

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (PART 2)

Study 1

THE LORD'S SAYINGS - ABOUT HIMSELF

Read John Chapter 10

In two studies we are going to look at some of the sayings recorded by John, many of which appear only in his Gospel. We noticed in our first lesson of this series that the Lord Jesus is the **"Word of God"**. This means that all the thoughts and truths of God are expressed in the Lord Jesus. If God is going to be made known to us, then it will be through Jesus as man. We have already seen that through His works - His miracles and signs - something of God's power was revealed. He could reply to Philip as he asked to be shown the Father, **"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."** (14: 11) Thus Jesus appealed to men's faith through the things that He did.

In the WORDS of the Lord Jesus, we find much that reveals the character of God. Our Lord spoke of many subjects during His life among men, and many of these were uttered with one purpose in view - to teach us that which God wants us to know. It was said of Him by one of those sent to arrest Him, **"No man ever spoke like this man."** (7: 46) People were amazed at the power and importance of His words. Sometimes they listened to His words and believed. It is interesting to look through the gospel and note the reactions of the people to the things Christ said.

In this lesson we are going to look very simply at some of those things Jesus said about Himself. It is important to notice what He said about His own person and work. These are amazing claims, yet never do they sound boastful or arrogant. If anyone else spoke in such a way about themselves, as Jesus did, we would perhaps feel that they were grossly exaggerated. But the words of the Lord Jesus about Himself have power and attraction. There are seven great **"I AM"** sayings which some have described as WORD SIGNS. These unfold to us much of the character and work of the Lord Jesus as God. We can merely touch on each of them in this lesson. Look at them carefully, especially in the context in which they occur.

1. **"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE."** (6: 35)

The subject of this verse is food. The Lord Jesus had fed at least 5,000 hungry people with five loaves and two fish. But was this the only food that the people needed? Notice that the Lord Jesus speaks of a deeper hunger than physical hunger. He could speak of Himself as the **"true bread from Heaven."** (verse 32) He was the **"bread of God"** which came down from Heaven to give life to the world. (6: 33) There is a hunger which is not satisfied with bread or material things; an emptiness in our lives caused by sin. We are restless and dissatisfied. But by believing in the Lord Jesus and coming to Him in faith, we find complete

satisfaction. Our hungry souls are satisfied, for He is the Bread of Life.

2. **"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."** (8: 12)

The Lord Jesus had just forgiven a sinful woman. Her life and the lives of her accusers were dark because of sin. It is obvious from the context that the Pharisees were not fit to lead the people into God's ways. They were blind leaders of the blind. We have similar leaders today. To follow Jesus was to have **the light of life**. In this present dark and sinful world where many are lost in sin, you need to know the Lord Jesus personally, as the Light of the World.

3. **"I AM THE DOOR."** (10: 9)

Notice very carefully the context of this **"I AM"**. Chapter 9 tells of a man put out of the Synagogue by the Pharisees who were supposed to be shepherds of the flock. The Lord Jesus is the door into the salvation and security of God. We find this security and satisfaction as we enter into God's blessings through the Lord Jesus as the Door.

4. **"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD."** (10: 11)

This is the central saying of the seven and in some ways the one upon which all the others depend. It reminds us of the sacrifice of the Cross because **"the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep"**. He is ready to die to prove His love and care for His sheep. Again you need to study this chapter carefully to appreciate the context in which this was spoken. We need the shepherd - care of the Lord Jesus every day of our lives.

5. **"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE."** (11: 25)

These words were spoken in circumstances of sadness and deep sorrow because a loved one had died. There is no experience so hopeless as that in which we feel the tragedy of death. Without Christ there is no hope beyond this life. To the family at Bethany He brought undreamed of hope and gladness because He proved His power to overcome death. He IS the resurrection: Jesus has conquered death, has risen and is alive for evermore. He is the Life: He gives life to us which is eternal when we commit our lives to Him. No Christian need fear death!

6. **"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE."** (14: 6)

These are great words spoken by the Lord Jesus as He told His disciples that He was going back to Heaven. To those who need assurance about life, the uncertain future, and their eternal destiny, the Lord Jesus reveals Himself in this triple character. He offers reality as the problems and perplexities of life are encountered.

7. **"I AM THE TRUE VINE."** (15: 1)

As Jesus talked with His disciples, He showed them that they were to serve Him. Every true servant of His was like a branch in a vine. He was the Vine, they were the branches. The evidence that the branch was truly in the vine, was seen in the fruit that it bore. Every Christian abiding in the Vine should bear fruit for the Master. Read

the context of this “**I AM**” carefully. Remember, you can become a fruitful ‘branch’ by dwelling in the Vine. Keep near to Christ in your service for Him.

Of the many sayings of the Lord Jesus, these we have considered are vitally important to all who desire to know Him and enjoy Him in true Christian living.

Study 2

THE LORD’S SAYINGS - TO OTHERS



John 4: 1-45

The way in which the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself was very important to His mission. He had much to say to the people among whom He lived. Many of them were baffled because they knew Jesus as the carpenter’s son and yet they heard such profound words from Him. Nicodemus paid Jesus the compliment of describing Him as “**a teacher come from God**”. (3: 2) The woman at the well in our reading acknowledged Him as a prophet when His words challenged her sinful life. (4: 19) He told, simply, the nature of His mission, yet the power of His words mystified the people.

Look at three verses from the gospel which give us an insight into His message to the world.

1. Its ORIGIN.

Notice two statements that Jesus made: “**He who sent Me is true and I speak to the world those things which I have heard from Him**” (8: 26); “**I speak what I have seen with My Father.**” (8: 38)

John stresses the fact many times that Jesus came into the world from God, His Father. Thus it is clear that the message He brought and the words that He spoke were from God Himself. We shall see how the Jews reacted to this. So there is tremendous importance today, for us, in all these recorded sayings. Clearly God is speaking through His Son.

2. Its CHARACTER.

There is one verse among many which reveals something of the vital character of the words of Jesus. “**The words that I speak to you, are spirit and they are life.**” (6: 63) This is interesting when we see it in the context of Jesus as the Bread of Life. Compared with the manna eaten in the wilderness, which only sustained a temporary existence, the Bread of Life supplies that which is Eternal. Think how powerful were the sayings of Christ. They were not merely religious ideas, which would become obsolete or ineffective. They are living, vital words, able to impart life to us today.

3. Its POWER.

Consider now the possibilities in the message of the Lord Jesus Christ. “**He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment but has passed from death into life.**” (5: 24) The value of any message is seen in the result which it produces. This is a powerful verse. Surrounded by crowds throughout His earthly life, countless people would hear what He had to say. Yet who were those most affected by His sayings? We find the answer clearly in these words. Only those who **HEARD** and **BELIEVED** found **EVERLASTING LIFE**, and a significant transformation took place in their lives. Notice the importance of the word “**HAS**”. The Lord Jesus offered present enjoyment of everlasting

life, as a personal and permanent possession. Pause for a moment and ask yourself if you have believed in the words of Jesus. Can you say that you possess everlasting life? You need to know the power that His word brings, not only in salvation, but in every area of your Christian experience.

Having considered these three Scriptures, let us look at the **APPEAL** of the Sayings of Jesus as He spoke to the people.

He spoke the **TRUTH**. Look at **chapter 8: 40**. The Lord Jesus could challenge the Jews who pursued Him and sought to kill Him, by declaring “**a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God.**” In a world familiar with lies, the Lord Jesus came speaking truth, for He **WAS** the **TRUTH**. (John 14: 6) Look at the majesty of **8: 46**, “**Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?**” We are used to men who tell us lies in their efforts to win our support and confidence. Governments are too often built upon false promises, given by men who are strangers to the truth. How good to build our lives on the true sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again notice that the words of the Lord Jesus **TESTED** the quality of the lives of others. You will find this illustrated in **6: 59-71**. Some would-be disciples listened to His claims but found them too hard to accept in practice. There were those who having gone so far, turned away and went back. It must have hurt Jesus very much to watch their desertion. Yet it is inevitable that at some point or other, the sins of half-heartedness, pride, selfishness and greed, will be challenged by the purity of the demands of Christ’s words. Listen to Peter’s declaration, “**Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**” (verse 68) As you are studying you are listening to many of the words spoken by Jesus. Do they test and examine your life? Are you willing to obey all that He asks you to do and be for Him?

Let us end our lesson with considering the **TRAGEDY** of refusing to accept the words of the Lord Jesus. The Lord made it so very clear as he spoke to people, that He demanded an answer, not only from their lips but also from their lives. Look at **12: 46-50**. The **PUBLIC MINISTRY** of the Lord Jesus recorded by John ends here. It seems as if He is throwing down the gauntlet and challenging the people to answer Him. Judgment must fall upon those who reject Him. The vital point about this judgment is that the very words that were spoken, with the intention of bringing salvation and blessing to the people, will provide the basis upon which they will be judged, (verse 48). Remember that Jesus was never guilty of wasting His words. Every one of them mattered!

So He spoke to the people. Today these same words challenge us. We must listen and obey if we are to have God’s blessing upon our lives.

Study 3

JESUS AND THE JEWS - CONTEXT



John chapters 6 & 7

One of the most interesting features of John’s Gospel is the picture he paints of the dealings of Jesus with the Jews.

The section dealing with His public ministry - **1: 19 to 12: 50** - gives evidence of the way He presented Himself to the nation and its leaders, and the kind of response it evoked.

The Lord Jesus was born into the Jewish race. Mary and Joseph were Israelites in every sense of the word. They came of the Royal line, the tribe of Judah. Thus, when Jesus was to be born, they went up to Bethlehem in Judah, their native city. This is why Paul in **Romans 1: 3** says that Jesus was **“born of the seed of David according to the flesh.”** John presents to us, in a very definite way, the involvement of the Lord Jesus with the Jewish leaders and their eventual rejection of Him and the message that He brought.

Look first of all at **1: 11**. After saying that the world into which Jesus entered did not know Him, John states, **“He came to His own and His own (people) did not receive Him.”** This tells us two things. Firstly, that the Lord Jesus was interested in appealing to His own people, the Jews. Of course, he was their promised Messiah and in this way He was to present Himself to them. Yet this verse tells us something else. It tells us that His own nation were blind to His true mission and they did not receive Him. John recounts a sad story of rejection which ends in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will now look at some of the CONTACTS that Jesus made with the Jews and the results which followed. It will become obvious to you that they frequently misunderstood Him.

1. **WHERE HE CAME FROM.** You will notice that the Lord Jesus said many times that He **“was sent”** or He **“came into the world.”** Study these passages carefully for they make clear to us that He was the Son of God. In **6: 41-43** we find the Jews complaining because He said that He came down from Heaven. **“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says ‘I have come down from Heaven’?”** Possibly this is where the crux of the matter of Jewish rejection lay. They could not accept that He was more than a man. We shall study this more fully when we look at the conflict that ensued.

2. **WHAT HE WAS DOING.** If you look at **6: 52** you will notice the kind of questions that arose concerning the work of the Lord Jesus. He had said that if men eat of the Bread which came down from Heaven they would live for ever. This Bread was His flesh, which He would give for the life of the world. Immediately, the Jews were baffled and questioned the intentions of Jesus. It is obvious that the Jews looked at everything in natural terms. The dimension of which the Lord Jesus spoke related to spiritual things. Thus even Nicodemus was mystified when Jesus spoke of his need to be **“born again.”** If you read **John 3: 1-11** you will understand this.

3. **WHAT HE TAUGHT.** The Jews could never come to terms with the teaching of Jesus because they could not fit Him into any religious category. The Rabbis had their schools of thought where all would-be teachers were taught. **“How does this man know letters never having studied?” (7: 15),** said the Jews, expressing their suspicion. Knowing that He had never been taught in their schools, they even went as far as to say that He was demon possessed. They would not listen to His words. Notice His reply in **7: 16-17**. His teaching was from Heaven and to accept it was to KNOW that it was from God.

4. **WHERE HE WAS GOING.** The Lord Jesus not only told the Jews from whence He came, but He also told them where He was going. This completely puzzled them.

Chapter 7: 33-36 is interesting in this connection. He told them that He was only with them for a little while, then He would go where they could not find Him. In **verse 35** they express their doubts, wondering if He would join the Jews of the Dispersion: those who were scattered among the Gentiles. Again it is evident that they had no clear idea of the mission of Jesus. He came from God and He went to God.

You need to carefully read those passages in John which deal with these things. Perhaps you may be tempted to think that the Lord Jesus deliberately sought to mislead the leaders and gave them no chance to accept Him. This is not true. There were those Jews who did believe in Him. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were among those who, in a time of crisis, demonstrated their belief in Him. Many of the Jewish people believed but were afraid to confess their faith to others. Even among the chief rulers, many believed on Him. Yet because of the danger of being cast out of the Synagogue they kept their secret. How sad then, that so many others were blind and prejudiced against Him.

We can end our study on the thought of Jewish unbelief. **Chapter 12: 37-50** is important in this connection. Read it carefully as you finish this lesson. The Lord Jesus came to His own people as light from God into their sin-darkened lives. But instead of believing, they became hardened. He met only blinded eyes and unresponsive hearts. Sadly, He had to turn away from them. John's gospel tells the story which illustrated the saying that light received brings greater light; light refused produces deeper darkness. Here is a lesson that we all need to learn as we are faced with the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Study 4

JESUS AND THE JEWS - CONFLICT

Read John chapters 7 & 8

The sad result of Jewish unbelief towards the Lord Jesus was seen in their growing hostility to all His claims. Each gospel gives a detailed account of the crucifixion and each has its own particular approach to the events that surrounded the Cross. But John is unique in his presentation of the personal hostility of the Jews towards Christ at this time. It is fascinating to trace the build-up of violence and hatred which eventually led to the cry, **“Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” (19: 15)**

In order to communicate something of the true meaning of Calvary to others, you need to study carefully the awful sequence of events leading up to the cross, as depicted in the Gospel of John. John shows quite emphatically that the Cross was no accident. Take a concordance and trace each time John speaks of either **“the hour”** or **“His hour”**. **2: 4** is the first mention **“My hour has not yet come.”** If you study carefully each mention, you will learn that the Lord Jesus was working to a timetable. The crucifixion was not merely a miscarriage of justice. The cross was always before Him, and He knew all that it involved and would accomplish. His deity shines out in His unswerving purpose to give His life as a sacrifice for sin. No one could take His life until **“His hour”** came.

Look at **7: 30**. **“Then they sought to take Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.”** So bitter was Jewish hatred towards Him, that

early in His public ministry they would have destroyed Him. Yet the last word was His, for no man could take His life from Him. **(10: 18)** In God's calendar, the Cross was not an unexpected crisis. It was the FOCAL POINT in God's great work of salvation.

The 'conflict' really commenced with the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda, on the Sabbath day. **(Chapter 5)** Immediately there was a controversy because He had cut across their traditions, and they sought to slay Him. It is most significant that at the beginning of John's record, Jesus goes into the Temple and casts out the moneychangers. **(John 2: 13-22)** He made it very clear that much of the religious profession of the day was just an empty sham. He exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and they could not forgive Him for this.

Yet there was a deeper reason for their hostility, which eventually became the main reason for crucifying Jesus. Look at **5: 17-18**. The Lord Jesus speaks of His Father working, and instantly there is a reaction. Not only had He broken the Sabbath, but He claimed that God was His Father, **"making Himself equal with God."** Here was the heart of the matter as far as the Jews were concerned. When the Lord Jesus asked them for which of His works they were wanting to stone Him, they had their answer ready. **"For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, because You, being a man, make Yourself God"**. **(10: 33)** Look through the chapters and notice each occasion on which the hatred of the Jews rose to such a pitch, that they tried to rid themselves of Him. They could not face His claims to be the Son of God, the Messiah.

Another reason for the increasing hostility of the Jews to Jesus was their fear of the impact that His ministry was having on the people. So great was the pressure on the Pharisees, that they panicked. They said among themselves, **"You see that you are accomplishing nothing! Look, the world has gone after Him"**. **(12: 19)** The reality and power of His words, His sympathy and compassion, were a startling contrast to the hollow professions of the Scribes and Pharisees. Each miracle and act brought an increasing response of faith from the people. Fear of His popularity certainly held back the rulers from arresting Jesus and putting Him to death. John presents to us the conflict between the emptiness and powerlessness of a dead religion and the living power of the Christ, the Son of God. It was eventually the envy and hatred of his acceptance by the people that strengthened their desire to get rid of Christ.

A further feature of the conflict between the Jews and Jesus which we must notice, is the growing division between them. John seems to present to us a Christ who was the great DIVIDER of men. Notice carefully in your study, how often it is said that there was a division because of Him. Look at **7: 40-43**. They were discussing the matter of Christ's identity. The Prophet? The Christ? No unanimous conclusion was reached; division continued. See **9: 16** and **10: 19-21**. It seems that each time the Jews, the Pharisees and rulers, were faced with Him, He demanded a decision. They could not be neutral, they were either for or against Him.

Let us conclude our lesson on this note. The Lord Jesus is still the centre of conflict. In our lives we cannot be neutral, for either we ACCEPT or we REJECT Him. What a blessing and

joy it brings, when we can respond whole heartedly to all He demands. He is worthy to be Lord of all that we have and are.

Questions

Study 1

The Lord's Sayings - About Himself

1. In what way did Jesus reveal God to men?
2. How did people react to the Lord Jesus? Give one example from John's gospel.
3. What difference will the Lord Jesus make to our lives if we truly know Him as the Light of the World?
4. Why is **"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD"** in some ways the most important of the seven **"I AM"** sayings?
5. Taking three of the **"I AM"** sayings, state what you consider each one to mean.

Study 2

The Lord's Sayings - To Others

1. Why did the words of Jesus baffle many of those who heard Him?
2. What is so important about the ORIGIN of the sayings of Jesus to the people?
3. Why is the word **"HAS"** in **John 5: 24** so important?
4. Give an example from John's gospel of the way in which the words of the Lord Jesus TESTED or examined the lives of those who heard Him.
5. Upon what basis will the Lord Jesus judge those who hear His words?

Study 3

Jesus and the Jews - Context

1. In what way was the Lord Jesus, as a man, involved in the Jewish race?
2. Why did the Jews find it difficult to accept the fact that the Lord Jesus came down from Heaven?
3. What line of reasoning did the Jews follow when they rejected the teaching of Jesus?
4. Why were many of the people who believed, afraid to confess their faith to others?
5. What happens when the light that Jesus offers is refused?

Study 4

Jesus and the Jews - Conflict

1. Say in your own words why the Cross was essential for man's salvation?
2. How do we know that the life and death of the Lord Jesus was all part of a pre-arranged, Divine plan?
3. Give the two main reasons for the commencement of the hostility of the Jews towards Jesus.
4. Why do you think that the Pharisees and rulers were so afraid of the impact of the work of the Lord Jesus upon the people?
5. In what way is the Lord Jesus today **STILL** the 'Divider' of men and women?