



Is Jesus the “I Am” of both Exodus 3:14 and John 8:58?

“God replied to Moses: I am who I am. Then he added: This is what you are to tell the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you”—Exodus 3:14 NAB

“Truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am”—John 8:58 NASB. Many translations of John 8:58 capitalize “I Am” so as to convey the idea of a title. As a prominent Bible study guide says, *“The ‘I am’ denotes absolute eternal existence, not simply existence prior to Abraham. It is a claim to be Yahweh of the OT”* (Ryrie Study Bible note on John 8:58).`

“You will find references to Exodus 3:14 in most commentaries on John 8:58”—The Forgotten Trinity, p. 97. In these commentaries, it is asserted that Jesus Christ is the “I am” of both Exodus 3:14 and John 8:58. However, we do well to ask some questions here, *“Was Jesus giving himself a title at John 8:58 that only belongs to Almighty God, Yahweh? If so, is Jesus to be identified as being Almighty God Yahweh, as at Exodus 3:14? Or was Jesus, at John 8:58, simply saying that he had a prehuman existence in heaven prior to coming to earth?”*

Most translations of Exodus 3:14 render it as, **“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’”**

(NIV). Trinitarians then connect this passage to **John 8:58**, where Jesus words are rendered, **“I AM”**, and then claim that Jesus Christ is Almighty God, in their attempts to support the Trinity doctrine. However, Jesus never claimed to be God. When he said, **“You believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1 NIV)**, by saying **“believe also in me,”** and **“God sent me” (John 8:42 NIV)**, he was saying God was someone other than himself. John also wrote that, **“No one has ever seen God” (1 John 4:12 NIV)**. But lots of people **“saw Jesus” (Matthew 8:26; 14:26; 28:17; Mark 5:6,22; 6:49,50; 9:15; Luke 5:12; 8:28; John 1:29,36; 11:32; 19:6; 20:14,20; 1 John 1:1,2)**. The scriptures thus refute the Trinitarian claim that Jesus claimed to be God at **John 8:58**.

The Trinity doctrine claims that the three beings in this Trinity have the same qualities, such as all three being Yahweh, the three being Almighty, and all three being equal. One gaping hole in their claim is that no attempt is ever made to call the holy Spirit, “I Am.” Another is that **Acts 3:13** (see explanation below) proves there is no equality between Jesus and Yahweh.

WHAT DOES **EXODUS 3:14** REALLY MEAN?

Yahweh’s statement to Moses here is in answer to Moses question about God’s identity. The usual rendering of, “I Am has sent me to you,” is a poor translation of **Exodus 3:14**. Why? Neither the Hebrew, nor the Greek, support the rendering “I am” at **Exodus 3:14**.

“I am who I am: Moses asks in v. 13 for the name of the One speaking to him, but God responds with a wordplay . . . as it appears to suggest something of the inner meaning of God’s name: ‘ehyey ‘I am’ or ‘I will be(come)’ for ‘Yhwh,’ the personal name of the God of Israel . . . it . . . suggests an etymological linking of the name ‘Yhwh’ and an earlier form of the Hebrew verbal root h-y-h ‘to be.’ On that basis many have interpreted the name ‘Yhwh’ as a third-person form of the verb meaning ‘He causes to be, creates,’ itself perhaps a shortened form of a longer liturgical name such as ‘(God who) creates (the heavenly armies)’”—New American

Bible (NAB) note on Exodus 3:14 . This explains what **Exodus 3:14** is about. Almighty God is explaining to Moses at the burning bush what his name means, and who he is, and that he will use Moses to lead the Israelites out of their bondage to the powerful Egyptians. If Almighty God is of a Trinitarian nature, this would be a great opportunity for him to explain it to Moses. But he does no such thing! Here is an accurate rendering of **Exodus 3:14**:

“God said unto Moses, I will become whatsoever I please, Thou shalt say unto the sons of Israel, I Will Become has me to you” (Exodus 3:14 The Emphasized Bible (EB) by Rotherham). Yahweh said, “I will become whatsoever I please”. Yahweh God explains to Moses that he can do anything he wants to, and become anything he needs to become, on behalf of his people, and/or to accomplish his plans and purposes, such as Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. This is the immediate need of which he is explaining to Moses that He will become whatever He needs to become in order to accomplish his purpose — in this case getting his chosen people out of their cruel, slavish bondage in Egypt.

Some popular, mainstream translations also give a more accurate alternate rendering instead of **“I AM”** in both of its two appearances at **Exodus 3:14** in their footnotes, or marginal readings, such as: **“I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE” (NIV; NLT; NRSV)**. **“I AM”** is simply a poor translation at **Exodus 3:14**. Here are these other renderings of **Exodus 3:14** that are more accurate:

“God said to Moses, ‘I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE’”—Exodus 3:14 NIV margin; NRSV margin; NLT margin

“I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE”—Exodus 3:14 HCSB margin

We thus learn that **“God Almighty”, “Yahweh” (Exodus 6:2-3 LSB)**, with his unlimited powers, is flexible in his activities, and can act in any way he chooses, at any time he chooses, to accomplish his purposes, even if that requires Him to act differently than he has previously. Of course, “it is impossible for God to do wrong” (**Job 34:10 CSB**), so we can have

the utmost confidence that everything He does is right.

OTHER TRANSLATIONS OF EXODUS 3:14

Now, let’s look at some of the more accurate renderings of **Exodus 3:14**:

“God said to Moses, ‘I am he who is.’ And he said, ‘This is what you are to say to the Israelites, “I am has sent me to you.”’ God further said to Moses, ‘You are to tell the Israelites, “Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.” This is my name for all time, and thus how I am to be invoked for all generations to come”—Exodus 3:14,15 NJB. “I am” is clearly shown to Yahweh, the ‘God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’

“God says to Moses, ‘I AM THAT WHICH I AM.’ He also says, ‘Thus you say to the sons of Israel: I AM has sent me to you’”—Exodus 3:14 LSV

Let’s notice the Greek Septuagint Version (LXX) rendering of this verse:

“God said to Moyses, ‘I am The One Who Is.’ And he said, ‘Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, “The One Who Is has sent me to you”’”—Exodus 3:14 A New English Translation of the Septuagint (LXX) (NETS). We can see from the LXX rendering of **Exodus 3:14** in Greek that the usual rendering of, “I Am has sent me to you,” is a poor translation of **Exodus 3:14**. When the apostle John wrote **John 8:58**, he was not quoting from **Exodus 3:14**. In fact, the Greek expression at **Exodus 3:14 LXX** is **“ho On,”** whereas the Greek expression at **John 8:58** is **“Ego eimi.”** Trinitarian translations in English mask over this difference.

Most translations render **John 8:58** like the following:

“‘Very truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’—John 8:58 NIV

In **John 8:58**, the issue is actually not about Jesus’ identity/existence, but it’s really about his age—whether he was alive when Abraham was alive. Let’s look at the context to see this:

“‘Your father Abraham as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad.’ The people said, ‘You aren’t even fifty years old. How can you say you have seen Abraham?’” (John 8:56,57 NLT).

Based on Jesus’ saying, “I am”, as most translations render it at **John 8:58**, and ignoring the context, Trinitarians make the leap to claim that Jesus Christ is the “I am” of **Exodus 3:14**, and he therefore is God Almighty. In **Exodus 3:14**, Almighty God makes a statement about his identity, whereas in **John 8:58**, Jesus explains that he was alive before Abraham was born. However, if saying “I am” makes a person God, the healed blind man must be God Almighty, because he said **“I am”** at (**John 9:9 NAB**).

JESUS IS THE SERVANT OF THE “I AM”, ALMIGHTY GOD

An extremely powerful proof that Jesus Christ is not the **“I Am”** of **Exodus 3:14** is the following:

“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him”—Acts 3:13 LSB; NASB

“God spoke further to Moses and said to him, ‘I am Yahweh and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name Yahweh, I was not known to them’”—Exodus 6:2,3 LSB

“God Almighty”, who is **“the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,”** identifies himself as **“Yahweh”** at **Exodus 6:2,3**. We also notice in **Acts 3:13,26; 4:27,30** that **“Yahweh”,** who is **“the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,”** has a **“servant”** (Greek,

"pais") named **"Jesus"**. Thus, FOUR times Jesus is named as the great I Am's **"servant"**. This means that "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", the **"I AM"**, cannot be Jesus Christ, because Jesus is **"his servant"** (**"pais"**). Yahweh is not a servant to anyone, but Jesus is Yahweh's servant. Additionally, **"Our Lord", "our God"**, is specifically referred to as having **"his Messiah"** (**Revelation 11:15; NIV; 12:10 NIV**), who is obviously Jesus Christ.

"My servant: . . . Scholars are of the opinion . . . that the original concept reflected in the words identified Jesus with the suffering Servant of the Lord of Is 52:13 - 53:12. [NAB note on Acts 3:13]. Jesus is referred to as **"my servant"** at **Isaiah 52:13 (NIV)**, which again emphasizes the fact that he is Yahweh's **"servant"**. Therefore, Jesus Christ cannot be the **"I am"** of **Exodus 3:14**, and cannot be Almighty God, because he is God's **"servant"**. This fact also refutes the Trinitarian claim that he and his Father are "equal." Jesus said, **"the Father is greater than I am"** (**John 14:28 GWT**). Jesus is presented as God's **"servant"** (**Acts 3:13,26; 4:27,30**) in the Bible, not as his "equal."

ACCURATE TRANSLATIONS OF JOHN 8:58

When **John 8:58** is accurately translated, the issue also clears up even more:

"Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham was born, I was"—John 8:58 Lamsa

"Jesus said to them, 'I tell you, I existed before Abraham was born'"—John 8:58 An American Translation by Edgar Goodspeed (AAT)

"Then Jesus said to them, 'I most solemnly say to you, I existed before Abraham was born'"—John 8:58 Williams New Testament (WNT)

"'Truly, truly, I tell you, said Jesus, 'I have existed before Abraham was born'"—John 8:58 Moffatt

“Before Abraham existed I was”—John 8:58 The Twentieth Century New Testament

The next rendering, while not quite as accurate, because Jesus has not always been alive, still reflects the primary fact that the issue was Jesus’ age, rather than his identity:

DID JESUS LIVE IN HEAVEN BEFORE COMING TO EARTH?

“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I have always been alive’”—John 8:58 NLT margin

The issue under discussion at John 8:56,57 was Jesus’ age, not his identity, and John 8:58 is more accurately translated, as above, in Lamsa, AAT; WNT, Moffatt, or even the NLT, than with “I am”, anyway. Thus, “I am” is not only a poor translation at Exodus 3:14, it is also a poor translation at John 8:58.

While Trinitarians claim that Jesus has eternally existed, on the other hand, some non-Trinitarians assert that Jesus did not exist until he was born on earth. John 8:58 refutes the latter claim. Micah 5:2 refutes both of these false teachings: **“You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me the one who will rule over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times” (NIV).** Matthew 2:4,5 quotes Micah 5:2 and confirms that it applies to **“the Messiah,”** Jesus. Jesus’ **“origins are from of old, from ancient times.”** This indicates Jesus had an ‘origin,’ a beginning to his life, and that he pre-existed humans. Jesus said, **“I came down from heaven” (John 6:38); “I have come down from heaven” (John 6:42); “I am the living bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:51 NIV), and “I came from God” (John 8:42 HCSB).** John 8:58 simply confirms this preexistence, without saying Jesus existed eternally.

SEVEN “I AM” STATEMENTS OF JOHN’S GOSPEL

Jesus makes seven statements, in the gospel of John, about himself, using the personal pronoun “I” and the present tense verb “am”, which Trinitarians twist into some of their “proofs” that Jesus is Almighty God. Let’s look at them:

1. “I am the bread of life”—[John 6:35](#)
2. “I am the light of the world”—[John 8:12](#); 9:5
3. “I am the gate for the sheep”—[John 10:5](#)
4. “I am the good shepherd”—[John 10:11,14](#)
5. “I am the resurrection and the life”—[John 10:25](#)
6. “I am the way and the truth and the life”—[John 14:6](#)
7. “I am the true vine”—[John 15:1](#)

However, these statements by Jesus are simply using metaphors illustrating various truths about himself. He was not identifying himself as Almighty God by using the pronoun “I” and the verb “am”. Many other people in the Bible also used the same “I am” expression to describe things about themselves. Some of these are: the angel Gabriel ([Luke 1:19](#)); the healed blind man ([John 9:9](#)); Peter ([Acts 10:21](#)); and Paul ([Acts 22:3](#); 26:29; [Romans 11:13](#); 1 [Timothy 1:15](#)).

IS THE HOLY SPIRIT “I AM”?

The holy Spirit is never referred to by, or as, “I am,” and Trinitarians don’t try to connect the term to the holy Spirit, whereas if the Trinity doctrine were true, the holy Spirit, of necessity, would also have to be.

CONCLUSION

But even if [John 8:58](#) and [Exodus 3:14](#) were both accurately translated as “I am”, it is still scripturally impossible to identify Jesus as the “I am” of [Exodus 3:14](#), because Jesus is Yahweh’s “**servant**” ([Acts 3:13](#)), and saying “**I am**”, does not make someone “**God Almighty**”, Yahweh, as demonstrated at [John 9:9](#) and other scriptures.

We have seen from the scriptures that Jesus is not God Almighty, nor is he equal to him. We have also noticed an absence of mention of the holy Spirit in either of these verses, nor any mention of a Trinity.

In conclusion, the **"I am"** in **Exodus 3:14 (Yahweh God the Father)** is not the same **"I am"** (**Jesus Christ, his servant**) that is in **John 8:58**. Jesus Christ is not **"God Almighty,"** but he is **"his servant"** (**Acts 3:13**).