

10

Jesus Is the Great I AM

Key Theme

- God reveals His character in the Bible.

Key Passages

- Exodus 3:14; John 6:35, 8:12, 8:56–59, 10:9, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that Jesus claimed to be God in the I AM statements.
- Identify the word pictures Jesus used to describe Himself.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet using the letter clues. If time allows, they will recite the verse to a partner or to the teacher using only the letter clues.



Activity 1: Jesus Is the Great I AM Class Notes

Students will fill out the Jesus Is the Great I AM Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

Jesus revealed His identity as God when He proclaimed, "Before Abraham was, I AM." The Jewish leaders were astonished and upset because they knew Jesus was saying He was God. Jesus also described Himself with word pictures that made the claim, "I AM." I am the door; I am the way, the truth, and the life; and I am the good shepherd, to name a few. Jesus wanted people to know He was God.



Activity 2: The Great I AM Review Game

Students will play a board game in teams to review the lesson material.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- ☐ Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- ☐ Memory Verse Poster
- ☐ Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



JESUS IS THE GREAT I AM CLASS NOTES

- ☐ Print one Jesus Is the Great I AM Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.
- ☐ Print and cut out the six Scripture Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM. Students will read the verses during the lesson.

- ☐ Jesus Is the Great I AM Class Notes for each student
- ☐ Jesus Is the Great I AM Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Six Scripture Strips
- ☐ Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- ☐ Study the Prepare to Share section.
- ☐ Go Before the Throne.

- ☐ Student Take Home Sheets



THE GREAT I AM REVIEW GAME

- ☐ Print the Review Game Components from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- ☐ Print one Game Board for every 2–3 students.
- ☐ Keep the Review Game Questions and Teacher Guide for your use.
- ☐ Cut out the Game Numbers and place in a cup. These will be used to move game pieces as the game proceeds.

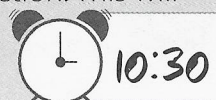
- ☐ Review Game Boards
- ☐ Review Game Questions and Teacher Guide
- ☐ Review Game Numbers in a cup
- ☐ One game piece (button or coin) for each team



Memory Verse

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

➤ **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages along with this background.

We spoke in Lesson 9 about Jesus's teaching. He often taught in parables using images and analogies that those with eyes to see and ears to hear would understand (Matthew 13:16). These parables often left people wondering what He was teaching. And Jesus often privately explained the meaning and the lesson of the parable to His disciples.

However, Jesus didn't always speak in parables. He was at times direct, as we will witness in today's study.

The scribes and Pharisees were offended at what Jesus was doing and saying—especially at His claim that He came from God and was sent by God (John 8:42). The Pharisees could not fathom His teaching that those who would keep the word of Jesus would never see death (John 8:51). They claimed He had a demon and questioned how He could say such a thing since even their father Abraham was dead. Was Jesus claiming to be greater than Abraham (John 8:53)? That could not be so. And yet, yes, Jesus was claiming to be greater than Abraham. And the words He spoke stunned those who were listening to Him, because they did not really hear. He answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58).

This enraged those arguing with Him, and they picked up stones to throw at Him. They decided then and there He was deserving of death because of that claim. What exactly was the claim He was making? These scribes and Pharisees were well versed in the Old Testament. They considered themselves experts in the Word.

They were very familiar with God's words to Moses as he revealed Himself at the burning bush when God said, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Of course, this is a name only the holy Creator God could have as it denotes complete independence and self-existence. In His self-existence, He is all-sufficient. He needs no one! It denotes eternity, one who always was and always will be. It could only describe the one true God. And this was Jesus's testimony—I AM God. And they hated Him even more.

Of course, Jesus would not be intimidated. And John recorded seven more instances where Jesus made the claim, "I AM," to confirm that He is God in human

form and the promised Messiah who would save His people from their sins. How did Jesus, the God-Man, describe Himself?

- "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). He is essential to life—not just physical life, but eternal life.
- "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). There is no other source of spiritual light or truth. He alone can explain all things.
- "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7). Salvation comes from no one else. Eternal life comes through Him alone—the only door.
- "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11; see Ezekiel 34). There is only one good shepherd—it is Jesus—who gave His life for His sheep. It is through Him alone that eternal life is gained. And through Him alone that we are guided, disciplined, comforted, and restored.
- "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). There is no resurrection or life without Jesus. He has conquered death forever. Trusting in this truth will bring comfort in the midst of the despair, sin, sickness, and evil of this present age.
- "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Jesus again claimed Himself to be exclusive. He alone is the only way. He alone offers the only truth. And He alone promises eternal life with God the Father.
- "I am the true vine" (John 15:1, 15:5). As we grow, Jesus, as the true vine, will continue to provide us with the nourishment and sustenance we need to persevere. We must abide in the vine—Jesus—in order to bear fruit. And just like a branch cut off from the vine cannot continue to grow, we can do nothing without abiding in Jesus Christ (John 15:4–5).

Jesus is God. His claim to be "I AM" left no doubt in the minds of the unbelieving Jews. They accused Him of blasphemy, and the Bible records several times when the Jews attempted to stone Jesus because He made Himself equal with God (John 5:18, 8:59, 10:33). They did not succeed those times. But eventually God's perfect plan of redemption through Jesus would be fulfilled. And Christ would be crucified because of His rightful claim that He is the great I AM, God in human form, the King of the Jews (John 19:19).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The truth that Jesus is God in the flesh, the second Person of the Trinity, and fully divine is an explicit teaching of the New Testament. Jesus Himself claimed equality with God the Father many times (e.g., John 8). Paul spoke of Christ's deity frequently (e.g., Colossians 1–2). The writer of Hebrews wrote of Christ's deity (e.g., Hebrews 1–2). And this view has been the dominant, orthodox view of the Christian church since its inception. However, there have been challenges to this truth in the past as well as today.

Arius was a teacher in the early 4th century AD. Arius did not believe that Jesus was truly God in the flesh. Arius taught that Jesus was created by God as the first act of creation, so Jesus was a created being with divine attributes, but was not divine Himself. This view came to be called Arianism and his followers were Arians. The teachings of Arius had a significant impact on the early church, which resisted the heresy by creating many of the early creeds. These creeds defined the biblical, orthodox view of Jesus's nature.

Though Arius was labeled as a heretic, his ideas did not die out completely. In fact, there are modern-day groups, which like Arius, deny the full divinity of Jesus. One of these groups is the Jehovah's Witnesses. Founded in the mid-nineteenth century by Charles Taze Russell, this false religion claims several million adherents around the world. Like the ancient Arians, these modern-day Witnesses have demoted Jesus to something much less than He is.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was the first creation of God, thus denying His deity and eternal preexistence. They also teach that before His birth, Jesus was the archangel Michael. They claim that 2,000 years ago, God transferred the life of Jesus to Mary's womb. Though adherents to this false religion may seem sincere and persuasive, we must be on our guard against their teaching and point them to the biblical truth about Jesus.

Another group that denies the full deity of Jesus Christ is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), or Mormons. Mormonism teaches that Jesus

was first begotten as a spirit, the firstborn offspring of God the Father (Elohim) and one of His heavenly wives. According to Mormon beliefs, God the Father dwells on a planet with His many spirit wives, producing numerous spirit children who await to inhabit physical bodies. Jesus's incarnation is taught to be the result of sexual relations between the Heavenly Father (who has a physical body) and Mary. Again, despite the good image that Mormons may have in their communities and the zeal with which they seek converts, their beliefs are opposed to God's Word, and we must seek to share the truth with them.

Hundreds of years ago, after nearly a century of debate at early church councils, the Christian church officially denounced Arianism as a false doctrine. But it did not die out. It simply morphed and changed its name. But as we see in our lesson this week, the Bible is clear that Jesus is the great I AM. His full deity is proclaimed repeatedly in the New Testament. Jesus must be God in order to accomplish eternal salvation for sinners. The weak Jesus of the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others (e.g., Islam) cannot offer forgiveness of sins and save sinners. When Jesus is believed to be a mere man, stripped of His deity, the atoning effect of His death is also stripped of any and all of its eternal significance.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Jesus, Lord of all, you are the way, the truth, and the life. You are God. You are eternal; you are great; and yet you know me and my students by name. You rejoice when we study your Word. Omniscient God, glorify yourself through me, through this lesson, and in my students. May the awe of you, Jesus, the one true God, cause us to desire to follow you with all our hearts. You have come that we might have everlasting life. Satisfy our souls, for you are the living bread. Help us to see you with fresh eyes and hungry hearts.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Jesus Is the Great I AM Class Notes

MATERIALS

- ☐ Jesus Is the Great I AM Class Notes for each student
- ☐ Jesus Is the Great I AM Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. We'll finish them together.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will discuss the claim Jesus was making when He called Himself "I AM." We will also look at some word pictures Jesus used to describe Himself and what they meant.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 9 Lesson Theme Poster. Jesus taught His disciples using parables.

- ? Last week we talked about parables. What is a parable? *Stories about everyday things that teach a spiritual lesson.*
- ? Jesus taught many parables while He was on earth. Which one is represented on the Lesson Theme Poster? *The parable of the sower and the seed.*

➤ Use the New Testament History Poster included with your teacher kit as you teach the lesson. Emphasize that Jesus ministered only 3 years, and He lived only about 35 years. Yet His life changed the world forever and brought eternal life to all who believe.

- ? That's right. What was that parable about? *Allow discussion using the Lesson Theme Poster for review.*

The seed fell on four different soils. The soils stood for people who heard the Word and what they did with it.

- ? What did the wayside stand for? *Someone who hears but does not listen.*

- ? What did the stony ground stand for? *Someone who receives the Word but only for a while. He soon forgets it.*

- ? What did the thorny ground stand for? *Someone who hears the Word, but the world chokes it out.*

- ? What did the good ground stand for? *Someone who hears the Word, understands it, and bears fruit for God.*

- ? Why did Jesus teach in parables? *Allow discussion.*

Jesus knew that many people would not believe in Him. Only those who were interested in following Him and learning from Him would understand or want to understand the parables. The parables separated those who truly believed from those who didn't really care.

- ? Who is Jesus? *Jesus is God.*

Yes. Jesus is God. And Jesus spoke about who He was to the scribes and Pharisees—the religious leaders of His day. Let's see what Jesus told them.

First, let's go back to the Old Testament. Turn to Exodus 3:14. This actually explains what God called Himself when He was talking to Moses! God had told Moses to go to the children of Israel and speak to them. Moses wasn't sure they would listen, and he asked God who he should say sent him.

Someone read Exodus 3:14. *Choose student to read the verse. Exodus 3:14.*

Exodus 3:14

EXAMINE THE WORD

What did God mean? Let's study a bit and see if we can find out.

Observe the Text

- ? How did God answer Moses? What is God's name? *Exodus 3:14. I AM who I AM.*

That's right. God said to tell them "I AM" sent him.

- ? What do you think God meant by that? *Allow discussion.*

Discover the Truth

Moses learned God's name. When God said "I am who I AM," He was explaining that He is the only one, the eternal one, the one who was, who is, and who will always be. He was saying He is the true God.

- ? Take a look at #1 on your class notes. Will someone read that please?
What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Name. Have students complete #1.*

- ? And what about #2? What is the answer there? Who will read it? *Assign a reader. One. Have students complete #2.*



READ THE WORD

Moses lived a long time before Jesus was born. So what does this have to do with Jesus? We are going to find out!

Turn in your Bibles to John 8:56–59. Jesus explained to the Pharisees and Jews who He was. Jesus had told them that He and the Father (God) were one. They did not want to believe this at all. And Jesus was going to explain even further what that meant.

- ? Will someone read John 8:56–59 for us? *John 8:56–59. Choose students to read the verses.*

John 8:56–59

EXAMINE THE WORD

Jesus really astonished the religious leaders of His day with what He said—and they didn't like it! Let's talk about it.

Observe the Text

- ? Who did Jesus say rejoiced to see His day? *John 8:56. Abraham.*

That's right. Jesus told the Jews that Abraham had seen His day. But how was that possible? Abraham lived about 2,000 years before Jesus.

- ? How did the Jews respond? What did they say? Someone re-read John 8:57 for us. *Assign a reader. Allow discussion.*

- ? How old was Jesus? *Not yet 50 years old!*

The Jews knew how old Jesus was. He was only in His thirties. They were looking right at Him. How could Jesus have seen Abraham, who lived thousands of years before? Well, that is a very good question. Jesus's statement doesn't make sense—for anyone but Jesus. But Jesus is God, and Jesus is eternal—right?

- ? How did Jesus answer them in John 8:58? *Before Abraham was, I AM.*

- ? Jesus said, "I AM." Who else called Himself "I AM"? Remember what we read in Exodus 3:14? Look at #1 on your class notes for a hint. *God.*

Jesus used the same name God used when He told Moses who He was. God called Himself I AM. Jesus called Himself I AM. Jesus was saying He is God.

- ? The Jews did not like this claim. What did they do? Will someone read John 8:59 again? *They took up stones to throw at Him.*

Discover the Truth

God told Moses to tell them I AM sent him. And Jesus told the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Jesus wanted the people to know that He was the great I AM—God as man. The Jews did not like this! They wanted to kill Jesus because of who He said He was.

? Let's go back to our class notes. Someone read #3 for us. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. God.*

? And how about #4? What is the answer there? *Assign a reader. Jesus.*

? And what about #5? Will someone read that with the answer? *Assign a reader. Kill.*



READ THE WORD

The religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus for saying He was God. But Jesus knew who He was, and He would not back down. In fact, there were several other times Jesus described Himself saying "I AM." Let's take a look at some of those and what Jesus meant by them. I have six strips here. Each has a verse we will be reading. I'll pass them out. And when we get to the verse you have, I want you to read it to the class. *Pass out the Scripture Strips.*

John 6:35

Let's start with John 6:35. If you have that Scripture Strip, please read it for the class. *Have student read John 6:35.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? What does Jesus call Himself in this verse? *The bread of life.*

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." Of course, He didn't mean He was the kind of bread we eat—but living "bread." Just like we need food for our bodies to live, Jesus is necessary for eternal life. We can't get to heaven without Him.

Will someone read #6 on the class notes for us? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Bread. Have students complete #6.*

John 8:12

Now, if you have John 8:12, please read it for the class. *Have student read John 8:12.*

? What does Jesus call Himself in this verse? *The light of the world.*

? What do you think that means? *Allow discussion.*



Jesus is the light of the world. He alone can explain all things. We can't find spiritual light, answers, or truth anywhere else. Jesus alone can light our path in righteousness.

? Will someone read #7 on the class notes? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Light. Have students complete #7.*

John 10:9 is next. If you have it, please read that one to the class. *Have student read John 10:9.*

John 10:9

- ? What does Jesus call Himself in this verse? *The door.*
- ? That's interesting. Jesus said, "I am the door." What do you think He meant? *Allow discussion.*

Again, Jesus was saying that eternal life and salvation come only through Him. He is the door. We must walk through that door—Jesus Christ—to be saved.

- ? Who has John 10:11? Please read it for the class, if you have that one. *Have student read John 10:11.*
- ? What did Jesus call Himself in this verse? *The good shepherd.*
- ? What does a shepherd do? Why would Jesus call Himself the good shepherd? *Allow discussion.*

John 10:11

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." There is only one good shepherd. Jesus is it. He alone can guide and lead His sheep. He will discipline them when necessary and comfort them when they are afraid or in danger. The good shepherd will protect His sheep, and He knows and loves each one in His flock.

- ? Back to the class notes. What is the answer to #8? *Assign a reader. Door. Have students complete #8.*
- ? And how about #9? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Shepherd. Have students complete #9.*

Now if you have John 11:25 please read it for the class. *Have student read John 11:25.*

John 11:25

- ? What does Jesus call Himself in this verse? *The resurrection and the life.*
- Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." He has conquered death. He has risen. And those who believe in Him will rise one day and have eternal life in Him.

Refer to the Memory Verse Poster. John 14:6 is our last verse. You should all know that verse. It is our memory verse! Let's read it together. *Read John 14:6 together.*

John 14:6

- ? What does Jesus call Himself in this verse? *The way, the truth, and the life.*
- ? What does this verse mean? *Allow discussion.*

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other way, no other truth, and no other life but through Jesus Christ. And no one can come to the Father in heaven except through Jesus Christ, the Savior.

- ? Let's finish our class notes. What is the answer to #10? *Assign a reader. Life. Have students complete #10.*

- ? And #11? Someone read that please. *Assign a reader. Truth. Have students complete #11.*
- ? And the last one, #12? Who will read that for us? How will you finish it? *Assign a reader. Only. Have students complete #12.*

Discover the Truth

Jesus wanted to make it clear. He is God. He is the great I AM. And there is no other way to heaven and eternal life with God except through Jesus. Many Jews hated Him because of this claim. They wanted to kill Him. And several times they tried. They would finally succeed when Jesus died on the Cross. But Jesus would die when it was His time to die according to God's perfect plan—not until then.



The Great I AM Review Game

MATERIALS

- ☐ Review Game Board for each team
- ☐ Review Game Teacher Guide
- ☐ Review Game Questions
- ☐ Buttons or coins, one per team to use as a game piece
- ☐ Review Game Numbers in a cup

INSTRUCTIONS

Students will compete in small teams, moving forward on the board as they get the review questions correct. Teams will take turns answering the questions presented. The first team to the finish line is the winner. See the Review Game Teacher Guide for more instructions.

- ? Is everyone ready for a fun review of today's lesson? *Yes!*

We are going to play a board game. *Play the game.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Good playing! That was fun. *Congratulate the winning team.*

Jesus told the people that He was God when He used the name that God had given Moses—I AM. He didn't keep who He was a secret. He wanted the people to know, and He wanted us to know. He was saying the same thing when He said I AM the light of the world, I AM the good shepherd, I AM the bread of life, I AM the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is the great I AM! He is the one true God.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 10 Lesson Theme Poster. Jesus astonished and even angered the religious leaders of His day when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM." They knew that "I AM" was the name God called Himself when He was

speaking to Moses. We read about that in the book of Exodus. The Pharisees thought Jesus was blaspheming God by calling Himself God's name. But we know that Jesus is God, and He was letting everyone know it when He called Himself "I AM."

Jesus also used the phrase, "I AM," when He described Himself at other times. We looked at six different times when Jesus referred to Himself with a word picture that started with "I AM." Let's read them all from your class notes. *Read #6–11 on your class notes.*

Jesus made it clear. He wanted the people to know He was God. Many of the Jews hated Him for that and wanted to kill Him. They didn't believe that He was the Messiah, or God in the flesh.

But we know the truth. God Himself, in the form of a man, came down to earth to take the punishment for sin. Then on the third day, He rose again. He conquered sin and death because He was all-powerful God. He did that for sinful man. Truly, Jesus Christ was God made man.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Jesus is God. There is no question about it. He is the only way to salvation. But some people want to say that Jesus was not God. Some religions say Jesus was a good person created by God and that He was like God but not God. Others say Jesus was a wise prophet but not God. Don't be fooled by those who say Jesus was only a man! You've read what the Bible says. Jesus wanted everyone to know that He was God in human flesh who came to save sinners. And all who believe this truth, turn away from their sins, and trust Jesus for forgiveness will go to heaven and have eternal life with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise Jesus because He is God who came to earth as a man to provide a way for us to have eternal life.
- Ask God to help us to believe the claims of Jesus and to trust Him as Lord of our lives.
- Ask God to give us the courage to tell others that Jesus is God and the only way to eternal life.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.