

# I AM HE

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JOHN 8:23-32 • TV432A

A television broadcast sermon delivered  
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by  
**HENRY T. MAHAN**

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## **John 8:23-32**

*And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

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I would like very much for you to get your Bible today, and follow along with me as I bring you this message to you. I'm going to be speaking from the **8<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John**. I think it would be very, very beneficial for you to get a Bible and just sit down and listen prayerfully and carefully to this message: **"I AM HE."**

Someone came up to me this morning, (a friend of mine), and he said, "Do you know why the Bereans were called more noble than the folks from Thessalonica?" I said, "Yes, I know, do you know?" He said, "Yes, they received the Word and searched the scriptures to see if these things be so." That is what I want you to do today. I want you to receive this message and I want you to search these scriptures in John Chapter 8 to see if these things be so. Would you do that?

I have a very familiar text. You've read it, and you have heard it many, many times. You may have even quoted it. When you open your Bible to this place in the scripture (John Chapter 8); stay there because I will be coming back to it. I'm going to make some comments and then we are going to go verse by verse and listen to what our Lord had to say here.

In **John 8:32**, the Lord Jesus is speaking, and He says, "*And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*" Have you heard that before? I'm sure you have. It says, "*And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*"

The thing about this passage of scripture, nearly everyone has heard it or read it, but not many people know where the Lord spoke these words. It is significant where He said this. It is also significant to whom our Lord was speaking. Also, it is very important what He meant when He said, "*You'll know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*"

I tell our people at the 13<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, that is so important when you are reading the scripture; find out who is speaking. Find out to whom they are speaking to and try to find out the subject. The scripture will open up more effectively to you.

Our Lord Jesus is speaking here. Now, where did He say these words, "*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free?*" In **verse 20**, it says; "*These words spake Jesus in the treasury as He taught in the temple.*" Our Lord was speaking in the most hallowed, sacred, religious place in the world. He was in the temple at Jerusalem. That is where He said this. He was telling these people there in this most sacred, hallowed place, "If you ever learn the truth, if you ever know the truth, it will set you free."

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Do you know to whom He was speaking? Well, He is speaking to the Jews. He was speaking to these Jewish leaders. These were men who revered Moses. They said, "*We have Moses. Abraham is our Father.*" These were men who revered Abraham. These were men who also defended the law. They studied the law; they taught the law; they knew the law and they defended the law. They tried, (according to their own testimony), to live by the law.

These were also, very moral men. They were very religious men. One of them said in the temple; "*I'm not an adulterer; I'm not an extortioner.*" He said, "*I tithe; I fast twice a week. I give alms to the poor.*" These were very devout, dedicated, moral and legalistic men. These were men who studied the scriptures. It was to these men our Lord said, "If you ever learn the truth and know the truth, it will set you free."

You see, my friends, the truth is not a form of worship, they had that. They had an age-old form of worship that was given to them by Moses. It was a typical form. It was a form of pattern and picture. They had the form. That is what the woman of Samaria said; "*You Jews say that Jerusalem is the place to worship*" and that is where the temple was and that is where they worshipped. They had the form, but truth is not the right form, even though it may be correct.

Truth is not a system of doctrine. These men had a doctrine. You can have a system of doctrine and to a large extent it can be correct. You may still have a system of the doctrine and not know the truth. The truth is not a law of morality and behavior. Saul of Tarsus had the law. He said, "Concerning the law; I was blameless." But, he did not know God. He didn't have salvation.

The truth is a person. Christ said; "*I am the truth.*" He didn't say, "I teach the truth, though He did, or I point you to the truth; "*I am the truth.*" The truth is a person. The truth is not a form of worship. It is not a system of doctrine. It is not a law of morality and behavior; it is a person. To know this person is to know the truth. "*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*"

Christ is the truth. Jesus Christ Himself is the truth. To believe this person is to believe the truth. To walk with this person is to walk in the truth. So, He said, "*If you know the truth; the truth will set you free.*"

I want you to look with me at this message. We will take it up from where He spoke to these men. He said, "*I go my way and you seek Me and you shall die in your sins and whether I go you cannot come.*" They began to ask Him questions. They asked, "*Will He kill Himself because He says, 'Whether I go you cannot come?'*" He spoke to them about the truth.

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There is a key word in this message (I must give it to you), it is the word or words, “*I am.*” It is used five times in these **verses from 23 through 32**. Five times the Lord said, “*I am.*” Now, where did that come from? I want you to look for a moment in **Chapter 3 of Exodus**. The Lord had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. It was the bush that burned and was not consumed. The Lord told Moses that he was to go down into Egypt where the children of Israel had been for 400 years in captivity, slavery and bondage. The Lord said, “Lead my people out. Go down and lead them out of Egypt. Lead them to a land that I will show you. Deliver them from bondage.” There were originally 70 of them, but now there were two or three million. Some people say that there were more.

Moses said, “Who am I that I should go down and lead these people out of Egypt; I am one man? Besides, when I go to them Lord, and tell them that you sent me, they are going to ask me what your name is. I will tell them that the God of your Fathers (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who created the world, the God of all things, the omnipotent living God of heaven and earth) has sent me to set you free.” They will say, “*What is His name?*” What shall I tell them?

Listen, and God said (this is capitalized in most translations of the Bible), “*I AM THAT I AM: and He said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*”

Our Lord Jesus Christ in this message spoke to these men in the temple. These people were ones who revered Moses and taught the law. They knew the scriptures, and thought they knew the truth. These were men to whom He said, “*If you know the truth, it will set you free.*” He uses that phrase, “*I am,*” five times.

Look at **verse 23**. He said to them; “*You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world and I am not of this world.*” Do you know what He is saying? He’s saying, “Truth is from heaven.” If a man knows the truth, walks in the truth, and loves the truth, it will come to Him from God and it will come by revelation. Truth is from heaven. If you are looking for the truth, don’t look for it on this earth and don’t look for it from the men of this earth. I don’t care how intelligent they are, how intellectual, educated, and even how wise in natural things they are. They don’t know the truth.

You see; you can get the best minds of the world together from all walks of life. For a while they will be very sharp, keen and very wise in natural things. But, they know nothing of spiritual things. “*No one has seen God at anytime. No one knoweth the Father but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.*”

Your sin and my sins have separated us from God and “*God dwells in a light which no man can approach.*” Job said this, “*Can you by searching find out God?*” *Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is higher than the*

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heavens. *What can you do? It is deeper than hell, what can you know?*” This is what our Lord is saying, *“You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”* If we are going to find out anything about God and spiritual matters we don’t look for it in this world or from among men. *“Let God be true and every man a liar.”*

Let me tell you what Paul said over in **Romans Chapter 11**; He said, *“O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.”* That is what I am saying! That is what our Lord said right here. He said, *“If you are ever going to learn the truth, if you are ever going to know the truth, it won’t be from you or from anybody that is kin to you. It won’t be from anybody like you.”* *“I am from above, and you are from beneath. You are from the earth; I am from heaven.”* So, if we know the truth, we will have to learn it from God. *“He dwells in a light to which no man can approach.”*

Look at the **verse 24**; *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am **he**, ye shall die in your sins.”*

This is one of the reasons that I wanted you to get your Bible. The word *“He”* is in italics. Somebody said one time, *“Well, the reason they put it in italics is because it is important.”* No, the reason they put it in italics is because it is not in the original transcript; the translators, hoping that it will help us, supplied it. In this case, it doesn’t help. Christ said, *“If you believe not that I am.”* When Moses asked the Lord, *“What’s your name?”* What did He say? He said, *“I am that I am.”* Jesus Christ, here, is talking about Himself. He says; *“I am.”* I am God’s messenger.

It says over in **Hebrews 1**, *“God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake to our Fathers by the prophets. He hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things by whom He made the worlds. Who being the brightness of His glory and the exact image of His person and upholdeth all things by the Word of His power when He by Himself, purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of God.”* Who is Jesus Christ? *“I am.”*

The Lord Jesus Christ the only messenger. God spake to our Fathers back yonder by the prophets *“But in these last days, He’s spoken by His Son.”* God has come incarnate human flesh. He came, *“Without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness. God was manifested in the flesh.”* If you don’t hear Christ and don’t receive Him and don’t believe Him, you are going to die in your sins. You are going to remain in your blindness. You are going to remain in your ignorance. You are going to remain in your darkness if you don’t believe that Christ Jesus is God. *“I am”* is the only messenger.

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In **Deuteronomy 18:18-19**, God said, *“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”*

God said, “If men don’t hear Him; I will require it of them” Do you see that? *“I am from above; I am from heaven, therefore, if you don’t believe that ‘I am’ you have no messenger.”* You have no one to reveal God to you. You have no one to tell you the truth. You have no way to know the truth and you will die in your darkness and in your sin and blindness.

In **verse 25**, now watch this, His word stunned them. I understand why they were stunned. Here He stood a man. They said, *“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?”*

He was a man; He was the God-man. He was God incarnate in human flesh. He was “Mystery of Mysteries.” Here He stands and says, *“I am.”*

They knew what that meant. They were familiar with Moses. They said, *“Who are you?”* They were disturbed and they were frustrated. Listen to what they said; *“Who are you?”* And Jesus saith unto them, *“Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.”* *“I am the light of the world; I am the bread of life; I am the water of life; I am the door; I am the way the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me; I am.”* These were strong words.

Your doubts and your debates and discussions are not going to change that fact. *“Even from the beginning, I said unto you that, I am.”*

John wrote, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and all things were made by Him (I’m from above).”* Then He said, *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

Phillip said, *“Show us the Father.”* He said, *“You’ve seen Me; you have seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The Father and I are one. Jesus Christ is the “Everlasting Father; He’s Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace and the Mighty God. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.”*

The angels said to Joseph, *“Call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.”* *“They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.”*

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Do you believe this, “*God with us?*” He did say that if you don’t believe it, you have no messenger. You have no truth. He says; “*I am the truth.*”

In the next verse, **verse 26**, He says, “*I have many things to say and to judge of you.*”

What He is saying is “I have many other things to say about you that will judge you, (because like in **John 5**), He says, “*I know you. You have not the love of God in you. You seek not the honor that comes from God only. Let another come in His own name and Him will you receive. I come in My Father’s name and you receive me not. I know you.*” You claim to believe in Moses. “*You don’t believe Moses; Moses wrote of Me;*” I know you. I’ve got a lot of things yet to say about you. It says here, “*He that sent Me is truth.*” What I say is truth. I am true. I speak the words; “*I speak to the world and those words that I have heard of Him. They understood not that He spoke to them of the Father.*”

Watch **verse 28**. This is so important. He said, “*When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am.*” When you have lifted Him up? He said on another occasion, “*Moses lifted up the serpent, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.*” What is He talking about? He said, “*When you have lifted up the Son of Man you are going to know that I am He.*”

He is talking about His crucifixion. He is talking about the death that He would die. You see, His crucifixion and His resurrection and His exultation was accompanied and followed by such manifestation of divine truth that many of these people listening here were convinced that He is the Messiah. The Centurion at the foot of the cross was sure that this was the Son of God. I’m sure many of these people listening to Him right here were redeemed and saved at Pentecost. It says, (verse 30) “*That in a moment many of them believed.*”

He said, “*When you lift Me up.*” You see; there have been many messiahs that have come into the world. There have been many reformers, and religious leaders. All of them have died, but only one arose, only one and that is Christ! Only one ascended unto the Father where He is seated at God’s right hand. He said, “*When you have crucified Me, when you have lifted Me up, then you will know that I am He.*”

“I am He of whom Moses wrote about. I am He whose day Abraham saw. I am He. I am the fulfillment of every prophecy, of every promise, of every pattern and of every type in the Old Testament Scriptures. I am the Passover Lamb. I am the brazen serpent. I am the rock that followed them. I am the mercy seat. I am the great High Priest. I am the Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

“*When you have lifted Me up and all the scripture has been fulfilled, and you see the Son of Man on a cross, in a tomb, risen from that tomb and ascended to glory,*

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*then shall ye know I am and I do nothing of Myself.” He speaks here as a representative man. “As My Father taught me; I speak these things. He that sent Me is with Me. I fulfilled and carried out His purpose. I didn’t come to do My will. The Words that I speak are His Words and I come to do His will. I always do those things that please My Father.”*

Look at **verse 30**; “*And as He spake these Words, many believed on Him.*” Oh the power of the Word of God! It may be as I am speaking these Words to you that you will believe (it doesn’t matter if it’s me that’s speaking). These may have heard Him when He walked this earth in the flesh. They may have heard His disciples. Some may have heard the reformers. Others may have heard men in the past years that preached the gospel. You may hear me. But, if it is His gospel and the gospel concerning His Son, the very Word of God is the power of God unto Salvation. “*The gospel is the power of God unto Salvation.*” It is the Word of life and it gives life.

“*My Word, He said, will not return unto Me void.*” In **James 1:18** it says; “*Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth. You are born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed, the Word of God.*” In **Romans 10:17** it says, “*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*” So, as He spake, it was the power of His gospel, the power of His Word that goes past these ears into the heart and regenerates by God’s Spirit. “*As He spake these Words, many believed on Him.*”

Then He said, now listen; look at this big little word (if); “*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, if you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed.*” Not just in profession but indeed. “*If you persevere, if you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed.*” It is not in form, but indeed.

You see; true faith is a living experience. It is a vital living relationship with Christ and true faith. If a man has true faith, it throbs in his pulse. True faith looks out of his eyes. True faith lights up his countenance. True faith softens his touch. True faith mellows his voice. True faith bows his head. True faith will bend his knee. True faith will open his hand. True faith will curve his tongue. True faith will humble his heart. True faith will order his steps. True faith will give him a hearing ear, a forgiving spirit and a peace of conscience. That is true faith, “*If you will continue in My Word. Then, are you really My disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.*” You will know Him.

What is this free business that He is talking about? He is talking about freedom from the curse and condemnation of the law. “*Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.*” There is judgment and condemnation but through Christ’s righteousness and blood, you are free



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from the curse and condemnation of the law. *“There is no condemnation to them in Christ.”*

They are free from religious tradition and form. There are so many people bowed down in duty and fear. You can be free from legalism. You can be free from the veneer of self-righteousness. Be free from worry and fear. Be free from judgment and condemnation. Be free in Christ! *“There is therefore, now, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.”*

*“They walk not after the flesh. They walk after the Spirit.”* They are in Him. The truth; you shall know the truth. *“I am the truth and the truth will make you free.”*