



COVENANTAL CRISES I:

The Beginning

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN opens: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1, 2). This statement is puzzling because it seems to define the only God as more than one. However, this puzzle was resolved more than 1,000 years earlier when God confronted Moses at the burning bush in the wilderness of Sinai. When Moses asked for his name, “. . . God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM . . .” (Exodus 3:14). In Hebrew the statement is “*eheyeh asher eheyeh*.” Surprisingly, the root word *hayah* is a Hebrew verb rather than a noun; and when it is incorporated in the divine declaration, it has the threefold meaning: I will *Be* for you, I will *Become* for you, I will *Effect* for you.¹ Thus, God himself constitutes relationality defined as the covenant. Internally, he is *Being* as the Father. Externally, he is *Becoming* as the Son. Interactively he is *Effecting* as the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ as the “I AM”

It is in this context that Jesus Christ appropriated the “I AM” as his “Name” during his incarnate life on earth and thereafter. For example:

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“. . . [L]o, I AM with you always, even to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:20, NASB (emphasis supplied).

“I AM the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger . . .” — John 6:35, NASB (emphasis supplied).

“I AM the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.” — John 8:12, NASB (emphasis supplied).

“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.” — John 8:58, NASB.

“I AM the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” — John 10:9, NASB (emphasis supplied).

“I AM the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies . . .” — John 11:25 (emphasis supplied).

“ . . . I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I AM, there you may be also.” — John 14:3, NASB (emphasis supplied).

“I AM the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.” — John 14:6, NASB (emphasis supplied).

“Do you not believe that I AM in the Father, and the Father is in Me?” — John 14:10, NASB (emphasis supplied).

“I AM the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” — John 15:1, NASB (emphasis supplied).

I AM Alpha and Omega, . . . the first and the last . . . — Revelation 1:8, 17 (emphasis supplied).

I AM he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I AM alive for evermore . . . — Revelation 1:18 (emphasis supplied).

I AM Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. — Revelation 22:13 (emphasis supplied).

Summary

Thus, from the very beginning God has constituted and will always constitute relationship defined as the covenant. Furthermore, it is in this context that God decided to become human as Jesus Christ.

Endnote

1. See Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1960), pp. 38-49.

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