

‘I AM the door’

Two church members were going door to door, and knocked on the door of a woman who wasn't happy to see them. She told them in no uncertain terms, she didn't want to hear their message and slammed the door in their faces. To her surprise, however, the door didn't close and, in fact, bounced back open. She tried again, really put her back into it, and slammed the door again with the same result, the door bounced back open. Convinced these rude young people were sticking their foot in the door, she reared back to give it a slam that would teach them a lesson, when one of them said, ‘excuse miss, before you do that again, you need to move your cat.’

I've been given the text from **John 10:7** to speak about today where Jesus says to the Pharisees, ‘ego eimi thura’ ‘I am the door’. Now before we get into the main text, I think it's important that we understand the meaning and the power of the words ‘I AM’ in the wider context, please turn your Bibles to **Exodus 3**.

Now remember after spending 40 years in Egypt, Moses fled from Egypt after killing an Egyptian. He went on to stay in Midian for another 40 years and it was during this time when he was tending his father-in-law, Jethro's sheep, he came to Mount Horeb. And it was here when he saw the burning bush and begun a conversation with God Himself.

We pick up the story in **Exodus 3:13+14** “Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I AM THAT I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Now remember the Bible doesn't use names for God in the same way as we use names today. God doesn't have a name as such but He uses certain words to describe His character or nature. For example, the words ‘El-Shaddai’ describes His nature as the all sufficient one, the all-powerful One. The word ‘Adonia’ describes His character as Lord, Master, the One with all authority. The word ‘Yahweh’ describes His nature as the everlasting, self-existing One.

And so, when God speaks to Moses, He isn't giving Moses a name as we understand it. But He's telling Moses to tell His people that ‘Yahweh’, ‘I AM THAT I AM’, the self-existing One has sent you. God is basically saying to Moses, I don't need a name but I will give you one to tell my people. Now remember the Israelites have been in captivity in Egypt for 400 years and so God goes on to say in **Exodus 3:15** just in case my people have forgotten who ‘I AM’, tell them “The LORD, (The One with all authority), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent me to you.’

Now let's fast forward a few thousand years. We know that the Gospel according to Matthew focuses a lot on ‘prophecy’ where Matthew points out time and time again that ‘Jesus is the promised Messiah’. The Gospel according to Mark focuses a lot on ‘Jesus' miracles’ and Mark uses the word ‘immediately’ throughout his Gospel. The Gospel according to Luke focuses a lot on ‘Jesus' humanity’ and shows Jesus as being ‘the Son of man’. And finally, the Gospel according to John focuses a lot on ‘Jesus being the Son of God’ which shows the ‘Deity of Christ’.

But have you ever wondered why all the ‘I AM’ claims of Jesus are found in John's Gospel? John writes in **John 20:30+31** “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”.

Now remember John never uses the word ‘miracle’ in his Gospel but he does use the word ‘sign’ throughout his Gospel. And there are **16 signs** recorded in John's Gospel, 8 are things which Jesus did and 8 were things which Jesus said. John is basically saying that the ‘I AM’ claims of Jesus are signs, selected from many other signs. And he says these signs are selected with a purpose in mind and that purpose is that you believe that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be.

And so just as ‘I AM’ is God's own identification of Himself in **Exodus 3:14** to Moses. When we come to the ‘I AM’ claims of Jesus, we need to remember that Jesus wasn't giving Himself a Name or a title, but He was asserting His Deity. In other words, every ‘I AM’ reveals some aspect of His nature and purpose.

Now some people may not recognise or understand Jesus' claims but the Jewish leaders certainly did. In **John 8** when the Jewish leaders were accusing Jesus of being demon possessed and asked Jesus, if He was greater than Abraham.

They go on and say to Jesus in **John 8:57-59** “You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham!” “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him”. The Jewish leaders had no problem understanding what Jesus was saying when He used the words, ‘ego eimi’, ‘I AM’. They understood that Jesus was claiming to be Deity, that’s why they were going to stone Him.

Let me give you one more example of Jesus’ use of the words, ‘I AM’. Remember when Judas sold out Jesus and agreed to show the authorities where Jesus would be, in order to arrest him? **John 18:3-5** “So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.”

Now if we’re not careful we can overlook a very important point in this text. It’s been estimated that there would have been between 300-500 men who came together to arrest Jesus on this night. But look at what happens when Jesus says, ‘I AM he’, they drew back and fell to the ground. Now that doesn’t make any sense as to why they would draw back and fall to the ground, until you remove the word, ‘he’ which isn’t found in the original text. It only makes sense if all those people understood what Jesus was saying, Jesus was saying, ‘I AM’, ‘the self-existing One’. They understood that Jesus was claiming to be Deity, that’s why they drew back and fell to the ground.

And so, when we come to **John 10** where Jesus shared a parable with the Pharisees but they didn’t understand it. It’s then that we come to **John 10:7** where Jesus declares to the Pharisees that, ‘I AM the Door’, He’s openly declaring another characteristic of His divine nature. In other words, Jesus is the One and only entrance into the sanctuary of God.

You see loved ones in the Old Testament, there were three doors in the tabernacle, each of them was a foreshadow or a representation of Christ. There was the door to the ‘Outer Court’, there was a door to the ‘Sanctuary’, where the Holy Place was and finally there was the ‘Veil’ which was at the entrance to the Holy of Holies. Jesus says if you want to enter the sanctuary of God, you must enter through Him. That’s why later He’s going to say in **John 14:6** “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”.

Now what does Jesus mean when He refers to Himself as the door or gate as some translations have it rendered? Well this door is the door to the fence around the sheep. In the mornings, the sheep would be led out of the enclosure by the shepherd, then in the evenings, they would be led back into the protected area and be kept safe. Both the shepherd and the sheep went in and out through the gate. Jesus says that He Himself, is this door to the sheep’s protected area.

Now why is that important to understand? Well, basically, there had been people coming in without going through the gate, and it’s these people that Jesus calls sheep stealers. Look at **John 10:1** “Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.”

Now the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep in Palestine is said to be closer than any other species. The shepherd calls the name of the sheep and the sheep know the voice of their shepherd. When their shepherd goes into the fenced area and leads them, it’s only for the purpose of helping them live.

But, in contrast, the sheep stealer isn’t that way, the sheep stealer isn’t coming into the enclosure to help the sheep live. From start to finish the only thing on the sheep stealer’s mind is his own good. I can imagine Jesus actually pointing His finger at someone when He uses the words, ‘thieves’ and ‘robbers’. I can imagine Him pointing His fingers at the Pharisees when He tells the parable but they don’t understand what He means.

And so, to help them understand, Jesus goes on to say in **John 10:8** “All who have come before me are thieves and robbers.” Do you think the penny dropped? Do you think the Pharisees finally understood what Jesus was saying? You see Jesus was pointing to everything which had gone on before He came. The doctrine of the Pharisees that had been in existence, the religion of the law that had been in existence, the system of religious rule that had been in existence, and He said it was all ‘thieves’ and ‘robbers.’ In other words, their doctrines didn’t help God’s sheep live in any true sense of the word.

They were thieves and robbers, they looked out for themselves, they didn’t care if the sheep lived or died, as long as they were alright. That’s why Jesus says in **John 10:8** “All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.”

It was Charles Spurgeon who once said, 'the church needs to start feeding the sheep rather than amusing the goats.' Loved ones we have to pay close attention to what is being preached from our pulpits and taught in our Bible classes.

I remember hearing a story about a guy who was building his own house. He was almost finished building it but slowly he started to remove the whole of the front of the house. When his friend came around to ask him what he was doing, he said, 'well, the front door I bought was an inch too big, so I have to rebuild the front of the house to make it fit'. To which his friend replied, 'why didn't you just shave an inch off the door!'

People are claiming there are many doors to salvation today and instead of just doing what the Bible says, they'll try and shave off some parts of the Bible in order to get saved. 'Oh, just say the sinner's prayer!' 'Just believe that Jesus is your Saviour!' 'Once saved always saved!' Listen loved ones, we have to listen to what's being said, otherwise we'll find ourselves being led by thieves and robbers.

You see the shepherd enters in through the gate, he leads the sheep to go through that gate. The thief however, avoids the gate, he enters from somewhere else, and takes the sheep out from some other places except for the gate. Jesus says in John 10:9+10 "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Jesus says, He is the gate and if you go through Him you will find salvation for your souls and you will receive daily nourishment and life to the full.

I remember reading a newspaper story a few years ago about a woman who was startled out of a deep sleep one night by some desperate cries of 'Help! Help!' At first, she thought her husband had cried out, but he was sleeping soundly next to her. Then suddenly she heard the cries again, 'Help! Help!' Finally, she threw back the covers and headed downstairs toward their living room. When she got there, she heard the word 'Help!' again and so she shouted, 'where are you?' 'In the fireplace,' came the rather shocking answer. And sure enough, dangling in the fireplace with his head sticking through the flue was a burglar, upside down and quite snugly stuck! The police and firemen got him out eventually, though not before having to disassemble the mantle and some of the masonry. Perhaps the best part of the story was what this woman did in the meantime, she flipped on all the lights and videotaped the whole thing.

You see, Jesus says these thieves don't want to give life to your soul but they want to steal and kill and ultimately destroy your soul. You see, the Pharisees were saying, if a person keeps the law, they will be saved. They believed that a person will arrive at eternal life by his or her good works. They believed that they were the religious elite who had acquired a special knowledge from God and because of that knowledge they would be saved.

Listen loved ones, law keeping won't get you into heaven. Your good works won't get you into heaven. Your knowledge of the Bible won't get you into heaven. People say Joseph Smith is the door to heaven, or Ellen White is the door to heaven or Charles Taze Russel is the door to heaven. There is only one way to eternal life, and that's through, Jesus the door. Ephesians 2:18 "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father".

Have you ever seen the film or read the book by C. S. Lewis' called, 'The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe'? If you remember when Lucy cracks open the wardrobe door, the first thing she encounters is a whole new spiritual world, that she previously didn't know existed. Through that door, she meets the King of Beasts, Aslan, who Lewis uses to represent Jesus, the King of kings.

That's what happens when we enter through Christ, the door, we enter into a whole new spiritual world that we didn't know existed. A world where our needs are met and our needs are sustained. A world where we are protected from thieves and robbers. A world where we find salvation and have life to the full. No wonder Paul says in Ephesians 1:3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

There was a man who had been saving up for years to buy a ticket for a boat trip to America in 1920, which in those days would take several months. He eventually saved enough to take the trip and so he bought his ticket and boarded the ship. He didn't have enough money to buy any of the meals provided on the ship, so he simply took along some cheese and crackers to help with through the journey. Now you know what salt air does to crackers and cheese don't you? They become soggy and very quickly go off. And so, he became desperate and when one of the porters came to clean his room, he begged him for some food. The porter asked him if he could see his ticket and when he saw it he said to the man, 'sir, all your meals are included with your ticket.'

You know I've heard people say that when they get to heaven they will be so blessed. Listen loves ones, your so blessed right now, we don't have to wait until we get to heaven to experience life fully. Jesus says in **John 10:10**, **"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."** God will never ask us to go somewhere without equipping us with everything we need. In other words, all the blessings we will ever need are included in our journey to heaven.

Now if we truly believe that Christ is the door and when we enter into the presence of God through Him, **why would anyone want to step back out of that door?** You see, doors not only allow us to enter a place but they also allow us to leave that same place. Christ the door, will provide protection and everything we need for this life but He won't keep us prisoners because the door isn't locked either. **John 10:9** **"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.** Yes, we can come in and go out but only when the Shepherd leads us in and out but He won't force us to stay where we don't want to be, it's called free will.

Let me give you an example of someone who decided to open the door and leave the spiritual world to return to the physical world. When the apostle Paul was near his time of death, he writes to his dear friend Timothy and says in **2 Timothy 4:9+10** **"Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica."**

Now we don't know much about Demas but notice Paul doesn't say what aspect of love Demas had for this world. Maybe he didn't write the details because he didn't want to embarrass his fellow labourer any further, and saying that he deserted him was bad enough. But whatever the reason was, we know that Demas was once a faithful follower of Christ but has now left Him. He opened the door to leave the spiritual realms because his desire for the physical was more important. The truth is we simply don't know why he left the church and went back to the world. Maybe he forgot what Jesus said in **Matthew 16:26** **"What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"**

Maybe you too are struggling with something this morning, maybe you too are being tempted to open the door and go back into the world. Maybe your struggling with a sin and think it's easier just to give up and leave Christ. Maybe your enjoying this physical life so much you've forgotten that you're actually living in the spiritual realms. Maybe you're having problems with your brothers or sisters in Christ and rather than causing a fight, you think it's just best to leave.

Whatever it is that's pulling you back to the world, give it to God, talk to Him about it. Talk to someone about it, talk to the elders about it, seek guidance and counsel, do whatever it takes to stay where Christ is. I'm pleading with you this morning if that's where you're at spiritually because God doesn't want you to leave, I don't want you to leave and **do you know why?** Because your soul is worth more to Him than it does to anyone else.

In **Mark 5:1-17**, we find Jesus casting out an evil spirit named Legion from a young man and sent them into 2000 pigs and those 2000 pigs drowned in the process. The local people were up in arms about the pigs drowning but Jesus didn't care what they thought, **why?** Because that man's soul was more precious than 2000 pigs. In **Luke 15:4-7** Jesus says if one sheep leaves the fold, He'll leave the 99 in the open and go out to find that one lost sheep. **Why?** Because that one sheep was worth saving.

He truly does care for our souls like no one else ever can, He wants us to be with Him more than we want to be with Him at times. Jesus is the only door to eternal life, he'll look after us and protect us as long as we remain in His presence. If you're not a Christian this morning, then come to Jesus, speak to someone about how you can have eternal life through Jesus, the door.