

---

# Encounter(ing) God

Son  
Rob Rogers

Part 4  
May 19, 2019

---

## Review

For the past several weeks, we have been looking at the “I AM” statements of Jesus found in John’s Gospel.

**In these statements  
we see a Man revealing  
the very nature of who He is  
and what He’s come to do,  
not just 2,000 years ago when He walked among us,  
but right here, right now, today.**

As we’ve said throughout this series, we can know all about God but never genuinely encounter Him. To encounter God, we have to wrestle with the claims of Jesus, Who is the express image of the invisible God.

Three weeks ago we started by looking at Jesus’ statement, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM**” (**John 8:58**), where Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh.

Two weeks ago we unpacked nearly all of **John 6**, where Jesus claimed to be the bread of life, the only one Who will ever satisfy the deepest longings of our soul.

Last week we explored **John 8:12**, where Jesus claimed to be the light of the world, our ultimate source of life, truth, hope, and joy.

---

## The I AM Statements of Jesus

...what Jesus said about Himself

The eight *I AM* statements of Jesus are:

- **I AM**
- **I am** the Bread of Life
- **I am** the Light of the World
- **I am the Door**
- **I am** the Good Shepherd
- **I am** the Resurrection and the Life
- **I am** the Way, the Truth, the Life
- **I am** the Vine

---

## I Am the Door

### John 10:7–10

Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.”

- In this passage, Jesus emphatically says, “I AM THE DOOR TO LIFE.”
- What good, moral teacher would ever make a claim like this?
- If Jesus is just a man—just a good, moral teacher—this claim is arrogant beyond belief.
- Yet, many modern people want to put Jesus in that category because it keeps them from having to wrestle with the fact that Jesus—over and over and over again—claimed to be God.

**If Jesus really is Who He claimed to be—  
God in human flesh—  
then you have to change *your* life.**

---

## The Religious Opposition

In today’s passage, Jesus is conversing with the religious leaders, and by this point, He has claimed to be God multiple times.

- **John 8:58**, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”
- **John 6:35**, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”
- **John 8:12**: “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

Let’s consider what happens between these claims and today’s passage by looking at **John 9**, where Jesus heals a blind man:

- After the blind man is healed, the Pharisees ask him, “Who healed you? How did this happen?”
- The man responds, “Jesus healed me.”
- This blind man was one of their sheep; someone they were charged to care for. The man is healed of blindness, so you would think they would celebrate with him. Not only don’t they celebrate, they are furious that he is healed. So furious, they excommunicate him.
- Why? Because his healing by Jesus was evidence of their further loss of power over the people.
- Every single time they encountered Jesus, they felt their power slipping away, and they frantically clamored to salvage it.

**When you truly encounter Jesus,  
when you wrestle with His claims,  
you will either:  
tighten your grip on life or loosen it;  
scramble for control or give what little control you have away freely;  
close your life off or submit it to God;  
hoard your life or offer it;  
soften your heart or harden it.**

You've got two options, two doors: a door to life and a door to death. Jesus says, *"I am the door to life."*

The Pharisees—religious leaders, followers of the law, doers of the law—found their life and their identity by following the ways of the Torah, or the law. Outwardly they appear to believe all the right things and behave in all the right ways, and they saw themselves as gatekeepers to righteousness and relationship with God.

**Then Jesus showed up.**

### **John 10:8**

*All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.*

- Throughout the gospels, Jesus has called the religious leaders liars, hypocrites, snakes, a bunch of dirty dishes, whitewashed tombs filled with dead people's bones, and a brood of vipers.
- Now he's saying, "You think you're a doorway to God? You're nothing but a bunch of thieves and robbers! You're not the door to life, and no one listens to you anyway."
- No one had ever talked to the Pharisees this way before. They were shocked.
- The Pharisees knew the scriptures. They knew they were to be looking for a Messiah.
- Jesus is standing there, blatantly telling them, "I'm the one you've been looking for. I'm the only way to eternal life. I'm the only way to be cleansed of the sin that is destroying your heart, your relationships, and your soul. I'm the only door to life."
- *The Pharisees completely missed it.*

**Questions**—*Is Jesus your Messiah? Do you recognize Him, or are you missing Him because, like the Pharisees, you don't want to give up control? Or, are you kicking the tires of Christianity? Do you feel uncertain about this whole Jesus thing?*

**Response**—You've got to wrestle with what Jesus claims. You ought to have one of two reactions to this claim: This claim either ought to entice you and draw you in or it ought to make you really mad. There is no middle ground. Jesus doesn't say, "Be a decent person, and then you can enter," or, "If your good outweighs your bad, then you can enter." He says, "If you want to enter at all, it has nothing to do with your goodness and morality. It has nothing to do with anything you must do."

**Jesus says,  
"It has everything to do  
with a Person you must know,  
and I am that Person."**

***The only way in is through Jesus.***

---

## **The "Exclusive" Objection**

Let's consider two of the most common objections to Jesus' claim to be the door to life.

**Objection #1:** *"This is my problem with Christianity. How can you possibly say in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that there is only one way to God, that there is one religion above them all? It's so primitive and elitist. It leads to Christians feeling superior to other people, which is exactly why I can't stand Christianity. No one should claim to have the one true religion."*

## Response:

- Jesus is the One Who said, “. . . I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved. . .” (**John 10:9**). Christians for the last 2,000 years have not just arbitrarily made this up. So if you’re criticizing Christians for something that Jesus said, be aware of what you’re actually doing. You are criticizing Christians for being intellectually consistent. Your problem is not with Christians; your problem is with Jesus. Rather than blame Christians for holding to the tenants that the Author of our faith instituted, acknowledge that in a world of relativistic, convenient, scared-to-offend belief systems, the majority of Christians have the intellectual integrity to accurately represent what Jesus taught.
- By saying you don’t think anyone should claim to have the one true religion, you are doing the very thing you accuse Christians of. Any belief, no matter what it is, by nature is exclusive. By saying, *You should stop doing what you’re doing, and do things the way I believe they should be done*, you reveal that you think *you* have the superior viewpoint to everyone else. Furthermore, your viewpoint isn’t based on anything other than what “feels right” in this particular cultural moment. You’re being incredibly exclusive, and what you’re being exclusive about has no root, no basis in anything other than your own arbitrary, self-righteous opinion. Do you realize how arrogant and elitist that is?

**Objection #2:** “Don’t all religions basically teach the same thing? Aren’t we all worshiping the same God? Don’t all roads eventually lead to heaven? Doesn’t “love win” in the end?”

## Response:

- **1 John 4:1, 5**  
Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world . . . They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.
  - Behind every teacher, prophet, or founder of new religions or spirituality, there is a deep and profound false spiritual influence.
- The only way to assert that all religions have a part of the truth is to assume that you have the whole truth. Yet, by doing so, you do the very thing you criticize Christianity of doing—you claim your belief system is the superior and only viewpoint.
- Huston Smith wrote, “As soon as the notion of sameness moves beyond vague generalities—every religion has some version of the Golden Rule—it falls apart on the fact that the religions differ in what they consider essential.”<sup>1</sup>
  - Let’s consider one example of this: God.
    - Islam says there is one God.
    - Buddhism says there is no God.
    - Hinduism says there are hundreds of Gods.
    - Judaism says there is one God, who is very different from Allah.
    - Christianity says there is one God in three Persons Who are coexistent, coeternal, and co-equal. It’s always been Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three are the one God.
  - Can all of those statements be true at the same time? No! To assert that they are simply shows an ignorance of what those religions actually teach.
  - Consider how offensive it would be to tell a Muslim and a Jew that they’re going to be in heaven together, or to tell a Buddhist and a Christian the same.

---

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions*. Anniversary ed., HarperOne, 2009.

British journalist Steve Turner wrote an ironic poem about the absurdity of our modern culture. Here's an excerpt:

We believe that all religions are basically the same . . . They all believe in love and goodness. They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation. We believe that each man must find the truth that is right for him. Reality will adapt accordingly. The universe will readjust. We believe that there is no absolute truth excepting the truth that there is no absolute truth.<sup>2</sup>

In the history of the world, there has never been a faith system more holistically inclusive, more ethnically diverse, and more culturally and contextually flexible across borders and the span of human history than Christianity.

**Question**—*Every other religion is severely restricted to its culture of origin, but from its birth, Christianity has spread across every national, cultural, and ethnic barrier. Why?*

**Answer**—It's the only faith system where your entrance into it isn't dependent upon you seeking God, but upon God seeking you. Your salvation isn't dependent upon your perfect performance in adhering to religious law, but in Jesus' perfect work on the cross.

Every other religion asks, "Who among you is good enough to earn your way in?" Jesus Christ alone says,

**Your acceptance into My family  
is not based on your performance, but on Mine.  
It's not based on your perfection, but on Mine.  
It's not based on your goodness, but on Mine.  
It's not based on your adherence to the moral law,  
but on My adherence to it on your behalf.  
It's not about you striving to climb up to Me,  
but My surrendering to come down to you.**

Christianity is the only religion in the world that completely undercuts feelings of moral superiority.

- Any Christian who carries an attitude of moral superiority has forgotten the very basis by which they are accepted by God.
- Christianity alone says our sin was so bad that it literally killed God, but God loves us so much that He was glad to die for us.
- Christianity alone says that we are totally accepted by God, but that acceptance has absolutely nothing to do with us; it is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ.

Jesus says, "You want to be great? Love your enemies. Lay down your life. Serve those who spit on you, mock you, belittle you, and even crucify you. Because I went first and ascended to My Father in heaven, I'm going to give you the power of My Holy Spirit so that you can have the power to love your enemies the way I have loved you."

No other religion gives you anything close to that!

---

<sup>2</sup> Steve Turner, "Creed," his satirical poem on the modern mind. Taken from Ravi Zacharias' book, *Can Man live Without God?* Pages 42–44.

---

## The Open Invitation

### John 10:7

Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”

- Jesus does not say, “There’s the door over there. You can go through that door, but first you must get your life in order.”
- He says, “I am the door. Come through Me. Enter by Me.”

Pastor Rob shared a personal story that illustrates the nature of sheep and their need of a shepherd.

### Historical Context:

- In the ancient near east, a shepherd’s sheep were his most prized possession. He cared for his sheep and protected them at all costs.
- Every day a shepherd led his sheep to pasture, where there were enclosures for the sheep to rest in at night.
- What’s interesting about these enclosures is that they had no gate or door.
- At night, the sheep would file into the enclosure, and the shepherd would lie down to sleep in the opening of the enclosure *as the door*. This way, if any predator came for the sheep, it would first have to get past the shepherd.
- When Jesus says He is the door of the sheep, He’s saying, “I’m the One Who stands in the opening of the sheep enclosure. I’m the One Who provides security for My sheep. I’m the Good Shepherd Who has laid down My life to protect and save My sheep. If the wolves want My sheep, they’ve got to go through Me first.”

**The image of Jesus as the door  
shows us what Jesus accomplished on the cross,  
how He laid down His life and  
took on the punishment of death for us,  
so we could be free  
and have security and provision  
under His care!**

There are two types of sheep:

1. Those who are shepherded by Jesus and are under his care, protection, and provision.
2. Those who are wandering in the darkness trying to find their way, or, are absolutely convinced they already know the way.

Either way, you’re a sheep. One is secure and free, the other is enslaved, wandering, and blind.

---

## Conclusion

Jesus extends an invitation to the whole world—to whoever is in bondage, lost in darkness, wandering, anxious, scared, or alone—to enter through Him, the door of life.

## **John 10:9**

*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

- The invitation to be safe, secure, protected, cared for, and treasured is waiting for you.
- If you accept the invitation and enter by Him, you become the recipient of a beautiful promise: to have provision and nourishment in Jesus Christ.

## **Philippians 4:19**

*And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

- The Shepherd knows His sheep and what they need.
- God through Jesus Christ will supply every single need we have.

## **John 10:10**

*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

- The thief comes to bring death.
- Jesus Christ came to give life to the full.

**As we come to the door of Jesus Christ,  
we can have peace  
knowing that we're living  
under the provision and protection  
of God Almighty.**

*There are two doors: a door to death and a door to life. Jesus Christ is the door to life. Which will you choose?*

---

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What does Jesus mean when He says that He is the door to life?
2. Why was this statement so offensive to the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' time?
3. Why is this statement so offensive to our modern culture?
4. How can you respond to objections raised by people who don't believe Jesus is the only way to God?
5. Why does Jesus use the metaphor of a shepherd with his sheep to illustrate His claim? How does this illustration speak to you?

## NOTES