

Good afternoon, everyone.

*Why* did people want to kill Jesus Christ? Why was He hated by so many in His day? Many people thronged to His teaching. He often had large crowds searching Him out to listen to Him. But at the same time, some were regularly plotting to arrest Him, to stone Him, to have Him executed.

But *why*? Reading through the Gospels, we see several different motivations and reasons for the religious establishment wanting to kill Jesus. In at least one case they wanted to kill Him for *healing* a man on the Sabbath, which in their view was *breaking* the Sabbath.

It's evident that sometimes their motivation was pure jealousy—they hated the attention He received from His teaching and His miracles and the following He had, and they wanted to kill Him for it. It's also plain that they wanted to maintain their positions—they had a good thing going, and Jesus and His teaching threatened to upset that, so they trumped up charges for the Romans and had Him crucified as a threat to the Romans.

But in the Gospels we find one reason for their wanting to kill Jesus that is mentioned more often than the others. What was that reason? Let's look at several passages from John and see the reason these passages have in common as to why they hated and wanted to kill Jesus of Nazareth.

#### **John 5:15-18**

**15** The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

**16** For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

**17** But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

**18** Therefore *the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.*

#### **John 7:28-30**

**28** Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, "You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.

**29** "But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me."

**30** *Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.*

#### **John 8:56-59**

**56** "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

**57** Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

**58** Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

**59** *Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

**John 10:30-33****30 “I and My Father are one.”****31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.****32 Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?”****33 The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, *but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.*”**

So we see from these verses that they wanted to kill Jesus because of who and what He said He was—who and what He claimed to be. So *who*, really, was Jesus? *What* was He? Who and what did His followers think and believe He was? Where did He really come from? We can't really understand a lot of what's in the Gospels if we don't understand the answer to these questions.

Most people see Jesus as a rabbi, a wise man, a great teacher who happened to found what became a great religion. But there's much more to the story than that. It's what lies at the heart of the true Christian faith. And if we understand that, it explains everything He did and said.

So today we will talk about ***The True Identity of Jesus Christ***. Again, this is at the heart of the true Christian faith. It involves the understanding that Jesus was not simply an extraordinary rabbi, a great teacher, a great human being. It involves understanding who and what Jesus of Nazareth really was. So let's go through and see what the Gospels, and the rest of the Bible for that matter, tell us about who and what He was—the true identity of Jesus Christ.

As we saw from those introductory scriptures, Jesus made statements about Himself that made the religious authorities of the day want to kill Him. He made many statements about Himself and Father—so many that we don't have time to cover all of them today. But what we will cover today is the more obvious statements, both from Himself and from the apostles, as to His true identity.

Let's begin with a section that I skipped over in the last class on the Gospels, and that's John 1. As I said in the last class, this is a big subject, too big to cover in one class after services, so I'd like to cover that now. Let's begin in **John 1:1**. Here we actually go back to the very beginning, even before the beginning that we read about in Genesis 1.

**John 1:1-18**

**1 In the beginning** [so this is a direct reference back to Genesis 1] **was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God.**

So this Being called “the Word” was both *with* God and *was* God. This is difficult for some people to understand, but it really boils down to how you define *God*. If you define God as one Being, you find yourself twisted into theological pretzels like those that came up with the idea of the Trinity.

But if you define God as a *kind* of Being—and we know that *Elohim*, the word used for God back in Genesis 1 and dozens of other places is a *plural* word including more than one—then you don’t have a problem and Scripture is consistent. We know when we put all the scriptures together that God is a *family*, currently consisting of the Father and Son as we see throughout the Gospels. We have a whole booklet titled *Who Is God?*, as well as the Trinity booklet, that explain all of this in great detail if you want to learn more.

Back to John 1, it says, “*In the beginning was the Word...*” This Greek word here translated “Word” is “logos.” This is an unusual word with no direct English equivalent. It can mean “speech” or “report” or, as the meaning here, “revelatory agent.” This is why we sometimes refer to it as meaning “spokesman.” This “Word” is the being who comes to reveal God, And as we know, Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father. But He also revealed something else about God that we’ll see in just a minute.

**2 He** [so this is talking about a personal Being] **was in the beginning with God** [with God the Father].

**3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.** I mentioned a minute ago that one of the meanings of “Word” is that it is a *revelatory agent*, someone who *reveals* God, and that Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father. But we see something else here very important about how the one who became Jesus Christ revealed God. And that is *He revealed God through the creation*. As a revelatory agent, *He revealed God through the creation*. Does this bring any scriptures to mind?

How about **Romans 1:20**? I’ll read this from the New Living Translation: “**From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.**”

This tells us that one of the most obvious ways of knowing God and knowing that God exists is by the creation. This tells us that the creation reveals “**his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature.**” In other words, we can tell what a great and awesome and perfect and powerful God we have by looking at what He has made. So this tells us that the Word, the one who reveals, the one who became Jesus Christ, **revealed the greatness and power and glory** and grandeur of Almighty God through the magnificent creation that we see all around us. So yes, Jesus Christ revealed the Father in His teaching while on earth, but He also revealed a great deal about God by His creative work in creating all things.

Let’s look at a few more scriptures that confirm who this Being was and that it was indeed Jesus Christ who was and is the Creator. One thing that will help you remember these is that they are all chapter 1. We’ve been reading from John 1 here, so let’s look at two other chapter 1s—Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1. We’ll start with **Colossians 1:16**. I won’t read the context, but it is clearly talking about Jesus Christ. And it tells us:

**Colossians 1:16-18**

**16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, . . .**

“heaven” here doesn’t mean the traditional idea of heaven, but rather it’s talking about the non-solid sky extending out all through the universe—the night sky filled with planets and stars and galaxies, and not just the physical planet earth that we live on.

Paul goes on to say that He created all things that are **visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers**. This is saying that Jesus created not just the visible, physical universe of the earth and sky and clouds and planets and sun, moon and stars and galaxies, but He also created what we might call “the invisible universe” as well—what we would call *the spirit world*. And these terms that he uses here, **“dominions or principalities or powers,”** Paul uses elsewhere to refer to different powers or kinds or ranks of beings in the angelic world. You might write down Colossians 2:10 and 15 and Ephesians 1:21 that show this. He’s talking about the archangels, the cherubim, the seraphim and other kinds of spirit beings.

Continuing here in Colossians 1:16, Paul says: **All things were created through Him and for Him**. So again, Jesus Christ is the one who created all of this—all things in the physical universe and the spirit universe, referring to the angelic or spirit realm.

**17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**

In other words, He existed before everything else began—which is exactly what we read earlier in John 1:1—“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” That was the real beginning, the beginning before the one we read about in Genesis 1. If He created all of these things, then He obviously had to exist before these things were created.

**18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

So we see again here that this is clearly talking about Jesus Christ—the head of the body that is His Church, and the firstborn from the dead through His resurrection from the dead.

Let’s also look briefly at **Hebrews 1:1-5**:

**Hebrews 1:1-5**

**1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,**

**2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son** [again, Jesus is the Word, the spokesman], **whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;**

So this again states plainly that “the worlds”—the universe, both physical and spirit—were made by the Son, Jesus Christ.

**3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person** [in other words, the Son is just like the Father], **and upholding all things by the word of His power** [so Jesus not only *created* the universe, He also “*upholds*” it or sustains it or “holds it together” as some other translations put it], **when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high** [so again, He *is* God and He is *with* God, at the right hand of the Father],

**4 having become so much better** than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

**5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again: “I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son”?**

This is quoting from Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14, both of which are prophecies of the Messiah and the Son of David.

So again we see clearly that God created all things through Jesus as the Creator, and that He is much greater than the angels, and that they have a family relationship as Father and Son within the God family.

So now let's go back and pick it up where we left off in **John 1 with verse 4**. John continues with the explanation of the Word who was with God and who was God, the One by whom "all things were made" as we read in verse 3 and have confirmed in these other passages. So, continuing in verse 4:

**4 In Him was life, . . .**

A few thoughts here. If He was the Creator, what was the most amazing aspect of His creation? Yes, He made the earth and seas and heavens and planets and stars and the universe, but what's the most amazing creation of all? That He took that raw material, a lump of dirt in the case of mankind, *and He gave it life*. Scientists, for all they know, have no idea how life begin. They've tried everything imaginable in labs for decades, but they can't create life. Only God can create life from non-living matter. So Jesus is not just the Creator of all things, He is also the Creator and giver of *life*.

And not just this physical life, but also eternal life, because as Jesus says three times in John 6, He can give *eternal life* to those who follow and obey Him:

**John 6:40**—**"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."**

**John 6:44**—**"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."**

**John 6:54**—**"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."**

So Jesus can give not just physical life, as we saw with Him as the Creator and also by the miracles He performed in raising people from the dead, He can also give the gift of *eternal life* to His faithful followers. So yes, **"in Him was life,"** and on multiple levels. And of course, He was the perfect, sinless life offered up as a sacrifice so that *we* might receive that gift of eternal life.

Continuing in **John 1, verse 4**:

**. . . and the life was the light of men.**

Life and light are two of the repeated themes of the Gospel of John. "Life" appears 39 times in John's Gospel, and "light" appears 16 times. That's a total of 55 times in only 21 chapters. Those are two whole sermon subjects just in themselves, but we don't have time for covering all that today. I'll just comment briefly that "light" is a synonym for truth—for God's truth, for God's way of life. Again, this is something that the Word, the Spokesman, came to reveal—the light of God's truth, God's plan, God's way of life, God's plan of salvation, Gods' light in everything.

**5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

This word "comprehend" isn't the best translation, I think. Some other versions translate this as "the darkness did not *overcome* the light" or "*overtake*" or "*overpower*" or "*extinguish*" the light. In other words, it's saying that the darkness John refers to here is *an active force opposing the light*. It is something very real and very powerful that tries to *overpower and extinguish* the light.

Was such a force at work against Jesus Christ? Yes, of course. He was still a baby when that force tried to kill Him by having Herod slaughter all the young boys in Bethlehem. His parents had to be divinely warned in a dream to flee to Egypt lest He be killed. What force was behind the attempts to stone and kill Him that we read about in the Gospels? What force finally possessed Judas Iscariot and led Judas to betray Jesus and have Him crucified?

Yes, there was indeed a powerful force of darkness at work all of that time trying to extinguish and overpower the light. How many of you saw the original *Star Wars* movie? A number of the

concepts in that movie were taken right from the Bible. There was “the force”—a kind of analogy to God’s Spirit. But there was also the opposite force—what the movie called “the dark side.” And there is a very real dark side that opposed the light in Christ’s day, and it still opposes the light 2,000 years later in our day. That dark side deceives the whole world. It’s the dark side of Satan and his demons, and it’s still around. But that dark side cannot conquer the light that Jesus Christ has brought and reveals.

Continuing in **John 1, verse 6:**

**6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.**

This is not the John who is the writer of this Gospel, but John the Baptist.

**7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.**

That was the purpose for John the Baptist’s life, that he would bear witness of Jesus Christ. Remember what he said of Jesus: “Behold! The Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.” John was also the bridegroom, going ahead of the groom and shouting that the groom is coming. He was the voice crying in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord” as foretold in Isaiah 40.

John was a young man when he was put to death, probably 31 or 32 years of age when he was killed. But he fulfilled the purpose for which he had been miraculously brought into the world and foretold in Bible prophecy.

**8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.**

So John was not the Messiah or the Light come from God, but the one who would help prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

**9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.**

One point to consider here is that yes, Jesus will give light to every person, but it doesn’t say *when* or that all will receive that light in this age of man. This is not the only day of salvation, in other words. Even many who saw and heard Jesus teach in that day didn’t necessarily have their opportunity for salvation, because they still lived in a world blinded by Satan the devil. We live in a world of darkness, and that darkness will not be removed until Jesus returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and Satan is bound and put away so he can no longer deceive the nations. Only then, and followed by the period of the White Throne Judgment, will all of mankind finally have the opportunity to see that light.

**10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.**

This is switching back to talking about Jesus the Messiah again. He is the one who created the world, and He as God came into the world that He had created, but the world didn’t recognize Him.

**11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.**

This is true on several levels. It’s talking specifically about the Jewish people of His day who didn’t recognize or receive Him, and who in fact plotted to kill Him. But it’s also true of His own immediate family, as His own half-brothers didn’t believe in Him—though at least two of them, James and Jude, or Jacob and Judah as their Jewish names would’ve been—later believed and wrote two of the epistles of the Bible. And on a third level, the entire human race as a whole has not received Him either. So this applies on multiple levels. This is why God’s calling is so important. We don’t choose, Him; He chooses us.

**12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**

Let’s look at two other verses here:

**Romans 8:29**—For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be *the firstborn among many brethren*.

**Hebrews 2:10**—For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, *in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*.

He is, as we see in these two passages, the one who makes it possible for many to be given the opportunity to become a member of the family of God—to be the children of God, God’s offspring.

Continuing back in **John 1, verse 13**:

**13 who were born, . . .**

And this is the Greek word *gennaō*, which depending on the context can refer to any part of the process from begetting to birth. We believe that we are now begotten by God’s Spirit to be part of His family, but we are not yet fully born into that family, which will happen at the resurrection of the dead when we will be the immortal, glorified children of God.

. . . **not of blood** [not of the physical birth process, in other words], **nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man** [not by a human process or human decision, John is saying], **but of God**.

And of course, we’re familiar with two passages where Jesus Himself addresses this and says:

**John 6:44**—No one can come to Me *unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day*.

**John 6:65**—And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me *unless it has been granted to him by My Father*.”

So *God* makes the decision and does the calling, not us.

Continuing on in **John 1, verse 14**:

**14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, . . .**

In talking about the backgrounds to the Gospels I mentioned that one of the purposes of John’s Gospel was to combat Gnosticism. This was a system of belief that taught that anything that was physical was evil because it was created by an evil power, and anything that is spiritual was good because it was created by God. We see this reflected several times in John’s writings, which is why the general belief is that these were written near the end of the first century, several decades after the other Gospels, when Gnostic beliefs were rampant in that part of the world.

In Gnostic belief, Jesus wasn’t really human, He was as spirit or phantom or apparition only appearing to be flesh—because again, physical flesh was evil. This was a powerful movement that heavily influenced the false Christianity of early centuries too. This is where things like the celibacy of the priesthood of a particular denomination came about—because sex, being physical and pleasurable, was evil. This is where the monastic movement arose, where groups of men—or women in the case of nuns—would go off in the desert or some other place cut off from the world and basically live on bread and beans and water, denying the self of food and drink and houses that were pleasurable. This was a powerful movement near the end of the first century and going forward from there.

So in combating this, John emphasizes that Jesus was God who came in the flesh. The Gnostics would deny that Jesus was the Messiah because He was physical. So John spends a lot of time countering that in his Gospel and also in his letters. John talks a lot about Jesus’ humanity. He shows that Jesus got tired—He was a human being who got tired. He says Jesus got thirsty. He says that Jesus felt emotions. He says Jesus was troubled. He says that Jesus broke down in tears. He says that Jesus truly loved people. And he says that he and others were eyewitnesses to these

things, and that they physically touched Him and knew He was a physical being. All of these things were very much opposed to what Gnosticism taught.

**. . . and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, . . .**

This is probably a reference to the transfiguration on the mountain, when Peter and James and John saw Him transfigured and glorified before them. It's likely also a reference back to the *shekinah* glory, the "glory of the Lord" that filled the temple and tabernacle on some occasions. It then says He was **. . . full of grace and truth.**

This isn't saying that grace and truth didn't exist earlier, because as the God of the Old Testament He clearly repeatedly exhibited grace and truth. What this is saying is that this is what summed up Jesus Christ—He was full of grace, God's undeserved favor or special gift, and truth. He was the Light who brought truth to the world.

**15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"**

Again, this is referring to the mission of John the Baptist, who came before Jesus. And again he's saying that Jesus pre-existed before John the Baptist was even born.

**16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.**

This is worded pretty awkwardly in English. I think the meaning is probably better expressed something like this in the New Living Translation:

**We have all benefited from the rich blessings he brought to us—one gracious blessing after another.**

Grace is basically referring to the goodness of God, something that He grants to someone which is not earned. It can refer to undeserved pardon, as we have said before, but it's much broader than that. It's anything and everything that God does that is good and kind and merciful toward us that we don't deserve. God loves us, but it's not something we earned or deserved. God wants to give us eternal life in His family, but it's not something we earned or deserved. God blesses us, but it's not something we earned or deserved. It's all His grace and His blessings and goodness toward us.

**17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

Again, this isn't saying that grace and truth didn't exist earlier. I think what he's doing here is pointing out a contrast—that the Jews had the law that was given through Moses, but they had corrupted it and twisted it and lost sight of its true meaning and made it a burden. But Jesus came to restore the truth about God's law, its true spiritual purpose and intent and the great blessing that it was intended to be. We see this conflict throughout the Gospels, and particularly in the Sermon on the Mount.

I think that John is drawing that contrast here. And of course, Jesus was the original lawgiver to Moses, so it's absurd to argue that Jesus came to change or do away with the very same law that He Himself had given to Moses and the Israelites. Because people don't understand who Jesus Christ really was, they come up with cockamamie ideas like that that in fact blaspheme Jesus and who He was.

**18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**

Let's look at a few more scriptures here that help us understand this.

**John 5:37**—*And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.*



So Jesus plainly said of the Father that no one has directly seen Him or heard His voice. He said that He came to reveal the Father. So who did they see when they saw God in the Old Testament passages?

**Exodus 33:21-23**

**21 And the LORD said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.**

**22 “So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.**

**23 “Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”**

Moses only saw His back, but he clearly saw Him. In another case, the 70 elders of Israel ate with God and saw him. We read about that in **Exodus 24:9-11:**

**9 Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity.**

**11 But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.**

So what are we to make of this? What is John talking about?

The only way we can make sense of this is to understand that *no man had seen God the Father* at any time. What they saw in these passages, and at other times when God appeared to individuals, was the Word of God who was God and who later was born as Jesus of Nazareth. As the Word or Spokesman He declared the Father and taught about Him so we could understand and know Him. It is only through the Son that we know the Father is there and what He is like. As it says in

**John 1:18** of Jesus and the Father, “**The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**

Again, Jesus is the Word, the Spokesman, the revealing agent, revealing and declaring the Father.

In covering this part of John we’ve seen a lot of what John and some of the other apostles said, but what did Jesus Himself say about who He was? As we saw in the introduction, *He claimed to be God* and they wanted to kill Him for it. In our remaining time let’s look at some of these statements and understand what He was saying.

Jesus makes a very bold statement about who He was several times in the Gospel of John. But we need a little background to understand and grasp what He’s saying. I quoted one of these statements in the introduction, but let’s go back and take a deeper look at it. It’s found in **John 8:56-59**. Here Jesus is arguing with some of the Jews, and notice what He says and the reaction it gets:

**John 8:56-59**

**56 [Jesus said]: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”**

**57 Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”**

**58 Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, *before Abraham was, I AM.*”**

**59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.**

Let’s notice three key points here:

- Jesus claims to have existed before Abraham (who lived about 2,000 years earlier),

- Jesus uses the words, “I AM,”
- This prompts the Jews to try to stone Him. Make no mistake; they weren’t just picking up rocks to throw at Him, they were trying to stone Him to death.

Translated into English, what He says here sounds confusing. It’s not good English. But in the Aramaic or Hebrew language in which Jesus was speaking, He was saying something that immediately made people try to stone Him to death for blasphemy. So what’s going on here? Jesus was actually revealing Himself to be the actual One whom the Jews knew as God in the Old Testament. He was saying not only that He existed before Abraham, but that He was the same Being as the God whom Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worshipped.

To understand the background, we have to go back to the time when God is revealing Himself to Moses and telling Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. We read about this in

**Exodus 3:13-14:**

**13 Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”**

**14 And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

Moses asked this Being what His name was. God responded, “*I AM WHO I AM*,” and told Moses to tell the Israelites, “*I AM has sent me to you.*”

“*I AM*” is basically linked to the personal name for God in Hebrew, the name *YHWH*. It’s commonly shown in our English Bibles with small capital letters as LORD. It appears as “Jehovah” in some Bible versions, although most scholars would agree the actual pronunciation was more like *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word or name is impossible to translate precisely into English. Something close would be “The Eternal One,” “The One Who Always Exists” or “The One Who Was, Is and Always Will Be.” That’s why sometimes when we read “Lord” in the Old Testament, you’ll hear the speaker read that as “The Eternal.” That’s basically the meaning of the word there.

So again, what’s going on here in John’s Gospel when he writes about this? When Jesus said what He did, the Jews knew right away exactly what He meant. And they picked up rocks to stone Him to death for blasphemy.

Another passage that ties in with this is **Isaiah 42:8** where this same Being says, “**I am the LORD [YHWH], that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.**”

The Jews understood who Jesus claimed to be. He said He was the Being that the nation of Israel worshipped as the one true God. By Jesus claiming for Himself the name “*I AM*,” He was saying that *He was the God whom the Jews worshipped as YHWH*. This name was considered so holy that the Jews of His day wouldn’t even pronounce it. So when the Jews heard Jesus use that name for Himself, they wanted to kill Him for blasphemy—for claiming to be God.

But this wasn’t the only time this happened. It happened repeatedly, but the problem is that it’s nearly always obscured by the way the King James translators, and other following in their footsteps, have played with the translation. Let’s see this elsewhere in the Gospel of John.

**John 8:24**—**Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”**

**John 8:28**— Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

**John 13:19**— “Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am *He*.

**John 18:4**— Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Whom are you seeking?”

**5** They answered Him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am *He*.”

I think we understand that when we see italicized words in the Bible, that means that translators added those words to make the translation more clear. Usually that’s true, but not here. Here’ they added words that obscured the true meaning. If you take away the added words, here is what Jesus actually said in these passages:

**John 8:24**— Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.”

**John 8:28**— Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

**John 13:19**— “Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I AM.

**John 18:4**— Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, “Whom are you seeking?”

**5** They answered Him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I AM.”

In each of these cases—and there are more—Jesus was claiming to be God, *Yahweh*, the eternally existing one, the Being whom the Jews worshipped as their Creator. This is why they wanted to stone Him to death for blasphemy.

**So what was and is the true identity of Jesus Christ?** As we have seen today, He was and is:

- The Word—the Spokesman who was with God and was God.
- The Creator who made all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible.
- The head of the Body, His Church.
- The firstborn from the dead.
- The Son of God.

- The One in whom there is life.
- The Light sent from God.
- The firstborn among many brethren.
- God in the flesh.
- The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Israelites.
- The great I AM, the eternal self-existent one.

And all of these are only *part* of who and what He is and means for us. He is many other things, as we will see as we continue through the Gospels.

This is why His disciple Thomas exclaimed of Him when Jesus appeared to Him after His resurrection from the dead, **“My Lord and my God!”**