

- **John 8:56-59**—“Your father Abraham exulted in that he should see my day, and he saw and rejoiced. The Jews therefore said to him, Thou hast not yet fifty years, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I am. They took up therefore stones that they might cast them at him;** but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.”

That is:

Your father Abraham exulted in that he should see my day, and he saw and rejoiced. The Jews therefore said to him, Thou hast not yet fifty years, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was** [*i.e., before Abraham ‘came into being’*], **I AM** [*not ‘I came into being,’ nor even ‘I existed,’ but ‘I AM,’ as Jehovah the Self-Existent, Uncreated, Ever Existing, Eternal One*]. **They took up therefore stones that they might cast them at him** [*to put Him to death, not merely for claiming pre-existence, but for His affirmation of absolute Deity in identifying Himself as Jehovah the I AM*]; but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Compare:

“And Moses said to God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say, **What is his name?** what shall I say unto them? **And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM.** And he said, **Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM** hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover to Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: **Jehovah**, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, **hath sent me unto you. This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.**” (Exod. 3:13-15)

“Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazaraean. Jesus says to them, **I AM.** And Judas also, who delivered him up, stood with them. **When therefore he said to them, I AM, they went away backward and fell to the ground.**” (John 18:4-6)

**“In the beginning was the Word** [*not ‘came into being’ in the beginning, but ever ‘was’ in the beginning, and thus had no beginning*], **and the Word was with God** [*not ‘came to be’ with God, but ever ‘was’ with God, that is, ever was personally in communion with {Gr. pros} the other two Persons of the Triune Godhead: God the Father and God the Holy Spirit*], **and the Word was God** [*not ‘became,’ but ever ‘was’ God, that is, absolute deity in nature, equally and fully as the Father and the Holy Spirit*]. **He was in the beginning with God** [*He, or this very One, who had no beginning, who is personally God, absolute deity in His eternal, timeless nature, and is thus Uncreated and Self-Existent, this very One ever ‘was’ in the beginning as a distinct Person in fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit—which is further confirmed by the next verse*]. **All things** [*not merely some things, most things, or all things except one, but ‘ALL things,’ all creation*] **came into being through him,** and [*to be even more emphatic and absolute*] **without him not one thing** [*no exceptions: not a single thing!*] **came into being which has come into being** [*that is, not one created thing exists apart from the eternal Word bringing it into existence!*].” (John 1:1-3)

“In John 8 we find, ‘before Abraham was I AM,’ in contrast with His age as man; which the Jews perfectly understood, and would have killed Him for blasphemy.” (J.N. Darby [JND])

“Unbelief reasons from its own thoughts, and is never so confident as when completely wrong. So the Jews, misinterpreting the faithful sayings of the Lord Jesus, avail themselves of it triumphantly as the proof that Abraham and the prophets could not be of His school; for they, beyond controversy, were already dead. He must be possessed, therefore, to speak thus. Did He set up to be greater than they? Whom did He make Himself [vv. 52-53]? **Alas! it is here that man, Jew or Gentile, is blind. Jesus made Himself nothing, emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, becoming a man though being God over all, blessed for ever, and as the humbled man exalted by God the Father.** If the eye be single, the whole body is full of light. So it was with Him Who came here and became man to do the will of God, in Whom He could and did confide to glorify Him. His path was one of unbroken fellowship as of obedience. He never sought His own glory, He always kept His Father's word; He could say, from first to last, I know Him [vv. 54-55]; in all leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. . . . But the Lord did not hesitate to meet their challenge of Abraham, and lets the Jews know that the father of the faithful exulted to see His day (as ever, I presume, His appearing in glory), and saw and rejoiced [‘It was the day when the promises would be accomplished,

and very naturally he who had the promises looked for the time when they are to be made good in Christ']. It was, of course, by faith, like the not seeing or tasting death in the context; but the Jews took all in a mere physical way, and on their arguing from His comparative youth to the denial of Abraham's seeing Him, the still deeper utterance comes forth, 'Verily, verily, I say to you, Before Abraham was, I am,' *the ever-subsisting One*. It was said: the good confession before the Jews, **the truth of truths, the infinite mystery of His Person, which to know is to know the true God and eternal life, as He is both. Such He was, such He is, from everlasting to everlasting. Incarnation in no way impeached it, but rather gave occasion for its revelation in man to men. He Who was God is become man, and as He cannot cease to be God, so He will not cease to be man. He is the Eternal, though also a man, and has taken manhood into union with Himself, the Son the Word, not with God only, but God too.** 'Before Abraham was (γενέσθαι), I am" (εἰμί).' **Abraham came into being. Jesus is God, and God is. 'I am' is the expression of eternal subsistence, of Godhead. . . . what He asserts could not be true, were He not *the ever-present and unchanging One, the I AM* before Adam, angels, and all things; as, indeed, He it was Who created them. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that has been made."** (William Kelly [WK])

"I hear Jesus saying (John 8), 'Before Abraham was, I am.' Did He speak the truth? If not, the morality of the gospel in its Chief is detestable, not Divine. Lofty precepts condemn, if there be not holy practice. **If Jesus was holy and true, He was God, according to the import of His own words. None but a Divine person could say, 'Before Abraham was, I am,'** πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι, ἐγὼ εἰμι. If you know Greek tolerably, you will see, when it is pointed out, the amazing force of this statement. In speaking of Abraham, a mere creature, the Lord uses the verb γίνομαι, which means *to become, or come into being*. **In speaking of Himself, He employs the substantive verb, which alone is proper to express, where required, absolute uncaused being. He, does not merely say, 'Before Abraham was, I was,' no matter how high you carry the point and term of His existence, even if it were the first of created beings, as the Arians say.** If so, Jesus would have said, ἐγενόμην. But no! He, the lowliest of men, could not deny His deity. **He is God, the 'I am,' and so He declared Himself, which provoked the unbelieving Jews to take up stones. But the time to suffer was not yet come; and so He passed through and went on His way."** (WK)

Compare also, for example:

**"See now that I, I am HE, And there is no god with me;** I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal, And there is none that delivereth out of my hand." (Deut. 32:39)

**"Thou art the Same, thou alone, Jehovah, who hast made the heaven of heavens, and all their host, the earth and all that is therein, the seas and all that is therein. And thou quickenest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Thou art the Same, Jehovah Elohim, who didst choose Abram and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham."** (Neh. 9:6-7)

"Of old hast thou [**Jehovah**] founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of **thy hands**: They shall perish, but thou continuest; and all of them shall grow old as a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. **But thou art the Same**, and thy years shall have no end. (Ps. 102:25-27)

**"Jesus Christ is the Same yesterday, and today, and forever."** (Heb. 13:8)

On Deut. 32:39 and the expression "**HE**" (in the phrase "**I am HE**"), JND notes its blessed meaning as signifying:

**" 'The Same,' 'the self-existent one.' This expression becomes virtually a name of God: see 2 Sam. 7:28; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 17:26; 2 Chron. 20:6; Neh. 9:6, 7; Ps. 44:4; 102:27; Isa. 37:16; 41:4; 43:10, 13; 46:4; 48:12; 51:9, 10; 52:6; Jer. 5:12; 14:22; Heb. 1:12; 13:8."**

Likewise, e.g., on Ps. 102:27 and the expression "**The Same**" (**which is applied to Jehovah-Jesus by God the Holy Spirit in Heb. 1:12**), he observes again:

**" 'Lit. 'Thou He,' a name of God, 'The [self-]existing One, who does not change:' see Deut. 32:39 [and the cross-references provided there]."**

Finally, on Heb. 1:12, JND writes that "**The Same**" (**which refers to Jehovah-Jesus**) means:

**" 'The existing one who does not change.' Every creature is changeable. A divine title. See Deut. 32:39."**

For: *"I Jehovah change not."* (Mal. 3:6a); *"Thou art the Same, thou alone, Jehovah."* (Neh. 9:6a)

**In fact, see the scores of passages of OT scripture** which declare the coming Messiah as *Jehovah Himself*, and/or which speak exclusively of *the true God, Jehovah*, and which the NT repeatedly and methodically applies, throughout, to the Son as *Jehovah, Jehovah-Messiah*: Exod. 3:13-15; Deut. 10:17; 1 Kings 8:39; Neh. 9:6-7; Ps. 8:1-2; 34:8; 45:6; 68:18; 97:7; 102:25-27; 136:3; Isa. 6:1-10; 7:14; 8:8, 10, 13-14; 9:6-7; 28:16; 40:3, 10, 28; 43:10-11; 44:6, 24; 45:11-12; 45:22-23; 48:12-13; Jer. 17:10; Joel 2:32; Mic. 5:1b-5a; Zech. 11:12-13; 12:10; 13:7; Mal. 3:1; etc., etc.