

Handouts

Including

Notes and Questions



The end that is a beginning

The Book of John and the Revelation of Jesus

“The Alpha and the Omega”

- Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet; Omega is the last letter.
- It is a way to say the span of both the beginning and the end of something, in all its completeness.
- This is how Jesus describes Himself in both the beginning of the book of Revelation—
- *I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'* Rev.1:8
- And at the end of Revelation—
- *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.* Rev 22:13

As you have read through the Bible from first to last

- It's all been about Jesus.
- He created a perfect world for humanity to enjoy and to walk with Him.
- When they disobeyed, He promised a Redeemer.
- The entire Old Testament talks about the future Redeemer, the importance of salvation by faith, and how the sacrificial system was a picture of what was coming in Jesus' death on the cross.
- The prophets continually reminded the people that the Redeemer, the Messiah was coming.
- And the New Testament records His life, death, and resurrection and the creation of the church He left to represent Him.

As we end the reading through the Bible

- It seems fitting to look at Jesus, to focus on Jesus, the Alpha and Omega of all we've read.
- In the chronological plan from Bible805 we are reading the Gospel of John just before the book of Revelation because it was written many years after the other gospels.
- And this is very important to understand when you read Revelation, a book that it is not, as is often assumed, a book of puzzles to ponder, but it is as the opening of the book says, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” Rev.1:1
- It is not about us setting dates, it is all about Jesus. And so we end the yearly reading with the last Gospel about Him and the final revelation of Him.

Revelation is a challenge to read because of the imaginative language it is written in

- There are many, many ways to interpret what is known as the images and pictures in it including—
- Some believe it prophesied what would happen during the lifetime of the people living close to when it was written; some think it is all future; some think some past, some future events are described.
- The interpretation of the images in the book changes with the generations—the leaders of evil; the plagues, all change with what is a current picture of these things.
- And of course, the timing changes as every prediction of the events in Revelation has not happened when past individuals predicted them.

In other words.....

- Every prediction about timing, the exact identity of any of the characters in Revelation, or events related to it...
- **Have all been wrong.**
- And that should not surprise us if we keep in mind what Jesus said just before He went back to heaven and they asked Him, still seeing Him as an earthly king, if now was the time to restore Israel and He replied, *“The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:7-8, NLT*
- To repeat, concerning the specifics of dates, etc., Jesus clearly said, “They are not for you to know.”
- Fulfilling Jesus’ command to be a witness, not a fortune teller or in a prophetic panic is to be our focus.

One more thing—

consider the prophecies of the first coming of Jesus and people’s interpretation of them

- The Old Testament is filled with prophecies and 2,000 years after Jesus fulfilled them, we understand more fully what they were talking about, even though many of the people during Old Testament times did not.
- And WHEN it actually happened; when Jesus came, most of the people living and even those living with Jesus, including His disciples (like the people before them) did not have any idea it would happen the way that it did.
- There were all sorts of confusion about the Messiah being a military leader and where He would come from, and what He would do, and they got most of it wrong.
- They couldn’t figure out Jesus’ first coming correctly and we most likely won’t figure out the second one very well.
- I take comfort in that.
- And I imagine, though I have no Biblical support for this, that one day when we are with the Lord, He will make all of Revelation clear to us—what a multimedia show that might be!

One more thing, the main revelation about Him is that **He is coming back**

- Regardless of the various views about it or what we do or don’t understand, Christianity 101 reminds us of these things:
- *Jesus’ return is an **Imminent Event**—it could happen at any time and therefore we should always be ready.*
- *Jesus’ return will be an **Absolute Event**—it will be total in destruction, resurrection, judgment, and rewards.*
- *Jesus’ return will be a **Universal Event**—the entire world and cosmos will be aware of what is happening.*
- With that reality in mind, let’s then focus in this lesson on the assurance of the ONE, our Savior, Lord, and friend we will be meeting.

For now, to focus on Jesus, let’s look at the book of John

- Written by his disciple who was one of Jesus’ inner group (Peter, James, John). Also, he Jesus’ cousin (his mother was Mary’s sister).
- The one called “the beloved disciple” also a “son of thunder.”
- He was also the disciple Jesus entrusted to take care of His mother after His death and return to heaven; tradition tells us they lived in Ephesus,
- John pastored there and then was briefly imprisoned on Patmos (where

he wrote Revelation) and returned to Ephesus to die.

- John lived the longest of any disciple and wrote the last Gospel long after the others were written.
- In it, John looks back at the Old Testament when God appeared to Moses and first gave His name to His people, when God said to Moses “I AM.”

In John, Jesus finishes the sentence in what are called the “I AM” saying of Jesus

- It would have been astounding to hear these statements from Jesus as the term, “I AM” was clearly associated with the identity of God, especially to the Jewish audience He was speaking to.
- When Jesus made the statements, He was not only claiming to be God, but showing his followers what the God who had been present, yet hidden, was like.
- Remember as Col. 1:15 reminds us in the Message translation, *We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen.*
- Let’s take some time to look at these “I AM statements.”
- The initial comments that follow are from www.GotQuestions.com, and after them are additional comments and application ideas.

“I am the bread of life.” (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51).

- *In John 6, Jesus establishes a pattern that continues through John’s gospel—Jesus makes a statement about who He is, and He backs it up with something He does.*
- *In this case, Jesus states that He is the bread of life just after He had fed the 5,000 in the wilderness. At the same time, He contrasts what He can do with what Moses had done for their ancestors: “Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die” (verses 49–50).*
- **Comments & Applications**
- Filling ourselves with food, miraculous or not is never enough.
- What Jesus gives us – In HIMSELF, stills our hungers.
- In practical ways, how is He the Bread of Life for us today? God’s Word is often referred to as food, when we feed our hearts and minds on it, we are nourished and filled with Him.

“I am the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5)

- This second of Jesus’ “I am” statements in John’s gospel comes right before He heals a man born blind.
- Jesus not only says He is the light; He proves it. Jesus’ words and actions echo Genesis 1:3, “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”
- **Comments & Applications**
- Think of the many phrases we use, “I’m in the dark about something.” “Can you shed some light on this for me?” “The light suddenly came on (metaphorically or physically).”
- In all these ways and so many more Jesus literally can give us light, he can help us see, understand, comprehend what we didn’t in the past.
- An interesting image in C.S. Lewis book, *The Great Divorce*, is how he pictures hell as a place of dusk, where it will some day be totally dark; and heaven a place of dawn, that someday will be fully light.
- Of course the book is fiction, but I think a true analogy to those who do not know Jesus, living lives in a half-light that if they don’t turn from it will one day become eternal darkness and those who know Jesus living in an ever-increasing dawn, “until the full light of day.”

"I am the door" (John 10:7 and 9, ESV)

- *"I am the door"* (John 10:7 and 9, ESV). This "I am" statement stresses that no one can enter the kingdom of heaven by any other means than Christ Himself.
- Jesus' words in this passage are couched in the imagery of a sheepfold. He is the one and only way to enter the fold. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber" (verse 1, ESV).

• **Comments & Applications**

- It wasn't just salvation Jesus was talking about in this passage—the sheepfold was a place of safety and protection. The shepherd slept at the opening and nothing could get past the shepherd to harm the sheep. Jesus not only is the one who opens the door of heaven to us, but he is a solid door that can keep evil out of our lives.

"I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14)

- With this "I am" statement, Jesus portrays His great love and care. He is the One who willingly protects His flock even to the point of death (verses 11 and 15). When Jesus called Himself the good shepherd, He unmistakably took for Himself one of God's titles in the Old Testament: "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1).

• **Comments & Applications**

- Remember in another story also how Jesus portrays himself as a shepherd who would go after one straying sheep to bring it home.
- This reminds us of the incredible importance Jesus places on individuals, even wandering individuals.
- As under-shepherds of Jesus we need to be sure individuals, those who wander, those who are perhaps considered "less" in some way are precious to us also.
- That might mean stepping out of our comfort zone to go after them.

"I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

- Jesus made this "I am" statement immediately before raising Lazarus from the dead. Again, we see that Jesus' teaching was not just empty talk; when He made a claim, He substantiated it with action. He holds "the keys of death and the grave" (Revelation 1:18, NLT).
- In raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus showed how He can fulfill Yahweh's promise to ancient Israel: "[God's] dead shall live; their bodies shall rise" (Isaiah 26:19, ESV). Apart from Jesus, there is neither resurrection nor eternal life.

• **Comments & Applications**

- Not only in our physical resurrection, but Jesus can renew all parts of our lives.
- As we go from "strength to strength"even though our physical selves might be weakening, we can consistently get stronger in our spirits.

A distorted Biblical interpretation of this idea

- Is how some interpret John 10:10 in the KJV where it says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."
- And they take it to mean that Christians should be rich and have all the fun and good things they can grab.
- The NLT puts it this way, "My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."
- The Greek simply means "full" but I think the NLT is closer to the overall idea throughout the New Testament and that is that for a "rich and satisfying life" that pleases God we should be focused on doing the

Lord's will, growing in our faith, and helping others—not selfishly focused on giving ourselves the worldly definition of the “good life.”

One more note, C.S. Lewis (and others) contrast between “bios” and “zoe”

- The Biological sort which comes to us through Nature, and which (like everything else in Nature) is always tending to run down and decay so that it can only be kept up by incessant subsidies from Nature in the form of air, water, food, etc., is Bios. The Spiritual life which is in God from all eternity, and which made the whole natural universe, is Zoe. C.S. Lewis
- ". . . bios means the course of a destiny and zōē something close to the brilliance of aliveness. In Hebrew, the concept is utterly theocentric, an implication of God's breath." Ivan Illich
- Jesus said he is the way, the truth and the life (zoe). In this case zoe differs from bios. Bios refers to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead), Zoe means to enjoy real life, to have true life and worthy of the name. [Zoe also means] active, blessed, endless in the kingdom of God. Bios refers to just life as opposed to not being alive. Vanha Veikko, Stack Exchange
- When Jesus refers to the “abundant life” it is ZOE as these say
- “The Spiritual life which is in God from all eternity, and which made the whole natural universe.”
- “The brilliance of aliveness.”
- “To enjoy real life, to have true life and worthy of the name. [Zoe also means] active, blessed, endless in the kingdom of God.”
- Not toys or money only, this is the LIFE Jesus promises!

“I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6)

- This powerful “I am” statement of Christ's is packed with meaning. Jesus is not merely one way among many ways to God; He is the only way.
- Scripture said that “The very essence of [God's] words is truth” ([Psalm 119:160, NLT](#)), and here is Jesus proclaiming that He is the truth—confirming His identity as the Word of God (see [John 1:1, 14](#)). And Jesus alone is the source of life; He is the Creator and Sustainer of all life and the Giver of eternal life.
- **Comments & Applications**
- There is NO other way to God except by Jesus—because if you don't know Jesus (who is the image of the unseen God, and God's only Son, the only one to rise from the dead), a key question would be, what “god” do you think you are worshipping?
- This is why it is so important also to know the REAL JESUS, not the one with the same name, but with a false identity as the Mormons, Jehovah witnesses and others do.
- Other lessons on Bible805 (on the Trinity, Why We Can Trust the Bible) go in to this more.

“I am the true vine” (John 15:1,5)

- ***“I am the true vine” (John 15:1, 5).*** The final metaphorical “I am” statement in the Gospel of John emphasizes the sustaining power of Christ. We are the branches, and He is the vine.
- Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it is joined in vital union with the vine, only those who are joined to Christ and receive their power from Him produce fruit in the Christian life.
- **Comments & Applications**
- After our salvation, Jesus doesn't leave us at the cross—he turns us around and sends us out to bear fruit of various kinds—

- In our lives—the fruit of the Spirit
- The fruit of praise to God and good works
- The fruit of souls
- We must remember, however, that ALL the various fruits mentioned are dependent upon us remaining closely joined to Jesus.

This “I am” has a warning that emphasizes the importance of staying united to Jesus

- John 15¹⁻³ “I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken. [application—God’s Word will have a pruning effect on our lives]
- ⁴ “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.
- ⁵⁻⁸ “I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

After these images of Jesus

- The book of Revelation gives us a final one (regardless of the details of when and how it will happen).
- Of Jesus as King of Kings, Lord of Lords, not only Judge, but Creator once again and this time of a new heaven and a new earth.
- When all things will be made new and the Paradise lost in Genesis is the Paradise restored in Revelation.
- And this time where God will walk with His people forever.

The article continues—

There are two more “I am” statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John

- These are not metaphors [as the earlier ones were, a metaphor is literary device **metaphor** states that one thing *is* another thing, but often not literally, e.g. Jesus was not a wooden door]
- It equates those two things not because they actually are the same, but for the sake of comparison or symbolism; rather, they are declarations of God’s name, as applied by Jesus to Himself. The first instance comes as Jesus responds to a complaint by the Pharisees. “I tell you the truth,” Jesus says, “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58). The verbs Jesus uses are in stark contrast with each other: Abraham *was*, but I *am*. There is no doubt that the Jews understood Jesus’ claim to be the eternal God incarnate, because they took up stones to kill Him (verse 59).
- A common critique of Jesus when presented as Savior and not just a good man, is that he never claimed to be God.
- The “I AM” statements and specifically THIS ONE show that He not only claimed to be God, but that his enemies knew exactly what He was saying.
- And if they didn’t believe He was who He said He was, they were justified in attempting to stone him, if he was only a human teacher claiming He was God.

The second instance of Jesus applying to Himself the name *I AM* comes in the Garden of Gethsemane.

- When the mob came to arrest Jesus, He asked them whom they sought. They said, "Jesus of Nazareth," and Jesus replied, "I am he" ([John 18:4–5](#)). Then something strange happened: "When Jesus said, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground" (verse 6).
- Perhaps explaining the mob's reaction is the fact that the word *he* has been provided by our English translators. Jesus simply said, "I am." Applying God's covenant name to Himself, Jesus demonstrated His power over His foes and showed that His surrender to them was entirely voluntary (see [John 10:17–18](#); [19:11](#)).
- From GotQuestions.org

After these images of Jesus

- The book of Revelation gives us a final one (regardless of the details of when and how it will happen)
- Of Jesus as King of Kings, Lord of Lords, not only Judge, but Creator once again and this time of a new heaven and a new earth.
- Where all things will be made new, and the Paradise lost in Genesis is the Paradise restored in Revelation.
- And this time where God will walk with his people forever in a new story, where as C.S. Lewis puts it--

For us this the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they [the characters of Narnia and for us] all lived happily ever after.

. . . Them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

— C.S. Lewis, [The Last Battle](#)

QUESTIONS for the Book of John and the Revelation of Jesus, the end that is a beginning

Note: this set of questions focuses on the 7 I Ams of Christ

Questions & Discussion on Jesus as the Door

- How do you answer people who think Christianity is very narrow for how it claims to be the only way to God?
- In thinking about Jesus as a “door” that protects, how does Jesus protect you from fears and dangers?

Questions and Discussion on Jesus as the Bread of Life

- In practical ways, how is He the Bread of Life for us today? God’s Word is often referred to as food, when we feed our hearts and minds on it, we are nourished and filled with Him.
- How often and in what ways should we take in God’s Word if we want to be properly fed by it?

Questions & Discussion on Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life

- What does it mean to you that we do not need to fear death?
- How does Jesus help us to live a full life now? What is a distortion of the teaching and how can we help ourselves and others understand the proper meaning of it?

Questions & Discussion on Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life

- How do you answer people who think Christianity is very narrow for how it claims to be the only way to God?
- If Jesus is the Truth, how should we live as His disciples to reflect the truth?—
- Give a specific example of what might be socially acceptable in the area of telling the Truth but isn’t for you as a Christian.

Questions & Discussion on Jesus as the true vine

- What does it mean to you in your growth as a Christian, that Jesus is the “true vine?”
- In this passage, Jesus also talks about “cutting off” the branches that don’t bear fruit and “pruning” those who do—what is He talking about here?

Questions & Discussion on Jesus as the Light of the World

- What are some dark areas in your life that Jesus needs to give you light in? They can be habits you want to conquer, questions, or confusion you have.
- How can you find out how Jesus’ words in the Bible can answer your problems?

Questions & Discussion on Jesus as the Good Shepherd

- How does Jesus being a “good Shepherd” influence your life? Consider that a shepherd also sometimes has to use a “rod and a staff” to get the sheep in line.
- How can we be good shepherds (following the example of Jesus) to people in our lives?