

Introduction

Some Trinitarians claim that Christ was declaring Himself to be God in John 8:58 because a large number of Bibles have the words of Jesus translated as, "Before Abraham was, I am." This erroneous claim is based on the words "I am" being a reference to [Exodus 3:14](#) "And God said unto Moses, I AM



THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you." From this they attempt to draw the conclusion that Christ must be alluding to the divine name and thereby telling the Jews that He was God.

There is in fact nothing in John 8:58 that states Jesus was claiming to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This idea has been wrongly assumed, added to, and read into in what Jesus stated.

Some further try and support their claim by saying this is why the next verse says they picked up stones to kill Him. But the reason the Jews did that was not because they saw Jesus declaring Himself to be God, but because He declared Himself to be greater than their father Abraham.

Did Jesus use the Divine Name in John 8:58?

John 8:58 is one of those difficult translations that occurs many times in Scripture. As a result, while there are many translators that have translated this verse correctly, most modern translators have not. And since most Bible translators are Trinitarian, their bias appears in various places in their translation and John 8:58 is a common one.

Here is the passage in context. [John 8:53-59](#) "Are you greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom makest you thyself? [54](#) Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom you say, that he is your God: [55](#) Yet you have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. [56](#) Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. [57](#) Then said the Jews unto him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? [58](#) Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. [59](#) Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

Some claim that to deny Jesus is declaring Himself to be God in John 8:58 denies His Deity but it does no such thing. Firstly, it depends on what Jesus was really saying, and secondly, everything that Christ consists of had no beginning because it came from the Father. So His divinity had no beginning. If you trace Christ back you will have to go through the Father and you will never get to a beginning. But His personality as the Son began when He was brought forth by His Father. Jesus is the Son of God and came from God, and so He has the same divine nature as His Father by inheritance and hence is equal with God. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." [Philippians 2:6](#).

Note that the phrase “I am” in John 8:58 comes from two Greek words “ego” and “eimi.” The Strong's Definitions are:

“ego : ‘I’ (only expressed when emphatic): - I, me.”

“eimi: I exist (used only when emphatic): - am, have been, X it is I, was.”

How would you expect Jesus to respond to this comment?
“Then said the Jews unto him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” John 8:57

Not knowing Jesus existed before Abraham, the Pharisees are saying how could you have seen Abraham because you are not yet 50 years old. Since the Greek words for “I am” also mean I exist or existed, what is the obvious translation and response from Christ who existed before Abraham?

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” John 8:58

Or

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I existed.” John 8:58

Both are valid translations and the majority of Bible translations agree with the last one in fact with good reason!

So “I exist”, “I have been” and “I was” are other possible translations which have all been used by various Bible translators for John 8:58 as well as elsewhere in the KJV. For example: ego eimi has been translated to “I was” in Luke 19:22 “You knewest that I was (ego eimi) an austere man,”

It is also notable that the phrase ego eimi does not have any special meaning. It simply and most commonly just means “I am.” In the following examples Peter, Paul, Gabriel and Zacharias all said, “I am” (ego eimi). But none of them were claiming to be God or without beginning.

Luke 1:18 “And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am (ego eimi) an old man,” Luke 1:19 “And the angel answering said unto him, I am (ego eimi) Gabriel,” John 1:27 “He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am (ego eimi) not worthy to unloose.” Acts 10:21 “Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am (ego eimi) he whom you seek.” Acts 21:39 “Paul said, I am (ego eimi) a man which am a Jew of Tarsus,” Romans 7:14 “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am (ego eimi) carnal,”

In the following verse the blind man identifies himself by saying, ego eimi (I am). None of the Jews saw this man as declaring himself to be God. John 9:9 “Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am (ego eimi) he.” Note that as per John 8:58, there is no predicate as the word “he” is added by the translators.

Except for John 8:58, here are all the other verses where Jesus used the words ego eimi in the Gospels. Note that not one can be understood as Jesus claiming to be God, only the Son of God. Matthew 24:5, Mark 13:6, Luke 21:8 “I am Christ”, John 8:24, 28, 13:19, 18:5, 6, 8, “I am he (Jesus),” Matthew 20:15 “I am good,” Matthew 28:20 “I am with you always,” Mark 14:62 “Jesus said I am (the Son of God),” Luke 22:27 “I am among you as one who serveth,” Luke 22:70 “You say that I am (the Son of God),” John 6:35, 48, 51 “I am the bread of life,” John 7:34, 12:26, 17:24, 14:3 “Where I am,” John 8:12 “I am the light of the world,” John 8:18 “I am the one that bear witness,” John 8:23 “I am from above,” and “I am not of this world,” John 10:7, 9 “I am the door,” John 10:11, 14 “I am the good shepherd,” John 11:25 “I am the resurrection,” John 14:6 “I am the way,” John 15:1, 5 “I am the true vine,” John 17:14, 16 “I am not of the world,” John 18:37 “Thou sayest that I am a king.”

And so the meaning of the phrase ego eimi is governed by context and grammar, not by any special meaning. These words formed a phrase that was in very common use by Jews and Christians and in New Testament Scriptures in the first century. It was not the name of any deity, be it the God of the Bible or any other god. It was never understood by Jews or Christians as declaring one to be God. If it were understood that way, you can be certain that the Jews would have never applied it to themselves as they did so frequently! Christ simply used the present tense of the verb “to be,” and there is actually no proof in these words that he was alluding to the divine name of Exodus 3:14. More on this later.

While it is not possible that the Jews would have seen Jesus claiming to be the Almighty God in John 8:58, we can be sure that Jesus meant one of the following things by the phrase “before Abraham came to be, I am (ego eimi).”

1. “Before Abraham came to be, I have been.”
2. “I have been in existence before Abraham came to be.”
3. “I existed before Abraham was born.” (“I was”; “I existed”; “I have been”)

you are having and Abraham you have seen? 58 ειπεν αυτοις 'Ιησοους 'Αμην αμην Said to them Jesus Amen amen λέγω υμίν, πριν 'Αβραάμ γενέσθαι I am saying to you Before Abraham to become εγώ ειμί. 59 ἤρασαν οὖν λίθους I am. They lifted up therefore stones ἵνα βάλωσιν ἐπ' αὐτόν; in order that they might throw upon him; 'Ιησοους δε ἐκρύβη και ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ. Jesus but hid and went out of the temple.	Abraham as Jesus said to them: "Most truly I say to you, Before Abraham came into existence, I have been." 59 Therefore they picked up stones to hurl [them] at him; but Jesus hid and went out of the temple.
9 Καὶ παράγων εἶδεν ἀνθρώπων τυφλῶν And going beside he saw man blind ἐκ γενετῆς. 2 καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν οἱ out of birth. 2 And questioned him the μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες 'Ραββί, τίς disciples of him saying Rabbi, who ἥμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, sinned, this (one) or the parents of him, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῆι; in order that blind he should be generated?	9 Now as he was passing along he saw a man blind from birth. 2 And his disciples asked him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, so that he was born blind?"
57* Has Abraham seen you? P ¹⁸ & S ¹⁸ . 58* I have been (ἐγώ εἰμι, ego' eimi'). The action expressed by this verb began in the past, is still in progress, and is properly translated by the perfect indicative. See App 2y.	

Note also that the words “I am” are present tense but Jesus is speaking of his existence in the past. By using the Greek word “prin” meaning “before”, Jesus places what He states next in the past tense, “before Abraham” came to be existing, and He then relates His own existence “before” Abraham’s existence. Some translations treat the present tense verb (transliterated as “eimi”) in John 8:58 as a historical present, while other translators treat it as what some scholars call the progressive past (extending from the past to present). But some scholars say that the historical present is only used in narrative form, and claim that the words of Jesus in John 8:58 are not a narrative form. This however does not change the fact that the present tense verb is still used in a past tense context. Where is there any other scripture in the New Testament wherein modern translators used a present tense verb in a past tense context? It should be apparent that the “triune God” dogma has influenced most (but not all) Trinitarian translators to make an exception with John 8:58.

The late A.T. Robertson who is considered to be one of the greatest Greek NT scholars that ever lived wrote the following concerning John 8:24 and 58: “*That I am he (hoti ego eimi). Indirect discourse, but with no word in the predicate after the copula eimi. Jesus can mean either “that I am from above” (verse 23), “that I am the one sent from the Father or the Messiah” (7:18,28), “that I am the Light of the World” (8:12), “that I am the Deliverer from the bondage of sin” (8:28,31,36), “that I am” without supplying a predicate in the absolute sense as the Jews (Deuteronomy 32:39) used the language of Jehovah (cf. Isaiah 43:10 where the very words occur hina pisteuseste--hoti ego eimi).*”

And Jason BeDuhn, Ph.D, historian of religion and culture who is currently Professor of Religious Studies at Northern Arizona University wrote, “A quick glance at Smyth’s Greek Grammar reveals that what we are dealing with in John 8:58 is a well-known Greek idiom. The pertinent entry is in section 1885 on verb tenses, which states, “**The present, when accompanied by a definite or indefinite expression of past time, is used to express an action begun in the past and continued in the present. The ‘progressive perfect’ is often used in translation. Thus, ...I have been long (and am still) wondering.**” I think you can see immediately that this entry applies to John 8:58, where the present verb eimi is accompanied by an expression of past time, prin Abraam gensthai.” — (Truth In Translation Accuracy and Bias in English Translation of the New Testament, Jason BeDuhn, Ch. 10, Tampering With Tenses p.106)

Despite this, some still argue that “I am” has no predicate such as “I am He” or “I am Christ.” And yet the following two verses have no predicate either. Jesus not only says “I am” (ego eimi), but is declaring Himself to be Christ, not God. While there is no predicate, we know from Matthew’s account that “Christ” is indeed meant. Note that the *light gray* text means it has been added by the translators. So when Jesus says ego eimi, is He saying “I am God” or “I am Christ” here?

Mark 13:6 “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am (ego eimi) Christ; and shall deceive many.”

Luke 21:8 “And he said, Take heed that you be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am (ego eimi) Christ; and the time draweth near: go you not therefore after them.”

Matthew 24:5 “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am (ego eimi) Christ; and shall deceive many.”

Jesus frequently declares Himself to be the Messiah using the words ego eimi, not God. Notice that Jesus admitted to being the Messiah when the Jews decided to kill him. “*Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am (ego eimi).*” **Mark 14:61-62.** So again we see Jesus use the words ego eimi to say that “I am Christ,” which is what enraged the Jews to condemn Him to die! And like John 8:58, there is predicate. Jesus just says “I am!” So once again, when Christ said “I am,” was He declaring to be God or the Son of God?

The footnote for John 8:58 in the Trinitarian *Holy Bible: Easy-to-Read Version* says: “*However, it can also mean “I am he (the Christ).” Also in verses 28 and 58.*” — (World Bible Translation Center, 2006)

And famous Trinitarian scholar Robert Young (*Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible*) in explaining John 8:58 informs us that Christ was proclaiming Himself by the words (ego eimi) to be “*the promised Messiah.*” — (*Young’s Concise Critical Bible Commentary*, p. 61, 1977 ed., Baker Book House)

The phrase “I am” (ego eimi) occurs many times in the New Testament, and is often translated as “I am Christ” or “I am he” or something equivalent. We find “*I am Christ*” in Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8 and Matthew 24:5. And “*I am he (Christ)*” in John 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8 and Revelation 2:23, and “*it is I (Christ)*” in Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; Luke 24:39 and John 6:20. If these are *parallel* uses of ego eimi as many Trinitarians claim, then John 8:58 should be understood as “*I am Christ.*”

Note that in John 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8 that is translated “*I am he*” that there is no predicate, just as John 8:58 has no predicate. The word “*he*” has been added by the translators to make it read correctly in English. In every instance Jesus is saying I am Christ. If the phrase in John 8:58 was translated “*I am he*” as per all the others, it would be easy to see that Christ was speaking of Himself as the Messiah, which He was, and would then be consistent throughout the New Testament.

These verses in John are often called John’s “I am” statements by Trinitarians. They claim that whenever John reports Jesus as saying ego eimi, that it is a claim to Jesus being God. For example, where Jesus says, “*I am the good shepherd*” or “*I am the bread of life,*” then Jesus is really saying “*I am God the good shepherd*” or “*I am God the bread of life*” etc. Based on this claim, then they would also be claiming that many shall come in the future saying that they are God since **Mark 13:6** says,

"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am (ego eimi) Christ; and shall deceive many." It is obvious that Jesus is saying that many will come in His name saying they are Christ. It would also mean that John 14:6 is really saying, "Jesus saith unto him, I am (ego eimi) God the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Therefore God is the only way to Himself. The lengths and desperation that some Trinitarians go to prove a lie is extraordinary.

Some Trinitarians claim that Jesus must have been making a claim to deity because of the reaction of the Jews wanting to stone Him. But this reaction came from a long discourse of increasing hostility with a climactic ending that began when the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him an adulteress woman in verse 3. And as the story goes, because of Jesus she was not stoned and He told her to sin no more. So the tension already exists. In verse 12 Jesus continued speaking again saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." So the Pharisees said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." After the exchange of many more words that were taking place in the temple area, Scripture tells us in verse 20 that they would have already seized Jesus but God restrained them for it was not yet time. The Jews said God is their Father but Jesus said that if God was their Father that they would love Him because He came from God who personally sent Him! Jesus then said their father was the devil. Needless to say, the hostility is increasing. Jesus says they do not hear because they do not belong to God. And the Jews responded that He was demon possessed. Jesus then said that if anyone keeps His word they will never die. The Jews said that Abraham and the prophets died and asked Him if He was greater than them. Jesus says that the one they call their God is who honors Him and again says that they do not know God and that they are liars! Things at this point would have been quite heated. Jesus then said that Abraham rejoiced at the thought of the day Jesus first came and so claimed to have seen Abraham. By now they would have been outraged and would want to kill him. To then say that He existed before Abraham would be the straw that broke the camel's back! Jesus has just claimed to be greater than their father Abraham. In an agitated and impulsive response to the extraordinary claim of Jesus, the Jews became enraged and picked up stones to hurl at Him. Looking at other examples in Scripture we find that they tried to kill Jesus for a whole lot less than what transpired in John Chapter 8.

Jesus in fact told everyone during this discourse who He was and He did not say that He was God. He did however indirectly say numerous times that He was the Son of God but the Pharisees did not understand. In verse 25 they asked Him who He was and Jesus replied that He had already told them in the beginning. After claiming many times to be the Son of God which others listening understood, and then to suddenly claim to be God at the end of this discourse would have caused nothing but confusion. Because others listening did understand and believed that He was the Son of God. (verse 30) The Scriptures prophesy many times that the Messiah would come. But they never prophesy that God Himself would come!

As Dr. John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible (1690-1771) said for John 8:30, "**many believed on him: as the Son of God, and true Messiah: faith came by hearing; Christ's hearers were of different sorts; some understood him not, and disbelieved, and rejected him; others had their eyes, and their hearts opened, and received him, and his words.**"

Craig L. Blomberg is a distinguished Professor of the New Testament at Denver Seminary in Colorado since 1986. He wrote, "The fact that the Jews immediately tried to stone him does not mean they understood his statement as a direct equation of himself with God. Claiming that Abraham had seen his day (verse 56) itself bordered on blasphemy, and the Jews had already tried to kill him for much lesser 'crimes', such as healing on the Sabbath and speaking of God's love for the Gentiles! Stephen Motyer plausibly concludes that **John 8:58 'would not be heard as a claim to be God. It would be heard as a claim to be a divine agent, anointed with the name and powers of God, and (in this case) active in the genesis of Abraham.'**" — (*The Historical Reliability of the Gospels: Second edition*, pp 209-210). In other words, the anointed one, the Christ!

Jason BeDuhn, Ph.D. who is an historian of religion and culture, currently Professor of Religious Studies at Northern Arizona University wrote, "It is Jesus' claim to be superior to Abraham, and to have a superhuman longevity, not a claim to a divine self-designation, that enrages his audience. Jesus' argument in 8:58 is that he has seniority over Abraham, and so by the standards of Jewish society, he has greater authority than the patriarch. No one listening to Jesus, and no one reading John in his own time would have picked up on a divine self-identification in the mere expression "I am," which, if you think about, is just about the most common pronoun-verb combination in any language." — (Jason BeDuhn, *Truth in Translation*, p. 11)

We know that the Pharisees did not understand that Jesus was telling them that He was the Son of God in John chapter 8 but did they see Jesus as declaring Himself to be God? Looking ahead just over a chapter, who did the Jews now think Jesus was? John 10:24 "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long do you make us to doubt? If you be the Christ, tell us plainly." They were wondering if Jesus was the Christ, but being God did not enter the equation! The Jews did not ask if He was God, they asked if He was the Christ which is all Jesus ever claimed to be.

What about by the end of the Gospels? If the Jews understood Christ to be declaring Himself to be God, then the charges against Him would be for saying He is God. Any such claim would have to be well-known by this time. So who did the Jews and others understand Christ to be saying He was? That He was the Son of God or that He was God?

Matthew 26:63 "And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you be the Christ, the Son of God." Matthew 27:40, 43 "You that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross. 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he

said, I am the Son of God." Here the Jews said that Jesus trusted in God and that they heard Him say that He was the Son of God. Did they understand Jesus as saying He was God? That would be an impossibility!

Mark 14:61 "Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am." Mark 15:39 "when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God." Luke 22:67, 70 "Are you the Christ? tell us. ... 70 Then said they all, Are you then the Son of God? And he said unto them, You say that I am." John 19:7 "The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

The Jews clearly never understood Jesus to be declaring Himself God. They only saw Him as saying He was the Son of God many times. The outrage would have been heard far and wide if Jesus had actually declared Himself to be God. There is no record anywhere in the entire New Testament of anyone even asking Him if He was God yet alone accusing Him of saying that He was God. So how could the Jews have seen Him to be saying He was God in John 8:58?

The disciples slept, ate, listened to His sermons, and traveled with Jesus almost everywhere He went. So if anyone is going to know if Jesus declared Himself to be God they are. So who did the disciples understand Jesus to be? Matthew 16:15-17 "He saith unto them, But whom say you that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven." So GOD the Father, who is in HEAVEN, revealed to Peter who was on EARTH, that Jesus was the Son of God. The disciples never saw Jesus as being God either.

Does the Bible call Jesus "God the Son" as Catholics and Trinitarians say or does the Bible call Christ the "Son of God"? Scripture always calls Jesus the "Son of God" in fact and with good reason. Because that is what He is to state the obvious!

It is interesting that almost every single Bible translation has used CAPITALIZATION in Exodus 3:14 to show this is a NAME or TITLE of God. But almost every translation of John 8:58 for "*I am*" has NOT used Capitalization. The modern NKJV being one of the rare ones that has. Almost all Bible translations are done by Trinitarians and yet almost all did not Capitalize "*I am*" in John 8:58. This reveals that all these scholars knew there was no connection between Exodus 3:14 and John 8:58.

We find the same situation with cross-references in many well-known Bibles. For example, in the NASB, Reference Edition, Foundation Press, 1975, the Trinitarian New Testament editors used John 1:1; 17:5, 24 for all the cross-references for John 8:58. There is not one reference to Exodus 3:14 or Isaiah or any other Old Testament verse where God says "*I am*." And the very Trinitarian RSV, American Bible Society, 1971 edition also has only John 1:1; 17:5, 24 as cross references for John 8:58. So none of these Trinitarian scholars accepted the "*I am*" argument as being a reference to God.

Some Trinitarian translators have gone even further and have not only not capitalized or used "*I am*" in John 8:58, but further clarify the probable meaning in English showing that they do not agree this is a reference to God. The translations below which interestingly enough are mostly by Trinitarians render *ego eimi* in John 8:58 as follows:

The Living Bible:

"The absolute truth is that I was in existence before Abraham was ever born!"

The New Testament in the Language of Today, 1964 ed., William F. Beck:

"I was in existence before Abraham was ever born"

New Believers Bible, New Living Translation, (1996):

"Jesus answered, "The truth is, I existed before Abraham was even born!"

The Concise Gospel and The Acts, C.J. Christianson, (1973):

"I existed even before Abraham was born."

New Simplified Bible:

"Jesus said, I tell you the truth, I existed before Abraham was born."

An American Translation, Smith and Goodspeed, (1939):

"Jesus said to them, "I tell you, I existed before Abraham was born!"

The New Testament in the Language of the People, Charles B. Williams, (1937):

"Then Jesus said to them, "I most solemnly say to you, I existed before Abraham was born."

Cotton Patch Version, (1970):

"To this Jesus replied, I existed before Abraham was born."

New Testament, Noli, M.F.S., (1961):

"Jesus answered them: Well, well, I tell you, I existed before Abraham was born."

The Original New Testament, H.J. Schonfield, (1956):

"I tell you for a positive fact, I existed before Abraham was born."

The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, George Swann, (1947):

"Jesus said to them, verily, verily I say unto you, I existed before Abraham was born."

The Clarified New Testament, P.G. Parker:

"Jesus answered, before Abraham existed, I existed."

A Translators Handbook to the Gospel of John, Nida:

"Before Abraham existed, I existed, or I have existed."

The Documents of the New Testament, G.W. Wade, (1934):

"Jesus said to them, in very truth I tell you, before Abraham came into being, I have existed."

The Complete Gospels Annotated Scholars Version, Miller, (1992):

"I existed before there was an Abraham."

The Bible, A New Translation, Dr. James Moffatt, (1935):

"Truly, truly I tell you," said Jesus, "I have existed before Abraham was born."

The New Testament Or Rather the New Covenant, Sharpe, (1881):

"I was before Abraham was born."

The Worldwide English New Testament Bible:

"Jesus answered, I tell you the truth. I already was before Abraham was born."

Good News for the World, (1969):

"Jesus answered, I tell you the truth. I already was before Abraham was born."

International English Version, (2001):

"I was alive before Abraham was born."

International Bible Translators, (1981):

"Jesus said to them, I am telling the truth: I was alive before Abraham was born!"

The Simple English Bible, (1978):

"Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth: I was alive before Abraham was born."

The Four Gospels and Revelation, Richmond Lattimore, (1979):

"Truly, truly I tell you, I am from before Abraham was born."

New Covenant, J.W. Hanson, (1884):

"Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, I am before Abraham was born."

A Literal Translation from the Syriac Peshito Version, James Murdock, D.D., from 5th century manuscripts, (1896):

"Jesus said to them: Verily, verily I say to you, That before Abraham existed, I was."

Twentieth Century New Testament:

"In truth I tell you," replied Jesus, "before Abraham existed I was."

The New Testament According To The Eastern Text, George Lamsa Translation, (1940):

"Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham was born, I was."

The Curetonian Version of the Four Gospels, Burkitt, from 5th century manuscripts, (1904):

"Before Abraham came to be, I was."

The Old Georgian Version of the Gospel of John, P. Blake, M. Briere, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, Vol. XXVI, fascicle 4, Paris, from 5th century manuscripts, (1950):

"Before Abraham came to be, I was."

Ethiopic-Edition: *Nouvum Testamentum Æthiopicæ*, T.P. Platt, revised by F. Praetorius, Leipzig, (1899):

"Before Abraham was born, I was"

The New Testament, Curt Stage, (1907):

"Before Abraham came to be, I was."

The New Testament, Kleist & Lilly, (1956):

"I tell you the plain truth. replied Jesus, I am here - and I was before Abraham."

New American Standard Bible, 1963 and 1971 editions alternative rendering:

"I have been"

The New Testament, George Rh. Noyes, D.D., "Professor Of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages and Dexter Lecturer on Biblical Literature in Harvard University", (1869):

"Jesus said, truly I tell you, from before Abraham was, I have been."

"The Four Gospels" According to the Sinaitic Palimpsest, Agnes Smith Lewis, from a 4th-5th century manuscript, (1886):

"He said unto them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I have been.'"

The New Testament in Hebrew, Franz Delitzsch, 1937 edition:

"Before Abraham was, I have been."

The Unvarnished New Testament, Andy Gaus:

"Truly, truly I tell you, Before Abraham was born, I have already been."

The New Testament: a New Translation and Explanation Based on the Oldest Manuscripts, Johannes Greber, (1937):

"I am speaking the truth, Jesus answered, I am older than Abraham."

The New Testament (in German), Friedreich Pfaefflin, (1949):

"Jesus: Before there was an Abraham, I was already there."

The New Testament in Hebrew, Isaac Salkinson and David Ginsberg, 1941 edition:

"I have been when there had as yet been no Abraham."

Translation of New Testament, Wakefield, G., (1795):

"Jesus said unto them: Verily verily I say unto you, before Abraham was born, I am He."

Ledyard, G.H. *New Life Testament*, (1969):

"Jesus said to them, for sure I tell you, before Abraham was born, I was and sum and always will be."

The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect, George William Horner, (1911):

"Before Abraham became, I, I, am being."

The New Testament, James A. Klist, S.J., and Joseph L. Lilly, C.M., (1954):

"I am here - and I was before Abraham."

Footnote from last entry: "Christ here states (1) that he "was" already "in existence" before Abraham "came into being"; and (2) that, since then he has always been, and "still is," in existence. The two statements, fused into one grammatical expression, stress the idea of continuity from before Abraham's time down to the present moment and intimate his eternity. The statement in Exod. 3:14 is different: "I am he whose essence it is to be." [Christ is disclosing his being before Abraham; but to say that 'he intimated his eternity', is reading more into the statement than is there. ed.]"

Even the paraphrased Living Bible (also published as *The Word and The Book*) which takes great liberties with the literal text to bring out Trinitarian interpretations when it can, denies the *ego eimi* is God interpretation for John 8:58. Instead it gives the obvious and intended meaning as, "the absolute truth is that I was in existence before Abraham was ever born!" It does not say "I was God before Abraham..." And in the New Living Translation it still says, "The truth is, I existed before Abraham was even born!" Numerous Trinitarian scholars would not ignore a chance to use a "Jesus is God" proof unless it was obviously invalid. Even the oldest English translations do not render this as "I am."

So why did so many respected Trinitarian scholars translate *ego eimi* in John 8:58 as above where most of the time they translated *ego eimi* as "I am" in other verses? They obviously knew how this verse is used by many Trinitarians, so why haven't they rendered it in a Trinitarian way? The only logical reason is that the context of John 8:58 simply does not allow for the "Name of God" interpretation and neither does it fit with parallel uses elsewhere in the new Testament.

That now leaves us with [Exodus 3:14](#), so please note the passage in context. "And Moses said unto 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 to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? 14 And God said unto 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. 15 And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD 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."

The words "I AM" are the English version of what's called the Tetragrammaton, which is a fancy term for the divine memorial name. Despite most Bible versions using these words, many scholars agree this is at best a weak and uncertain translation, and at worst a shoddy mistranslation and terrible abuse of the original words. Note the following commentary.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, LL.D., F.S.A., (1715-1832)

"I am that I am - אהיה אשר אהיה Eheyeh asher Eheyeh. These words have been variously understood. The Vulgate translates Ego Sum Qui Sum, I am who am. The Septuagint, Εγω ειμι ο Ων, I am he who exists. The Syriac, the Persic, and the Chaldee preserve the original words without any gloss. The Arabic paraphrases them, The Eternal, who passes not away; which is the same interpretation given by Abul Farajius, who also preserves the original words, and gives the above as their interpretation. The Targum of Jonathan, and the Jerusalem Targum paraphrase the words thus: "He who spake, and the world was; who spake, and all things existed." As the original words literally signify, I will be what I will be, some have supposed that God simply designed to inform Moses, that what he had been to his fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he would be to him and the Israelites; and that he would perform the promises he had made to his fathers, by giving their descendants the promised land. It is difficult to put a meaning on the words; they seem intended to point out the eternity and self-existence of God. Plato, in his Parmenides, where he treats sublimely of the nature of God, says, Ουδ' αρα ονομα εστιν αυτω, nothing can express his nature; therefore no name can be attributed to him."

The Hebrew word "Ehyeh" is transliterated to "hayah" and occurs 76 times in 72 verses in the Hebrew concordance of the KJV. Strong's dictionary H1961 says the meaning of this word is, "A primitive root to exist, that is, be or become, come to pass." So it is clear why the literal translation is, "I will be what I will be" and not "I am." It is also interesting to note that every other occurrence of the Hebrew word "hayah" in the KJV is never translated as "I am."

Even with the uncertainty as to the meaning of these words, Trinitarians claim that the words "I am" Jesus spoke in John 8:58 are an allusion to the memorial name "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh" in Exodus 3:14. But this is incorrect and not based on good scholarship. This can also be proven by comparing the words God originally spoke in Exodus and the words Jesus originally spoken in John. You will find that they are not the same and have nothing to do with each other.

But how do we compare the words of John 8:58 and Exodus 3:14? The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew and the New Testament was written entirely in Greek. Quite easily in fact.

If we read the New Testament in the original Greek, we would find that quotes from the Old Testament are also in Greek. This means at some point they were translated from Hebrew to Greek before the New Testament was written. Many of these references are actually excerpts from a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible called the Septuagint. The Septuagint was completed around 270 B.C. by 70 Jewish scholars and was used by Greek speaking Jews in the time of Christ. The term "Septuagint" means 70 in Latin to the credit of these 70 scholars and it is also called the LXX for the same reason. In any case, this gives us the Old and New Testament in the same language for our comparison.

Here is Exodus 3:14 from the Greek Septuagint. *"και ειπεν ο θεος προς μωυσην εγω ειμι ο ων και ειπεν ουτως ερεις τοις υιοις ισραηλ ο ων απεσταλκεν με προς υμας."*

A bit of a problem if you cannot read Greek, so here it is from the 1851 English translation of the Greek Septuagint.

Exodus 3:14 LXX "And God spoke to Moses, saying, I am THE BEING (ego eimi ho ohn – εγω ειμι ο ων); and he said, Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, THE BEING (ho ohn – ο ων) has sent me to you."

Now compare it with the KJV.

Exodus 3:14 KJV "And God said unto 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."

Some claim that Christ was quoting the Septuagint in John 8:58 but you are about to discover that is impossible. Keep in mind also that regardless of what some translations may say in English that can be in error, the original text almost never is. For example: Acts 12:4 in the KJV used the pagan word Easter and yet the Greek word there is "pascha" which means Passover, not Easter. What were they thinking! Other translations have translated "pascha" correctly as Passover.

The Hebrew word "Ehyeh" in the divine name is translated into the Greek OT as "ho ohn." In the Greek NT, the words of John 8:58 are "Before Abraham was, I am (prin abraam genesthai ego eimi – πριν αβρααμ γενεσθαι εγω ειμι)." There is no mention of "ho ohn" anywhere! The direct translation of these Greek words is "The Being" for the divine name, and "I am" for the statement of Jesus. So Jesus saying "I am" (ego eimi) does not identify him as the God who spoke in Exodus 3:14. God said "ego eimi ho ohn – εγω ειμι ο ων," while Jesus just said "ego eimi – εγω ειμι."

Note that the words ego eimi (I am – εγω ειμι) in Exodus 3:14 need a predicate. That is, it needs to say what you are. It cannot just say, "I am nothing." And so we find that God said, "I am the being – εγω ειμι ο ων." And yes, ego eimi is found in John 8:58 but it is not the substance of emphasis, "ho ohn – ο ων" is. So the divine name is actually "ho ohn – ο ων", not "ego eimi – εγω ειμι." This is further proven by the end of verse 14 which says "(ho ohn – ο ων) has sent me to you." (ο ων απεσταλκεν με προς υμας.) It does not say "(ego eimi – εγω ειμι) has sent me to you." (εγω ειμι απεσταλκεν με προς υμας.) It literally says "the being has sent me to you," not the "I am has sent me to you." The words are different in either language and there is no connection. No matter how it is translated into English, "ho ohn" is not the same as "ego eimi."

So the Greek has Exodus 3:14 using *ho ohn* for the divine name, but the same Greek has Jesus saying *ego eimi* to the Jews in John 8:58. The divine memorial name is not *ego eimi* (ἐγώ εἰμι) which Jesus said. It is however, *ho ohn* (ὁ ὢν), which Jesus did not say. As you can see, there is no connection between “I AM” in Exodus and “I am” in John. In no way does John 8:58 equate Jesus to God except by biased inference based on weak translation and bad grammar.

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Passage Verse

• [1 Corinthians 8:6](#) “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”

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• [1 John 2:22](#) “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”

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