

THE USAGE OF "ἐγὼ εἰμι" IN THE  
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

by

Russell W. Betz

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Joan H. French



## PREFACE

This paper is the outgrowth of an interest in the reason for the soldiers falling to the ground when they came to arrest Jesus (John 18:1-8). The passage says that they fell when Jesus said, "ἐγὼ εἰμι ." Interest was raised as to the usage of this phrase, especially in the Gospel of John, to see if there is some logical and systematic way to understand this expression.

Since this paper is dealing with the phrase ἐγὼ εἰμι throughout the entire Gospel of John, there will not be detailed discussion of each specific verse. Rather, the verses will be considered in light of the usage of ἐγὼ εἰμι and its significance. Enough evidence will be given to show that the interpretation given in this paper is correct. The goal of this paper; therefore, is to discover how ἐγὼ εἰμι is used in John and what general guidelines of interpretation can be established.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### PART I. THE USAGES OF $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ WHICH ARE CLAIMS OF DEITY

#### Chapter

I.	IDENTIFICATION OF $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ WITH JEHOVAH . . . .	1
	Grammar and Usage of $\epsilon\gamma\omega$ and $\epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ Christ Identified as Jehovah	
II.	IDENTIFICATION AS DEITY WHEN USED WITH A PREDICATE. . . . .	7
	Ancient Usages Usages of Jehovah With a Predicate in the Old Testament Usages in John With a Predicate	
III.	IDENTIFICATION AS DEITY WHEN USED WITHOUT A PREDICATE. . . . .	20
	The Name of Jehovah in the Old Testament The Name of Christ in John	

### PART II. THE USAGES OF $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ WHICH ARE NOT CLAIMS OF DEITY

IV.	THE USAGES WITH JESUS SPEAKING . . . . .	38
	Jesus Using $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ With a Negative Jesus Using $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ As An Indication of Location	
V.	THE USAGES WITH OTHERS SPEAKING. . . . .	41
	John the Baptist Using $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ Pilate Using $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ The Blind Beggar Using $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$	
	CONCLUSION . . . . .	44
	APPENDIX . . . . .	46
	BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	49



## CHAPTER I

### IDENTIFICATION OF ἐγὼ εἰμι WITH JEHOVAH

#### Grammar and Usage of ἐγὼ and εἰμι

The two words under consideration here are common and freely used Greek words. The first is ἐγὼ. This is the first person singular form of the personal pronoun. It is the Greek word for I. 'Εγὼ generally is used with a verb and has the force of emphasis. A. T. Robertson writes that in conversation the personal pronoun in the nominative case was common. Also, that while ἐγὼ shows emphasis, that emphasis will vary according to the circumstances. At times it may completely vanish.<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis of ἐγὼ is often used to show antithesis or contrast.<sup>2</sup> An example of such contrast is found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. In this passage, Jesus repeatedly uses ἐγὼ and a verb to contrast what the scribes have taught and what He is now saying. "The Messiah

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<sup>1</sup>A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 677.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: American Book Company, n.d.) Corrected edition originally published by Harper & Brothers 1889, p. 167.



has come, and with all the authority of God He issues a summons to His people. The ἐγὼ alone validates His word."<sup>1</sup>

Ἐγὼ can also be used without a verb. In such cases it means I am and is equivalent to 'אָנִי or 'אָנִיָּה.<sup>2</sup>

The second of these words is εἰμι. This is the first person singular, indicative mood of the verb εἰμι. All verbs in Greek have personal endings which indicate the nominative. Εἰμι is properly a continuous tense, implying neither beginning nor end of existence.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the problem occurs when these two words occur together. The question must be raised as to why the emphatic ἐγὼ is used with εἰμι. By looking at the context and the author's style in the Gospel of John, it is hoped to find the solution to this problem.

#### Christ Identified as Jehovah

Christ is identified with Jehovah of the Old Testament in many places. This will be demonstrated here to

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<sup>1</sup>Ethelbert Stauffer, "ἐγὼ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (hereinafter referred to as John) (London: William Cloves and Sons, Limited, 1958), p. 283.



show at least the possibility that ἐγὼ εἰμι is a claim to deity by Christ. It is His declaration that He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

In Isaiah 40:3 the prophecy states, "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah." John the Baptist quotes this prophecy and says that it applies to Christ (Matt. 3:3). The person Isaiah saw in his vision was Jehovah (Isa. 6:3,5). Yet, Jesus refers to this incident and says that the person of the prophecy is the same that Isaiah saw in his vision (Jn. 12:38-41). Isaiah 44:6 reads, "Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last." Speaking to John, Christ says that He is the first and the last (Rev. 1:17; 22:13). The Psalmist ascribes to Jehovah the laying of the foundation of the earth and the forming of the heavens (Ps. 102:25). The author of Hebrews quotes this passage and ascribes it to Christ (Heb. 1:8,10). In another Psalm, Jehovah is said to have ascended on high, and led away captives (Ps. 68:18). Paul quoting this verse applies it to Christ (Eph. 4:8). These and other parallel passages show that Christ is identified as Jehovah.

In the Septuagint the word Jehovah is not used. Rather this Hebrew name for God is translated as κύριος. The fact that the term κύριος is applied to Christ over a thousand times in the New Testament is "a distinct and



extensive proof that Christ is Jehovah."<sup>1</sup> Chafer furthermore says, "It is justifiable procedure to treat the name Jehovah of the Old Testament as continued in its specific meaning into the New Testament by the name Lord."<sup>2</sup>

Louis Berkhof is more conservative in his approach to κύριος in the New Testament. He says that in the Septuagint κύριος is equivalent with Jehovah, a rendering of Adonai, or a translation of a "human honorific title applied to God." He says that in the New Testament when κύριος is applied to Christ it is a polite and respectful form of address (Mt. 8:2), an expression of ownership and authority (Mt. 21:3), or the highest connotation of authority, being equivalent to the name God (Mk. 12:36,37).<sup>3</sup> In either case, both men agree that at times κύριος identifies Christ as Jehovah.

Benjamin Warfield quotes Charles Briggs as saying that the three synoptic writers agree in thinking of Christ as Jehovah of the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> Alexander Patterson goes to the point of saying that all references to Jehovah are

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology (8 vols.; Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), I, 334.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), p. 315.

<sup>4</sup>Benjamin B. Warfield, Biblical and Theological Studies, ed. by Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1952), p. 103.



referring to Christ. "This is Jehovah, the name by which Christ was to be known to his people, and in the special relationships he held to them. Jehovah of the Old Testament was Christ."<sup>1</sup> To support this he says that Jehovah was often seen by men. Therefore, since no man has ever seen the Father, the one seen was Christ. Also, he points to the specific references linking Christ to Jehovah which have been mentioned previously in this paper.<sup>2</sup> Whether every mention of Jehovah is a reference to Christ is not the subject of this paper. The argument here is that quite frequently Christ is identified as the same person as Jehovah. Some have even taken the position that the two are equivalent. Therefore it is quite possible that in the "I am" passages of John, Jesus is declaring Himself to be Jehovah.

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Patterson, The Greater Life and Work of Christ (New York: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1896), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER II

### IDENTIFICATION AS DEITY WHEN USED

#### WITH A PREDICATE

##### Ancient Usages

The use of ἐγὼ εἰμι has had a religious connotation throughout the ages. Rudolf Bultmann classifies four distinct usages of the ἐγὼ εἰμι formula. The first is the "presentation formula." This, he says, is the reply to the question, "Who are you?" By using ἐγὼ εἰμι the speaker introduces himself. In the Orient it was used as a sacred formula. As examples he gives the Code of Hammurabi where the law giver introduces himself at the beginning of the law. He also cites Jehovah introducing the Ten Commandments as such an example (Ex. 20:2). Other examples of the presentation formula are found in Genesis 17:1; 28:13; and Revelation 1:17.

Bultmann's second usage is the "qualificatory formula." This formula answers the question, "What are you?" According to Bultmann it often follows a presentation formula and is followed by a prayer or hymn in the second person. An example of this is Isaiah 44:6, where Jehovah says that He is the first and the last.



Bultmann calls his third classification the "identification formula." Here the speaker identifies himself with another person or object. His example is the Egyptian god, Re, identifying himself as "I am he who arose as Chepre."

The fourth usage is called the "recognition formula." In this case the  $\epsilon\gamma\omega$  is the predicate and identifies the speaker as the one expected, asked for or spoken to. Bultmann says it is used as a revelation formula when the speaker reveals himself by  $\epsilon\gamma\omega \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  as the one for whom the people were waiting. His example of this formula is Deuteronomy 32:39 where Jehovah says, "I, even I, am he and there is no god with me."<sup>1</sup>

Adolf Deissmann mentions several instances where  $\epsilon\gamma\omega \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  was used in a claim to deity or in sacred usage. The best known of these and the clearest is from the inscription in honor of Isis from the island of Ios. Part of this inscription reads, " $\epsilon\gamma\omega \text{ Ἰσις εἰμι ἡ βασίλισσα πάσης χώρας}$ " (I am Isis, the queen of every land). Throughout the inscription the  $\epsilon\gamma\omega \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  formula is used.<sup>2</sup>

This sacred formula has also been found in a magical papyrus (P Lond 46 145ff). The reading in this

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, The Gospel of John, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches, ed. by G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 225-26.

<sup>2</sup>Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East, trans. by Lionel R. M. Strachan (2nd ed.; New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), p. 135.



papyrus is "ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἀκέφαλος δαίμων . . . ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀλήθεια . . ." (I am the without beginning demon . . . I am the truth . . .).<sup>1</sup> During the Hellenistic period ἐγὼ εἰμι became a slogan in religious propaganda.<sup>2</sup> It was used by many people, but the Rabbis avoided the ἐγὼ εἰμι formula because it was offensive to them.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore it can be seen that the use of ἐγὼ εἰμι had a wide usage in the Ancient Near East. It was commonly used to express religious or sacred beliefs, especially the claim of deity or supreme position.

#### Usages of Jehovah With a Predicate in the Old Testament

Jehovah is the most sacred and most distinctive name of God.<sup>4</sup> It is derived from the Qal Perfect of יהיה (to be). God explains this name to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as יהוה אֲנִי יהוה (I am who I am).<sup>5</sup> In the second half of the verse the name is shortened to יהוה אֲנִי (I am). The

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<sup>1</sup>James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 180.

<sup>2</sup>Stauffer, "ἐγὼ," p. 345.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>4</sup>Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, based on the lexicon of William Gesenius, trans. by Edward Robinson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 218.



Septuagint renders Exodus 3:14 as "'Εγὼ εἰμὶ ὁ ὢν . . . ὁ ὢν ." This shows the connection between the name of Jehovah and ἔγω εἰμι.

The name Jehovah does not always stand alone in the Old Testament. Jehovah is compounded with the name Elohim (Gen. 2:4). Also, Lewis Chafer cites seven appellatives of the name Jehovah. These are יהוה יִלְאֶה , "Jehovah will provide" (Gen. 22:14); יהוה לִפְאָה , "Jehovah that healeth" (Ex. 15:26); יהוה נִסֵּי , "Jehovah our banner" (Ex. 17:15); יהוה שָׁלוֹם , "Jehovah our peace" (Jud. 6:23,24); יהוה לֹצֵ , "Jehovah my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1); יהוה צְדִיקָה , "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6); and יהוה שָׁמָּה , "Jehovah is there" (Ezek. 48:35).<sup>1</sup>

By understanding that the name Jehovah derives from the Hebrew expression I am a parallel construction between these names for God and ἔγω εἰμι with a predicate is realized.

#### Usages in John With a Predicate

This section centers on the problem for this paper. Some form of the expression ἔγω εἰμι is used thirty-seven times in the Gospel According to John. It would be impossible in a paper of this size to discuss in detail each of these thirty-seven occurrences. Therefore it will be necessary to look at these usages according to various groupings.

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<sup>1</sup>Chafer, Systematic Theology, I, 269.



In this section the purpose is to look at ἐγὼ εἰμι when it occurs with a predicate. These occasions appear to emphasize the deity of Christ.

Concerning the background of this form of speech, C. K. Barrett points to three areas. The first area is the use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in the Old Testament Septuagint. He shows that it was used for self-revelation (Ex. 3:14) and of command (Ex. 20:2, ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος ὁ θεός σου ). The second area of background is the secular usages. These have been dealt with previously in this chapter. The third area of background which C. K. Barrett mentions is that of the Christological statements in the synoptics with other verbs. He emphasizes the use of ἐγὼ in Matthew 5 (Mt. 5:22,28,32, 34,39,44)<sup>1</sup> Concerning this background he says that it is multiple, but essentially simple. The speech is calculated to be impressive, to suggest the presence of an active and self revealing God.<sup>2</sup>

This use of ἐγὼ εἰμι with a predicate also has a grammatical implication. In every instance it has a definite article with the predicate noun. This usage makes clear that there is an equation rather than a subordination. Christ is supreme and the ultimate in these things. "In short, all

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<sup>1</sup>Barrett, John, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 243.



these concrete or abstract definitions are names which Jesus claims for Himself and denies to any other being or object."<sup>1</sup>

J. H. Bernard agrees that these passages are clearly the style of deity.<sup>2</sup> The usage of ἐγὼ emphasizes that Jesus is each of these characteristics in the ultimate sense. It also shows the contrast between Christ and others, for no one else can make these claims. Therefore this is further proof that these are claims of deity on the part of Jesus.

However, not everyone accepts these as claims of deity. Rudolf Bultmann places most of these as simply a recognition formula, meaning that Jesus is stating that He is the one who fits that description.<sup>3</sup> Barnabas Lindars states that these are simply explanatory. They are like Moses' explanation of the manna in Exodus 16:15, "It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat."<sup>4</sup> Yet, while these men refuse to take ἐγὼ εἰμι as a claim of deity, they admit that it is taken as such. Bultmann says while each case is a recognition formula it is intended as a

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<sup>1</sup>Stauffer, "ἐγὼ," p. 350.

<sup>2</sup>J. H. Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John (hereinafter referred to as John), 2 vols. in the International Critical Commentary, ed. by C. A. Briggs, et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, cxix.

<sup>3</sup>Bultmann, The Gospel of John, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup>Barnabas Lindars, ed., "The Gospel of John," in New Century Bible (London: Oliphants--Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), p. 259.



presentation formula, which is a sacred formula.<sup>1</sup> Also it is admitted that "at the same time it constitutes a self-revelation."<sup>2</sup>

While most commentators do not specifically mention the grammatical constructions of these passages, they emphasize the indications of Christ's deity in each passage. They realize that these are characteristics which only God possesses to the ultimate degree.

There are fourteen occasions when ἐγὼ εἰμι is used with a predicate in the Gospel of John. These fourteen verses can be grouped into eight claims of Christ. The first is Christ's claim to be The Bread. This occurs in slightly various ways. In John 6:35 and 6:48 He says, "ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς" (I am the bread of life). The Jews say that He said, "ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ καταβὰς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ" (I am the bread which came down out of heaven) in John 6:41. And in John 6:51 it is "ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν" (I am the living bread).

This claim of Christ occurs the day after He fed the five thousand. In verse twenty-six, Jesus says the people are seeking Him because they ate the bread and were filled. He furthermore refers to the manna which was given to the Israelites in the wilderness by Moses. Jesus then says,

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<sup>1</sup>Bultmann, The Gospel of John, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup>Lindars, "The Gospel of John," p. 259.



"but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven, for the bread of God is he which comes down from heaven and gives life unto the world" (6:32-33). Then Jesus says that He is The Bread.

The context alone shows that He is claiming deity with this title. He refers to God as His Father (6:32). Also He says that He comes from heaven and can give life (6:33). Just as food represents man's primary need as a physical being, Jesus, The Bread, represents man's primary need as a spiritual being. The following verses also give evidence of His claim of deity. In verse thirty-nine He says that He is sent by the Father. Then He says that He imparts eternal life and raises the dead believers (6:40). Christ, The Bread, must be eaten to live eternally and eating this bread results in spiritual satisfaction that never ceases.<sup>1</sup>

The second claim of Christ is found in John 8:12, when He says, " ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου " (I am the light of the world). This is similar to John's prologue identifying Jesus as The Word, God, and The Light (1:1,4, 7-9). Here Jesus is saying, "I am the light." I John 1:5 reads, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Psalm 27:1 reads, "Jehovah is my light." Therefore, it is

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<sup>1</sup>Homer A. Kent, Jr., Light in the Darkness (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1974), pp. 106-07.



seen that light is frequently identified as a characteristic and title of deity.

Furthermore, this claim is made during the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was to remind the Jews of the blessing of the wilderness.<sup>1</sup> One of these was the pillar of fire which guided them. Christ, The Light, is the one who lights the path and shows direction, even as the pillar of fire did for the Israelites.

The third claim of Christ to deity is that as The Testifier. In John 8:18, Jesus speaking to the Pharisees says, " ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ " (I am the testifier concerning myself). The Jewish law demanded two witnesses. Jesus says his two witnesses are ἐγὼ εἰμι and the Father. This verse is not usually included in the list of the "I am's" of John, yet it is a clear usage of ἐγὼ εἰμι as a claim to deity. By considering that ἐγὼ εἰμι is a reference to Jehovah, the two witnesses are Jehovah, who is Christ the Son, and God the Father. The implications of this verse lead one to the conclusion that Christ is identified with Jehovah of the Old Testament. This identification has already been demonstrated in a previous chapter.

The fourth claim to deity by Christ is that of The Door. John 10:7 and 10:9 read, " ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ θύρα " (I am the

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Louis Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of John, Vol. II, trans. by Timothy Dwight (reprinted; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 91.



door). A door is the entrance into a given place. In this context Jesus is talking about a door to the sheepfold. He says that He is The Door. He is the way of entering into the sheepfold. In verse nine, Jesus says that salvation comes only by entering in through Him. Then He says that He has come to give life (10:10). Therefore, Christ, The Door, is saying that because He is God, all must come through Him in order to have salvation.

The fifth claim is closely related to the fourth. Christ says in John 10:11 and 10:14, "ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός" (I am the good shepherd). Not only is Christ the way to enter eternal life, but Christ, The Shepherd, protects and cares for His own. He provides all their needs and leads them. The Shepherd symbolism of God is one of the richest and most thrilling in all of Scripture. There is a comparison between this identification of ἐγὼ εἰμι with a predicate and the compound of **יְהוָה יְהוֹשִׁיעַ** as the Shepherd. This is further proof that ἐγὼ εἰμι is an identification of Christ as Jehovah.

The context again substantiates that this is a claim of deity. Jesus continues to refer to God as His Father (10:15,17,18). He says that He will lay down His life (10:17,18), that no man can take His life from Him (10:18) and that He will take up His life after His death (10:17-18).

George Reith, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., in *Handbooks for Bible Classes and Private Students*, ed. by Alexander Whyte and James Moffatt. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1948), II, 36.



Therefore, by context, description, and parallel passages in the Old Testament it is shown that this is another claim of deity.

The sixth claim is found in John 11:25. Here Christ says, "ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ" (I am the resurrection and the life). This occurs in the passage of the resurrection of Lazarus. Jesus is talking to Martha about Lazarus. He says that Lazarus will rise again (11:23). Martha says that she knows he will rise again at the last day. Then Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." He also says that one believing in Him will have eternal life. Martha responds by saying that she believes He is the Christ, the Son of God (11:27). Her response indicated that she understood Jesus' remarks as a claim of deity.

Furthermore, only God is able to raise one from the dead. The resurrection here of Lazarus points to the resurrection of Himself and all believers.<sup>1</sup> Christ, The Resurrection and The Life is the one possessing the power of life over death. "He is personally the substance of the resurrection and the life."<sup>2</sup>

The seventh claim by Christ is His statement in John 14:6, "ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ" (I am the

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<sup>1</sup>Kent, Light in the Darkness, pp. 148-49.

<sup>2</sup>George Reith, The Gospel According to St. John, 2 vols., in Handbooks for Bible Classes and Private Students, ed. by Alexander Whyte and James Moffatt. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1948), II, 56.



way, and the truth, and the life). Again, the context makes it clear that this is a claim to deity. Jesus speaks in these verses of God as His Father (14:2). He also says He is going to prepare a place for believers and then take them to be with Him (14:2-3). In this verse Jesus says that no one can come to the Father except through Him.

G. Campbell Morgan says that Jesus is The Way to the Father, The Truth about the Father, and has The Life of the Father.<sup>1</sup> Christ, The Way, did not come to show the way, rather He is the way to God. Christ, The Truth, not only tells the truth, all there is about Him is truth. Christ, The Life, not only is eternal, but He gives eternal life to all who receive Him. Therefore, the one who claims to be The Way, The Truth, and The Life must be God.

Finally, the eighth claim of deity by Christ occurs in John 15:1 and 15:5 where he says, "ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀμπελος" (I am the vine). Again Jesus refers in the context to God as His Father (15:1). Through this image, Jesus shows the vital connection between Him and the believer. Christ, The Vine, has a life sharing union with the believer, causing him to have a life of fruitfulness.<sup>2</sup> Without The Vine, the branches could not have life or value (15:6). Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup>G. Campbell Morgan, The Gospel According to John (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), p. 246.

<sup>2</sup>Kent, Light in the Darkness, p. 179.



Christ, The Vine, is showing that all fruitful life flows through Him, because He is God.

These fourteen occurrences of  $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  are clearly a parallel with the Jehovah compounds of the Old Testament. They serve to indicate a claim by Christ to be the I AM, Jehovah God. The claims of Jesus to be the  $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  not only point to deity, but are in themselves a claim of deity. The qualifying predicate acts then, much as in the Old Testament, to point to some characteristic of God which is being emphasized. Therefore, when Jesus speaks the words  $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  with a predicate He is identifying Himself as God, the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

John Davis, in arguing for the present tense translation says that this translation of the verb  $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$  is further substantiated by the rendering of the Septuagint.<sup>2</sup> The first phrase of Exodus 3:14 reads, " $\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota\ \delta\ \delta\epsilon\upsilon$ " John Davis translates this as "I am the one who is."<sup>3</sup>

Jehovah is the name of God which points to the unchangeableness of God and stresses His covenant faithfulness (Ex. 33:3, Ps. 89:19).<sup>4</sup> I AM is the eternal name by

<sup>1</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> John J. Davis, "The Patriarch's Knowledge of Jehovah, Exodus 6:3" (unpublished B.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1962), pp. 47-48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Berthoff, Systematic Theology, p. 49.



### CHAPTER III

#### IDENTIFICATION AS DEITY WHEN USED

#### WITHOUT A PREDICATE

##### The Name of Jehovah in the Old Testament

As previously stated the name of Jehovah is believed by most Hebrew scholars to come from  $\text{יהוה}$  as the Qal of  $\text{יהו}$ . The accurate translation of  $\text{יהוה}$  in Exodus 3:14 has caused some debate. Some scholars claim it should express a future tense rather than a present tense.<sup>1</sup> However, John Davis, in arguing for the present tense translation says that this translation of the verb  $\text{יהוה}$  is further substantiated by the rendering of the Septuagint.<sup>2</sup> The first phrase of Exodus 3:14 reads, "Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν." John Davis translates this as "I am the one who is."<sup>3</sup>

Jehovah is the name of God which points to the unchangeableness of God and stresses His covenant faithfulness (Ex. 15:3, Ps. 83:19).<sup>4</sup> I AM is the eternal name by

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Driver, and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup>John J. Davis, "The Patriarch's Knowledge of Jehovah, Exodus 6:3" (unpublished B.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1962), pp. 47-48.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>4</sup>Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 49.



which the eternal God is to be known and remembered by all generations.<sup>1</sup> It is God's self declaration of His own being. Any other form represents a substituted equivalent for the name in its original form, which is "I am" in English.<sup>2</sup>

The Hebrew equivalent of ἐγὼ εἰμι is אֲנִי-הוּא. According to J. H. Bernard, this expression occurs only when God is the speaker. It is translated in the Septuagint by ἐγὼ εἰμι.<sup>3</sup> Two such examples are: a) Deuteronomy 32:39,

אֲנִי הוּא אֲנִי הוּא אֲנִי הוּא אֲנִי הוּא, ἴδετε ἴδετε ὅτι

ἐγὼ εἰμι (See now, that I even I am he); and b) Isaiah

43:10, אֲנִי הוּא אֲנִי הוּא אֲנִי הוּא, συνῆτε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι

(understand that I am he). These examples show the usage of the Hebrew אֲנִי-הוּא and the Greek ἐγὼ εἰμι as identifying the one and only God. Therefore, the expression ἐγὼ εἰμι is used of Jehovah in the Old Testament Septuagint without a predicate.

#### The Name of Christ in John

The passages in John where ἐγὼ εἰμι is used without a predicate are the ones which cause the greatest debate. It is entirely possible and probable that in each one of these occasions Jesus is claiming identity with Jehovah.

<sup>1</sup>William Phillips Hall, A Remarkable Biblical Discovery or "The Name" of God According to the Scripture (New York: American Tract Society, 1929), p. 140.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard, John, I, cxx.



First however, it would be well to look at a usage outside of John's gospel. In Mark 13:6 Jesus is warning of false prophets and Messiahs. He says, " πολλοὶ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνοματί μου λέγοντες ὅτι Ἐγὼ εἰμι " (Many will come in my name, saying, I am). The ὅτι introduces the direct quotation of 'Ἐγὼ εἰμι. The false Messiahs come, with the same claim as the true Messiah, that is, the claim to be the ἐγὼ εἰμι. "'Ἐγὼ εἰμι thus becomes here a technical formula for the self-revelation of Christ . . ."<sup>1</sup>

#### John 8:58

There are nine verses in John where Jesus speaks ἐγὼ εἰμι and there is no predicate following. These will be discussed in a progressive order, rather than their order in the book. The first passage to be discussed is John 8:58. This is the easiest to identify as a definite claim of Christ to deity.

The context of this passage is Jesus' discussion with the Jews about His relationship to Abraham. Jesus had said that Abraham rejoiced to see His day. The Jews questioned Jesus by saying that since He was not even fifty years old, how could he claim to have seen Abraham? Jesus responded by saying, "before Abraham was born, I am." At that point, the Jews took up stones to cast at Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup>Stauffer, " ἐγὼ," p. 353.



There are some who do not accept this as a claim to deity. The Jehovah Witnesses say this is simply a claim of existence prior to Abraham.<sup>1</sup> It is also said that John never simply identifies Jesus with God. The idea here is that Jesus is saying He is continuous forever. Therefore, He is the eternal Son of God and the ἐγὼ εἰμι denotes only timeless pre-existence.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the reluctance of these critics to accept this as a claim of deity, most scholars do accept it as such. Two basic reasons can be cited in support of this as a claim of deity. The first is the contrast between γινώμαι and εἰμι. Jesus uses the aorist tense of γινώμαι to describe the birth of Abraham. That indicates an historical beginning in the life of Abraham.<sup>3</sup> However, concerning Himself He uses the present tense of εἰμι. This designates His eternal nature, having no beginning. This can be true only of God. This contrast between εἰμι and γινώμαι occurs only in this passage.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce Blair Baker, "A Critical Investigation of John 8:58" (unpublished B.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1956), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Lindars, "The Gospel of John," p. 336.

<sup>3</sup>Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of John, II, 122.

<sup>4</sup>Friedrich Buchsel, "εἰμι," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 399.



The second reason for accepting this as a claim of deity is the reaction of the Jews. Lewis Chafer says, "No instructed Jew who was present missed the fact that Christ asserted of Himself that He is the 'I am,' the Jehovah, of the Old Testament."<sup>1</sup> J. H. Bernard says that the Jews understood this as a definite assertion by Jesus of His Godhead.<sup>2</sup> This is seen in their attempt to stone Jesus because of what they considered blasphemy. Other scholars who accept this as a claim of deity, equivalent with Jehovah are Tenney,<sup>3</sup> Buswell,<sup>4</sup> Tasker,<sup>5</sup> and Lenski.<sup>6</sup> Bruce Baker has written a thesis on this verse for Grace Theological Seminary which has come to the same conclusion.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chafer, Systematic Theology, I, 264.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard, John, II, 322.

<sup>3</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, John: The Gospel of Belief (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>James Oliver Buswell, A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion (2 vols.: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), II, 22.

<sup>5</sup>R. V. G. Tasker, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), 122.

<sup>6</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), pp. 670-71.

<sup>7</sup>Baker, "A Critical Investigation of John 8:58."



## John 8:24,28

The second and third verses to be discussed are John 8:24 and 8:28. These two verses are in the same context and are basically the same in construction. In John 8:24 Jesus says, "except you believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins." In John 8:28 he says, "then shall ye know that I am . . . ." In these verses some commentators find problems with taking ἐγὼ εἰμι as equivalent with the I AM, or Jehovah of the Old Testament. Rudolf Bultmann says it is not possible here to resolve ἐγὼ εἰμι into "I am the I am." He says it cannot be taken as an assertion of His identity with God.<sup>1</sup> R. Lenski says that the omission of the predicate is quite common. The Greek mind, he suggests, finds no difficulty in each instance in supplying a predicate.<sup>2</sup>

A. T. Robertson says some possible predicates are: a) the one from above (8:23), b) the one sent from the Father (7:18,28), c) the light of the world (8:12), or d) the deliverer from the bondage of sin (8:28,31).<sup>3</sup> However, he says the best interpretation is to take the phrases as having no predicate. These occasions of ἐγὼ εἰμι are used "in the absolute sense, as Jews used the language of

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<sup>1</sup>Bultmann, The Gospel of John, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup>Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 614.

<sup>3</sup>Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (6 vols.: New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), V, 146.



Jehovah."<sup>1</sup> A. Plummer says that these verses are not just a claim to be the Messiah. Rather, the ἐγὼ εἰμι is "the great name which every Jew at once understood, I AM."<sup>2</sup> J. H. Bernard also says that these occurrences are used absolutely and are identical with the self designation of Jehovah.<sup>3</sup> Finally, Frederick Godet says that the attention is directed to the subject, ἐγὼ, and no other. "It seems to me difficult to suppose that, in using this expression, Jesus is not thinking of that by which Jehovah often expresses what He is for Israel."<sup>4</sup>

The context of these verses speaks of Christ's deity. He refers to God, His Father as the one who sent Him (8:26,27). He refers to His death (8:27), to His being from above (8:23), and to His going back to heaven (8:21). Therefore He is clearly showing Himself as God. The uses of ἐγὼ εἰμι are further indications of His claim to deity.

John 8:24 is especially a close parallel with Isaiah 43:10. The Septuagint reading of Isaiah 43:10 is "ἵνα γνῶτε καὶ πιστεύσητε καὶ συνῆτε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι," while the Greek of John 8:24 reads, "ἐὰν μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>A. Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John (hereinafter referred to as John), in the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1923), p. 184.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard, John, II, 303.

<sup>4</sup>Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of John, II, 98.



The Isaiah passage is speaking of Jehovah, while Christ is speaking of Himself in John. Therefore, it must be concluded that the context, the grammar, and parallel passages all support the rendering that this is another claim by Christ to be the I AM of the Old Testament, that is, to be Jehovah.

### John 13:19

The fourth verse under discussion here is John 13:19. This occurs immediately after the Lord washed His disciples' feet. In verse nineteen He says concerning His betrayal, "I tell you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am." The style and general context is so similar to John 8:24, that the view taken for John 8:24 by a commentator reflects his view on this verse. Lenski says the predicate needs to be supplied. It should be either the Messiah or the one who tells you this in advance.<sup>1</sup> However, as in John 8:24 the context would suggest Jesus had a much higher objective in mind. When he says ἐγὼ εἰμὶ here, He wants the disciples to realize that He is the I AM, Jehovah. Jesus says that the Scripture must be fulfilled which says, "he that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18, Ps. 41:9). He mentions this prophecy before it occurs so that when it

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<sup>1</sup>Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, pp. 935-36.



does happen, the disciples might believe that Jesus is the ἐγὼ εἰμι. Therefore, the most simple and logical interpretation here is to take ἐγὼ εἰμι as a claim of Christ identifying Himself as Jehovah.

#### John 4:26

The fifth occasion when Jesus uses ἐγὼ εἰμι without a predicate is the first occurrence in John. This is in John 4:26. The setting is His conversation with the Samaritan woman by the well of Sychar. The woman had stated that she knew the Messiah was coming, and that when he came he would declare all things. Concerning that remark, Jesus says, "'Εγὼ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι" (I am, the one speaking to you). This verse is placed in this section because ὁ λαλῶν σοι is not a predicate. Instead, it is an appositive. This would be the natural flow of the sentence. The editors of the Greek text also take it this way as seen by the use of the comma after εἰμι. Therefore, ἐγὼ εἰμι occurs here without a predicate.

Because of the context most commentators do not accept this as a reference to the divine name, I AM. They say this is simply His open declaration of His Messiahship.<sup>1</sup> There are some who do see this as Christ's claim to identification with Jehovah. C. K. Barrett while not going quite that far, does say that the lines of thought and allusion

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<sup>1</sup>Plummer, John, p. 113.



indicated in John 8:24 may have suggested themselves to John and his readers here, that Jesus is the Revealer.<sup>1</sup> Another author who does not accept the ἐγὼ εἰμι formula as Christ's claim of being Jehovah, writes in relation to this verse that the literal translation should be, "I am, who speak to you."<sup>2</sup> He says that this is the first occasion when Jesus uses the "I am" revelation formula, which is normal when God introduces Himself in the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> However, he says, "In these passages Jesus, as it were, takes to Himself the name of God because he is the revealer of God's character."<sup>4</sup> While realizing the claims of Christ, he fails to accept Christ as identity with Jehovah. To him Jesus is claiming to be the "I AM" because He is only the revealer of God's character. Christ, here and in these other passages, not only is claiming to be the revealer of God; He is claiming to be God.

There is a parallel passage to John 4:26 in the Old Testament. Jehovah is speaking in Isaiah 52:6. He says, "Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak." The Septuagint reading is "ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι αὐτός ὁ λαλῶν ."

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<sup>1</sup>Barrett, John, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>Lindars, "The Gospel of John," p. 191.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



J. H. Bernard says that this parallelism and the ἐγὼ εἰμι by Christ is used to indicate the style of deity.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that when Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "Ἐγὼ εἰμι," He not only was saying that He was the Messiah, but was claiming more. He was declaring that He is Jehovah, the I AM of the Old Testament.

John 18:5,6,8

The next three occurrences of ἐγὼ εἰμι without a predicate occur in John 18:5,6, and 8. This is the reference which started the interest in this paper. The context of these verses is the arrest of Jesus. When the soldiers came, Jesus asked them whom they were seeking (18:4). They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Then Jesus said to them, "Ἐγὼ εἰμι." At that time, when Jesus said to them, "Ἐγὼ εἰμι," they went backward and fell to the ground. These questions and answers are repeated, but nothing is said about the soldiers falling the second time that Jesus says, "Ἐγὼ εἰμι."

This passage has created a great deal of interest and debate among the scholars, with many interpretations. Frederick Godet says that the men fell because the words were pronounced with majesty and produced the impression of fear.<sup>2</sup> Merrill Tenney says that "Christ's courage

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard, John, I, 151.

<sup>2</sup>Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of John, II, 352.



frightened the would-be captors so that they shrank back from Him and fell on the ground."<sup>1</sup> R. C. Lenski says that the ἐγὼ εἰμι implies that Jesus was saying, "I am the man." By His own volition Jesus delivered Himself into the hands of the soldiers.<sup>2</sup> They fell, according to Lenski, because of a peculiar and divine power which Jesus intended to display. It was not only to frighten the Jews but also to strengthen the disciples.<sup>3</sup>

However, there are some who take these words by Jesus as His claim to be Jehovah, the I AM. The author of the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary says that these words were used at a time of crisis in declaring His identity. They have a meaning similar to that in the Old Testament, and therefore are an assertion of His deity.<sup>4</sup> R. G. V. Tasker writes that the ἐγὼ εἰμι might suggest divinity to those familiar with the Septuagint.<sup>5</sup>

Richard Woodworth wrote a thesis for Grace Theological Seminary on these verses. His conclusion is that the soldiers fell because of a supernatural action of God. The

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<sup>1</sup>Tenney, John: The Gospel of Belief, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup>Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 1179.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 1181-82.

<sup>4</sup>Francis D. Nichol, ed., The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (7 vols., Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), V, 964.

<sup>5</sup>Tasker, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 196.



use of ἐγὼ εἰμι was as the title of Jehovah in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> This utterance was sufficient to overpower for it was the enunciation of the ineffable Name of God. Such a claim carried the full power of the God whom it designated. At these words, and the power that was vitally connected with them, the crowd was thrust to the ground.<sup>2</sup> Richard Woodworth continues by saying that the words ἐγὼ εἰμι represented the Person who spoke them and His power. The words were not the sole source of the miracle. "Christ declared that He was 'I AM' and this assertion, accompanied with the power of 'I AM' the Everlasting God, thrust the enemy to the ground."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that in these verses, Jesus again is claiming to be Jehovah, the I AM.

There is some discussion on John 18:5 about a variant reading. Some texts, in fact the majority of the major texts, read, "ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐγὼ εἰμι" (I am Jesus). The United Bible Societies text, edited by Aland, Black, Metzger, and Wikgren gives the ἐγὼ εἰμι reading a "C" rating. In comments upon this verse, Bruce Metzger says they accept the reading without the predicate for various reasons. While

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Woodworth, "A Critical Investigation of John 18:6" (unpublished B.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1964), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 47.



admitting that it was possible that the name of Jesus was accidentally omitted, he says it is "probable that copyists would have identified the speaker by inserting the proper name."<sup>1</sup> Another reason he gives is the variation of the position of ὁ Ἰησοῦς either before or after the ἐγὼ εἰμι. This is an indication of the secondary character of the longer readings.<sup>2</sup> Another support of the ἐγὼ εἰμι without the predicate would be that it is not included in either verse six or eight when the statement is repeated.

#### John 6:20

The ninth, and final occasion of Jesus using ἐγὼ εἰμι without a predicate occurs in John 6:20. The context here is that the disciples were out on the sea when a storm came up. They saw Jesus coming to them, walking on the water. Upon seeing this, the disciples became afraid. Jesus seeing their fear said, "'Εγὼ εἰμι μὴ φοβεῖσθε" (I am, be not afraid). This is the most difficult verse to prove that Jesus was using ἐγὼ εἰμι as a claim to deity.

Many commentators refuse to accept this as anything other than Jesus identifying Himself to the disciples. C. K. Barrett says that at the most there are only overtones

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 251.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



of deity expressed here.<sup>1</sup> J. H. Bernard claims Jesus is identifying Himself, saying He was not a spirit. It is not a self designation of Jehovah.<sup>2</sup> Another says that this cannot be taken as the divine name I AM. Yet he says that one "cannot exclude the possibility that John regarded it as an anticipation of the I am sayings of discourse (v. 35)."<sup>3</sup>

Part of the hesitancy of these and others to accept this as a declaration of Christ's identity with Jehovah lies in the parallel passages to this incident in Matthew and Mark (Mt. 14:27, Mk. 6:50). In these passages, Jesus is also recorded as saying, "ἐγὼ εἰμὶ." They claim that because ἐγὼ εἰμὶ is used in Matthew and Mark, it is proof that this is not a declaration of deity. The usage of ἐγὼ εἰμὶ as identification of Christ with Jehovah may not occur as a pattern in Mark and Matthew as it does in John. However, this is no reason for saying that this usage in John does not follow the pattern of John. Also, it is not necessary to say that ἐγὼ εἰμὶ is never used in the synoptic gospels as an identification of Christ to the I AM of the Old Testament.

Some commentators do accept this as another claim of Christ to be Jehovah. "John records Jesus as having made

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<sup>1</sup>Barrett, John, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard, John, I, 187.

<sup>3</sup>Lindars, "The Gospel of John," p. 247.



use of this statement repeatedly at crucial points in His life."<sup>1</sup> Matthew's account records Peter as responding to the ἔγω εἰμι by calling Jesus, "Lord." This is the same word used in the Septuagint for Jehovah. Furthermore, the disciples' reaction was to worship Jesus and call Him the Son of God (Mt. 14:28,33). "The One who could say ἔγω εἰμι, walked upon the water, a display of His divine power . . ."<sup>2</sup>

The statement, " ἔγω εἰμι" would be insufficient identification to the disciples on the stormy sea. If they could see Jesus close enough to recognize Him, there would be no need for a simple self-identification. If they could not see Him well enough to recognize Him, could it be supposed that with waves beating against the boat, and the wind blowing, that they would be able to recognize His voice?

Therefore, the disciples recognized Christ by what He said. For just the words ἔγω εἰμι to identify someone, the words would have to carry a special meaning. For Christ and the disciples ἔγω εἰμι did carry such a meaning, for it was His declaration to be Jehovah. This is especially true when one considers the reactions of the disciples, and Christ's effect on calming the sea. This case follows the

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<sup>1</sup>Nichol, The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, V, 964.

<sup>2</sup>Woodworth, "A Critical Investigation of John 18:6," p. 50.



pattern of the usage of ἐγὼ εἰμι in John. It is another claim of Jesus to be the I AM.

In Part I of this paper, it has been shown that when Jesus uses ἐγὼ εἰμι in the Gospel of John, He is claiming identity with Jehovah. He is claiming to be the I AM, the name of God revealed to Moses as recorded in Exodus 3:14. When ἐγὼ εἰμι is used with a predicate, upon the lips of Jesus, it is a parallel to the compound names of Jehovah in the Old Testament. Also, when Jesus uses ἐγὼ εἰμι without the predicate, He is also identifying Himself as Jehovah.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE USAGES WITH JESUS SPEAKING

#### Jesus Using εἰμι With A Negative

Three times Jesus uses εἰμι with a negative.

These occur in John 8:23; 17:14; and 17:16. The context of John 8:23 is Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees concerning His identity. Jesus states that they are of this world but He is not. (I am not out of this world.)

#### PART II

Jesus is giving a contrast of relationships to this world in this. THE USAGES OF εἰμι WHICH ARE

IN JOHN 17:1 NOT CLAIMS OF DEITY

In John 17:1 Jesus is praying to the Father. In each verse Jesus is praying for the disciples. He says that they are not of this world, "οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τῆς οἰκουμένης" (just as I am not out of the world). Again Jesus is contrasting relationships to this world. He says that the disciples, as He, are not of this world.

In these cases the εἰμι is used to show location by use of a negative. Jesus is saying that He is not of this world. The εἰμι, therefore, is placing the emphasis on the person of Christ and showing the contrast between Him and others. In John 17, He also includes the disciples as being just as (οὕτως) He is. Therefore, in these verses εἰμι is not a claim of deity for Christ.



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In John 17:14 and 17:16, Jesus is praying to the Father. In each verse Jesus is praying for the disciples. He says that they are not of this world, "καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου" (just as I am not out of the world). Again Jesus is contrasting relationships to this world. He says that the disciples, as He, are not of this world.

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It is to be noted that the usage of ἐγὼ εἰμι is different here than in the previous cases cited as claims of deity. In the other cases ἐγὼ εἰμι occurred either with or without a predicate. However, there was not a negative used with any of the cases where ἐγὼ εἰμι is a claim of identity with Jehovah.

#### Jesus Using ἐγὼ εἰμι As An Indication of Location

Jesus uses ἐγὼ εἰμι in this final basic form. This is to show His location, but in a positive way. This usage occurs six times in John (7:34,36; 8:23; 12:26; 14:3; 17:24). In John 8:23, the context is the same as above. Jesus says that the Pharisees are from beneath, but " ἐγὼ ἐκ τῶν ἄνω εἰμι " (I am from above). In this verse only the context and the contrasting of Himself with the Pharisees show His claim to deity. The usage of ἐγὼ is again primarily for emphasis and contrast.

In John 7:34, again speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus says that He is going to go to Him that sent Him (v. 33). The Pharisees will seek Him and shall not find Him and, " ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἐλθεῖν " (where I am you cannot come). The reaction of the Pharisees is recorded following this. In John 7:36 they quote Jesus and ask among themselves what He meant by this saying.

The usage in John 12:26 occurs when Jesus speaks to his disciples concerning His death. He says, "If any man



serves me, let him follow me; and where I am ( καὶ ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ ), there shall also my servant be" (12:26). John 14:3 is of similar context and content. Jesus speaking about His leaving to prepare a place for believers says He is doing that "ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς ᾗτε " (that where I am, ye may be also). Finally, in John 17:24, Jesus praying to the Father says, "θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ᾤσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ" (I desire that where I am they also may be with me).

In each of the above cases, with the exception of John 8:23, the sentence structure is basically ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ (where I am). The use of ἐγὼ must again be to indicate emphasis upon Jesus. He is the only one who could so indicate his future position as εἰμι. Each of these do indicate his deity because of the use of εἰμι indicating a future position. The εἰμι indicates His essential presence.<sup>1</sup> It shows His eternity and omnipresence. However, there is nothing in the usage to suggest identification to Jehovah. The word order is different than in the cases where ἐγὼ εἰμι indicates the claim of Jesus to be Jehovah.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the use with ὅπου (where) makes the identification unlikely.

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard, John, II, 435.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>1</sup>Plummer, John, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Barrett, John, p. 144.



## CHAPTER V

### THE USAGES WITH OTHERS SPEAKING

#### John the Baptist Using ἐγὼ εἰμι

There are others beside Jesus who use the phrase ἐγὼ εἰμι in some form. John the Baptist uses it three times. All three times he uses it with the negative. Two times, he is denying that he is the Christ (John 1:20, 3:28). In John 1:20, he responds to the questioning of the priests and Levites by saying, "Ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ὁ Χριστός" (I am not the Christ). Questioned by his disciples about Jesus, John reminds them that he had said, "Οὐκ εἰμι ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός" (I am not the Christ). The third occasion John uses this phrase occurs in the same context of the first time. Still speaking to the Levites and priests, John says concerning Jesus that he is not worthy (οὐκ εἰμι ἐγὼ ἄξιος) to even untie His shoes (1:27).

The ἐγὼ is used here for emphatic contrast.<sup>1</sup> The contrast is not only a strong denial that John is the Christ; it also asserts that the Christ is at hand.<sup>2</sup> Also the use of the negative would indicate that this is not a claim to deity or identification with Jehovah. Therefore, the

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<sup>1</sup>Plummer, John, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Barrett, John, p. 144.



context, the form of language, and the person speaking show that these are not to be taken as equivalent with the I AM of the Old Testament.

### Pilate Using ἔγω εἰμι

When Jesus is brought before Pilate for questioning Pilate uses ἔγω εἰμι (John 18:35). Pilate asked Jesus if He is the King of the Jews. Jesus responds by asking if Pilate says that of himself or did others tell him that. Pilate answers by asking, "Μήτι ἔγω Ἰουδαῖος εἰμι;" (Am I a Jew?). This question, used with a negative (μη), expects the negative answer. It is clear that the ἔγω is used for emphasis. There is no claim to deity in this passage.

### The Blind Beggar Using ἔγω εἰμι

This usage of ἔγω εἰμι occurs in John 9:9. The context is that Jesus had healed the blind beggar. When the neighbors saw this man, they debated among themselves. Some said that he was the beggar and others said the one they now saw was only someone who looked like the beggar (9:9). The beggar then spoke up and said, "'Εγω εἰμι" (I am).

The blind beggar uses ἔγω εἰμι without a predicate and in the same word order as Christ did when claiming deity. Therefore, some commentators have taken this verse as proof that Christ was not really identifying Himself as Jehovah. One commentator says, "This simple use of the words warns the reader against assuming that ἔγω εἰμι was



necessarily to John a religious formula."<sup>1</sup> The context shows that the ἐγὼ was used to emphasize the beggar's identity. The neighbors were questioning whether he was truly the blind beggar. To emphasize the truth that he was the beggar, he used ἐγὼ. There is no question that there is not any claim of deity here by the beggar. This is the simple use of ἐγὼ for emphasis.

However, the question must be answered as to whether this usage invalidates the usages by Christ which have been interpreted as claims of deity. This usage causes one to admit that just the appearance of the words ἐγὼ εἰμι does not mean that there is an allusion to the divine name I AM.<sup>2</sup> While admitting this, it is not necessary to say that the usages by Christ were not allusions to the name I AM. In each case it was shown that such an interpretation was possible and probably the correct one. There are two significant differences in this case. The first is that a different person is speaking. The second is that the context makes clear the need for the emphatic use of ἐγὼ. There is no such clear need for ἐγὼ in any of the usages by Christ. Therefore, it must be concluded that this usage does not invalidate the interpretations reached previously in this paper.

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<sup>1</sup>Barrett, John, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup>Woodworth, "A Critical Investigation of John 18:6," p. 48.



## CONCLUSION

The two words ἐγὼ and εἰμι are used many times together in the Gospel of John. In many instances there is no indication of a claim to deity. Such instances are when a person other than Christ is speaking. Also, when Christ uses these words with a negative or to indicate position there is no claim of deity in these words. In such cases by Christ, the words are in inverted order (εἰμι ἐγὼ) or separated by other words. This is clearly seen in the following chart (Appendix).

There are also times when ἐγὼ εἰμι does indicate a claim of deity. Jesus claims to be Jehovah. Jehovah is the name of God derived from the name God gives Himself in Exodus 3:14. Jesus, by saying, "ἐγὼ εἰμι," alludes to the I AM of Exodus 3:14; hence, He claims to be Jehovah. These occasions of a claim to deity occur in two basic forms. The first form is ἐγὼ εἰμι (in that word order) followed by a definite article and a predicate nominative. The second form is the simple ἐγὼ εἰμι without any predicate. When Jesus says, "ἐγὼ εἰμι" in either of these forms He is identifying Himself as Jehovah.

Whether or not the use of ἐγὼ and εἰμι together in John is an indication of a claim to deity depends upon three basic factors. The first is the person speaking. Only



Christ makes such a claim in John. The second factor is the word order of ἐγὼ and εἰμι . Only when ἐγὼ is followed immediately by εἰμι does it indicate a claim to deity. The third factor is the sentence structure. A claim to deity is either without a predicate or has a predicate consisting of a definite article and a predicate nominative. When a negative occurs with ἐγὼ εἰμι , the two words are separated by another word, or when used with ὅπου to indicate location, there is no declaration of deity. Therefore, when Jesus speaks a simple ἐγὼ εἰμι without a predicate or followed by a definite article and a predicate nominative, He is claiming to be Jehovah, the I AM of the Old Testament.



# Table of the day of the week

## Table of the day of the week

### Christ--with presence

#### Bread

6:35 1st class 1st class  
6:41 1st class 1st class  
6:48 1st class 1st class  
6:51 1st class 1st class

#### Light

8:12 1st class 1st class

#### Testifier

8:16 1st class 1st class

#### Door

10:7 1st class 1st class  
10:9 1st class 1st class

### APPENDIX

#### Good Shepherd

10:11 1st class 1st class  
10:14 1st class 1st class

#### Resurrection

11:25 1st class 1st class

#### Way, Truth, Life

14:6 1st class 1st class

#### Vine

15:1 1st class 1st class  
15:5 1st class 1st class

### Christ--without presence

4:26 1st class 1st class  
6:20 1st class 1st class  
8:14 1st class 1st class  
8:28 1st class 1st class  
8:38 1st class 1st class  
13:19 1st class 1st class  
18:3 1st class 1st class  
18:4 1st class 1st class  
18:8 1st class 1st class



USES OF ἐγὼ εἰμι IN JOHN

Claims of Deity

Christ--with predicate

Bread

6:35 ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος  
6:41 ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος  
6:48 ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος  
6:51 ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος

Light

8:12 ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς

Testifier

8:18 ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ μαρτυρῶν

Door

10:7 ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ θύρα  
10:9 ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ θύρα

Good Shepherd

10:11 ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν  
10:14 ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν

Resurrection

11:25 ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις

Way, Truth, Life

14:6 ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ

Vine

15:1 ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος  
15:5 ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος

Christ--without predicate

4:26 ἐγὼ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι  
6:20 ἐγὼ εἰμι, μὴ φοβεῖσθε  
8:24 ἔάν μὴ πιστεῦσητε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι  
8:28 γνῶσεσθε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι  
8:58 πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμι  
13:19 πιστεῦσητε . . . ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι  
18:5 λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἐγὼ εἰμι  
18:6 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἐγὼ εἰμι  
18:8 Εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι



## Not Claims of Deity

## Christ--location

7:34	καὶ ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ
7:36	καὶ ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ
8:23	ἐγὼ ἐκ τῶν ἄνω εἰμι
12:26	καὶ ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ
14:3	ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ
17:24	ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ

## Christ--negative

8:23	ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου
17:14	καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου
17:16	καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου

## John the Baptist--negative

1:20	Ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ὁ Χριστός
1:27	οὐ οὐκ εἰμι ἐγὼ ἄξιος
3:28	Οὐκ εἰμι ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός

## Pilate--negative

18:35	Μήτι ἐγὼ Ἰουδαῖος εἰμι
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## Blind beggar--without predicate

9:9	ἐκεῖνος ἔλεγεν ὅτι Ἐγὼ εἰμι
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