence and destruction" (Ezek 34: 1). They had not been sent by God either through Christ, but illegitimately claim leadership. Jesus states that the sheep shall no longer follow or listen to the voice of these false leaders, because they now know and hear the voice of the true shepherd.

The Resurrection and Life

In chapter eleven Jesus affirms He is the resurrection and life, and John quotes that raising Lazarus from the dead at Bethany is a prelude to Jesus own death and resurrection. He claims that the resurrection life is like a future experience and a present reality. Secondly John claims that Jesus is the only one who can raise the dead and give life. Therefore, the resurrection and life can only be experienced in Jesus. Consequently the word ' life' is identical to ' eternal life', the divine gift given to those who believe in Jesus.

Ultimately, those who receive His life are born of the Spirit. Christ does not only raise the dead by His voice giving life, but He is the resurrection and the

life, having the power to resurrection fullness of life, also affirming that He works in oneness with God in raising the dead.

According to Jesus, all human beings will be resurrected after death to receive God's judgement, for it is appointed for them to die once, and after that to face judgement (Heb 9: 27). The words 'will never die' does not promise immortality, but those who believe in Jesus by faith will face physical death like every other human being, but death will have no control over them. By the power of Jesus they will rise up from the dead to experience heavenly life in all its fullness. Therefore the one who lives and keeps on believing will not perish eternally.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

John sees this as Jesus' pastoral speech delivered to His disciples before He leaves them to go to the Father. In spite of their close relationship with Jesus,

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His disciples still did not understand His destination. From this misunderstanding Jesus makes His sixth I AM saying, and it is the only one to be followed by three predicates. He professes that he is 'the way, the truth and the life,' and that no one comes to the Father but through Him.

Here the 'way' is the one that is emphasised because it corresponds with Jesus' statement in (14: 4) "Where I go you know, and the way you know," and Thomas' inquiry in (14: 5), "Lord we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" The predicates 'truth' and 'life' are then added to explain the term 'way'. In response to Thomas's question Jesus answers

him by saying, " I am going to be with God, the Father of us all." So when He states, ' I am the way,' He is saying that it is only in communion with Him that one can reach God. Here John stresses that Jesus is God's only revelation and the only way of salvation. Jesus came from God and is going back to God by way of being crucified and then resurrected; He is God's self-revelation and the one who is the only way to God. The two nouns ' truth' and ' life,' reveal that Jesus is the true and living way to God, because He is the truth of God and the life of God. Here John's emphasis is on the person Jesus who is the way to the presence of God there one will experience eternal joy. Parallel to verse 6 is Psalm 16: 11 which speak of those who follow the path of life will experience joy to the full in the presence of God.

Jesus is the Word incarnate and teaches to His disciples that He is the true and life-giving way to the presence of God in peace and prosperity; Isaiah (30: 23-26), also speaks of this prosperity to the people who obey the word. As the way, Jesus gives us access to the Father; He will also include with Himself all those who trust in Him when He returns to His Father. As the truth, Jesus reveals God as the Truth to the world in His love, mercy and deliverance. As the life, Jesus gives life and peace to all those who believe in Him. Only those who see God's love and faithfulness in Jesus and draws towards Him, will know the way to reach God, this is wholly expressed in His statement no one comes to the Father except through me.

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Since Jesus is the embodiment of divine truth and life, the only way to enter the heavenly realm is through Him.

The Vine

In the final I AM sayings Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine and the branches. He reveals Himself as the true vine, and compares Himself with the people of Israel who he metaphorically described as branches who had failed to bear fruit, therefore failing to glorify God. Fortunately, what is known as failure and impossible with man, can be turned into success and become possible through Christ. Knowing He is from heaven and the life He possesses is divine, He can also supply life to the branches. Here John presents Jesus not as one who bears fruit, but as the source of power allowing those who stay in union with Him to bear fruit and fulfil the plan of God.

Hebrews 9: 24 quotes that the tabernacle in heaven is called the 'true tent' and the earthly sanctuary is known as a copy of the 'true one' that is in heaven.

Jesus reveals Himself to be 'the true vine'. This vine is of heavenly origin, and therefore has the ability to reveal heavenly reality and give life to the branches which are united with it. Jesus refers to God as the 'vinedresser' this shows us that God is the owner and planter of the vine and the branches. The function of the branches is to 'bear fruit', in other words one need to do good deeds' after repentance (Luke 6: 35, Matt 3: 10). God expects good works from human beings, and failure to perform them will lead to God's judgement, resulting in one being separated from Him and to destruction. Those who bear fruit reproduce Jesus' life by which the Father's glory will be revealed to the world. Jesus continues the metaphor by referring to all His disciples saying, 'every branch of mine'. Meaning those who are <https://assignbuster.com/i-am-sayings-of-jesus-in-johns-gospel-religion-essay/>

united with Jesus will be recognized by the world as His disciples. The Father, the vinedresser, takes away any branches that does not bear fruit, and prunes those that do.

Clearly what is seen here is that God is the one who controls the whole process of fruit-bearing.

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He purifies the vine to protect the fruit-bearing branches by removing branches that do not bear fruit meaning followers of Christ who becomes unfaithful.

He takes them away from His people and consigning them to eternal punishment. God also purifies the fruitful branches by pruning them so that they will bear more fruit. God's pruning of believers takes place through the saving mission of Christ words and deeds.

Jesus tells His disciples that they are already clean by the word He has spoken, which is the Father's word. Here 'word' stands for the whole message of salvation preached and performed by Jesus who also declares God and His love to mankind. Those who receive Jesus and His word by faith will see God's Glory and are passed from death to life. The disciples, who have received Jesus' word, are already clean; however, cleaning is a process; as long as they remain in Christ God the Father will continue to clean them so that they will bear more fruit. Jesus emphasises this point so that they realise the Father is already pruning them and they are already cleansed making them fit for union with Christ. They need not attempt to wipe out evil

from their minds or partake in any form of meditation in order to achieve
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union with God; for union with Christ, and in Him with God, is a gift that has already been given and need to be received by faith.

Jesus' exhortation, 'abide in me' and 'I in you', is the key statement in chapter fifteen. Here Jesus issues a command, in terms of the metaphor of a vine and its branches. This metaphor highlights the communal life of which the person who does the abiding is part of. Life for the church flows from Jesus, and one cannot absorb life from Him unless they are united with Him. All one needs to do is to remain in union with Him. When we abide in Christ, and make His word our theme of meditation in our everyday life in love and obedience, we can apply His word to changes in our every day situation. Believers can be nurtured by Jesus' life through meditating on and absorbing His words.

Conclusion

Jesus came into the world from heaven to bring salvation to mankind, by giving up His own life as a sacrifice on the cross. God's name 'I AM' and glory are given to Him revealing them to those who believe in Him as the anointed Messiah sent by God into the world. He has divine authority and delegated power to give heavenly life to everyone who comes to Him. There is no other person one can look for divine life except in the one whom God has authorized. So to follow and abide in Jesus is the only way to salvation, as we observe from His I AM sayings. Salvation is no longer confined to the nation of Israel but is extended to all nations of the world.