

“the” true vine. Just like Jesus was not “a” way, but rather **“the” way**; nor “a” door to eternal life, but rather **“the” door**. A vine is the source of life and nourishment to the branches. A vine is the vehicle by which the branches grow and bring forth fruit. Without the vine, the branches shrivel up and die. Jesus is the True Vine.

Though Jesus is clearly speaking about the vineyards of His day, there is behind it all the use of wine in the Tabernacle. The table with the bread and wine was the first objects you would encounter when you entered through the door and into the tabernacle. It was established by God to be a place of fellowship, not unlike the table of the Lord’s Supper, where we meet to have fellowship with God and with one another. It was served as daily sustenance for the Jews as they prepared for the journey. They ate the bread and drank the wine standing up as they were nourished for the journey. Just as the branches gain their life from the Vine, so this practice symbolised our need for daily fellowship with Jesus as we journey through life. We cannot have sustenance, strength or growth unless we abide in Christ (1John 2:28). When we stay in fellowship with the Lord, we bear fruit. As Jesus said so plainly, “apart from me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The Seven **“I Am”** statements are linked to seven tabernacle items. Of course, there are NUMEROUS other interpretations, but I believe Jesus makes a constant connection with the Tabernacle and other Jewish practices, constantly reminding them that the old ways could not produce the eternal riches that He came to give. The book of Hebrews in particular shows us how Jesus was the complete fulfilment of all those Tabernacle rituals.

So what does this mean to us today?

1. Whatever our need, Jesus is all we need

Whatever the ache in your life today, Jesus is the great I AM who can meet your every need and provide what you need to face life in this world.

2. Relationship with Jesus replaces Ritual

Jesus taught the emptiness of ritual and the fullness of a genuine relationship. Lasting life is not found in just ‘doing things’; like trying to be good,

church activities or helping others. The Jews had commandments and practices that they thought were enough, but they did not unite them to God eternally. Only Jesus could do that by His life, death and resurrection. A relationship with Him makes all the difference to what you do.

3. Jesus is the only way to God and Heaven

Like it or not, Jesus did not leave any room for other ways, roads, or paths. Either you believe the Bible or you don’t. Jesus is the ONLY way. Jesus said, I AM the way, the truth and the life!! Mohammed, Buddha, Hinduism, Taoism, and others are not the way. In Jesus, God has shown you the true path.

4. Faith in Jesus results in eternal life

Personal faith in Jesus Christ is the only way of gaining eternal life with Him and God in Heaven. This means we must be willing to stop trusting or believing in other ways and accept Jesus Christ as the only way.


5. Fellowship is essential for fruitfulness

To grow and be fruitful in the Christian life, we are to stay close to Jesus, read the Bible (His word) and have fellowship with other Christians in Worship and Prayer.

If we trust in Jesus as our personal Lord and saviour and walk close to Him, He the great I AM will help us enjoy the journey of life until that day when we arrive safely at home with Him in heaven.

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So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
- John 8:36


SEVEN GREAT NAMES OF JESUS

“Before Abraham was born, **“I AM”**
John 8:58

I AM... the Bread of life... the Light of the world... the Gate... the Good



Shepherd... the Resurrection... the Vine... the Way, the Truth & the Life



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Seven Great Names of Jesus

“Before Abraham was born, “I AM” – John 8:58

Seven times, Jesus spoke of Himself clearly and directly as the great “**I AM**”. These statements are found nowhere else but in the Gospel of John. They refer to his Deity! God revealed Himself to Moses by the name I AM (Jehovah) (Exodus 3:14). God is the self-existent One who “is, and ... was, and... is to come” (Revelation 1:8). When Jesus used the name I AM, He was definitely claiming to be God. Each one refers to his Deity.

In this study, we will focus on what Jesus said, what these names mean and what they should mean to us. It is believed that Jesus' seven “**I AM**” statements directly relate to seven objects described and placed in the Israelite tabernacle during the Exodus (Exodus 25 - 30). Jesus was the fulfillment of God's purposes set forth in the religious life of the Jews in the days of the Tabernacle. These declarations of Jesus, no matter how figuratively, or symbolically interpreted - clearly represent God, as the author of all things.

In the Jewish tabernacle of Old Testament times, there were seven items of which Jesus was reminding the Jews. Examining them makes sense of his words.

What are they and how do they relate?

1. The Bread – Jesus declared to the multitude, “*I AM the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty*” (John 6:35). The manna in the wilderness did not minister spiritual satisfaction (John 6:32). The Jews were also aware of the Table of Showbread (Numbers 4:7), which was a symbol of fellowship between God and man. It was also called “bread of the presence”. Jesus came in human flesh to live and die for us to lead us to God.

The spiritual hunger of the human situation is ended when we know Christ and through Him know God. The restless soul is at rest; the hungry heart is satisfied and we experience peace and contentment.

2. The Light – When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “*I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but*

will have the light of life” (John 8:12). The Menorah, [seven branch lampstand] was the **ONLY** source of light in the holy place in the Tabernacle, (Exodus 25) just as **Jesus is the ONLY source of light** in the darkened world. Jesus made this statement, when He was in Jerusalem for the feast of the Tabernacles and He was in the Temple section known as the Women's Court. There were two huge candelabras in this court. The candelabras were a reminder of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that God used to guide the nation of Israel through the wilderness. They were normally lit after the evening sacrifice and the light is said to be seen throughout the city. Many people danced and rejoiced around the lights. It is in this setting that Jesus says, “*I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life.*” The light in the Temple is a brilliant light, but in the end it flickers and dies. I am the light which lasts forever.'

3. The Gate or Door – Jesus said, “*I AM the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture*”. (John 10:7,9) It is clear from John chapters 9 & 10 that Jesus is referring predominantly to the life of Shepherds and Sheep. But when He speaks of Himself being the gate, things change a bit. The gate (Exodus 27) was the **ONLY way** to enter into the courts of the Tabernacle, just as Jesus is the **ONLY way** to enter into heaven. Entering the gate was significant to the Israelites because it was viewed as the only way to find forgiveness and fellowship with God. The Old Testament priests provided access to God through ritual and ceremony. Jesus Christ, who is the New Testament door would transcend the ritual and provide intimate access to a loving and caring heavenly Father. So what does this mean to you today? You can only enter into God's fold or family through the door of Jesus Christ!

4. The Good Shepherd – “*I AM the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*” (John 10:11) - In the Tabernacle the altar of incense, also called the brazen altar, sat in front of the holy of holies and separated the holy place from the holy of holies. The incense was a symbol of intercession. Christ is our redeemer, saviour and intercessor as He said, “*The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep*” (John 10:11).

The imagery goes back and forth from Shepherding and Tabernacle life. He said that hired workers don't really know the sheep. When they see a wolf coming, they run off and leave them behind. But “*I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me.*” As the Good Shepherd He owns the sheep, takes responsibility for them, and knows them intimately. Spiritually, He loves us, cares for us, and will keep us safe and protect us from all harm (1 Peter 2:25, Hebrews 13:20).

5. Eternal Life – To troubled hearts Jesus said, “*I AM the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*” (John 11:25-26) - The ark of the covenant was the ultimate symbol of atonement for the Israelites, (Exodus 25), just as Jesus is our ultimate source of atonement; through His resurrection, we have life! If you trust in Christ you will receive the gift of eternal life. The choice is yours! (John 3:16, 10:28, Romans 6:23).

6. The Only Way To God. – When a disciple asked how to get to heaven, Jesus answered, “*I AM the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). Jesus stresses the point that He is the only way to God, in total contrast to everything that has gone before. He is the ‘fulfilment’ of all the practices and pictures in the Old Testament history. The altar of burnt offerings in the tabernacle, was situated directly inside the gate and was where the offerings were sacrificed. The offerings they presented symbolised that for a sinful man to approach a holy God, he must be cleansed by the blood of an innocent creature.

Jesus is the perfect Lamb of God (John 1:29) who was sacrificed so that we can be cleansed of our sin and approach a holy God (Hebrews 9:14).

7. The Vine – In a personal discussion with his disciples Jesus added, “*I AM the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). This time Jesus uses the picture of a vineyard where He is the vine and we are the branches. Jesus says, “I am the **true** vine.” This was another statement directed towards his deity. Jesus was not “a” vine, but rather