

John 8:58 (KJV)

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Before Abraham was, I am.

This is one of those passages where Jesus reveals his divinity, his identity as God the Son. This expression, I am, echoes those same words that God used to reveal himself to Moses at the burning bush, **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.*

I AM

This name was so sacred to the writers of the Old Testament that they would not even write it just as YHWH but used a code that would clue a reader to substitute the name “Adonai, which means My Great Lord, instead.

What a powerful identification of God when you stop and think about it. When God names himself I AM he is saying that He is everything, totally and there is nothing that is that is not himself, not created nor contained in the whole universe that is not within himself.

Imagine, if you will, that everything that ever was or will ever be in the universe is contained within God himself. There is nothing that is that is not God.

We get so used to thinking about God being “up there” that we do not recognize we are all part of God and God is all of us. God is creation and creation is contained in God.

It's kind of hard to bend our minds around that one. God being the Creator but not only being the Creator, he is all in all.

However, creation is not God. We have to be careful with that one. When get out and sing those little ditties on Earth Day we need to be careful because we are in fact flirting with worshipping the creation rather than the Creator. When we refer to Mother Nature, we are in fact acknowledging the very goddess that God warned the Israelites against.

And what did God say? You shall have no other gods but me.

When God reveals himself as I AM he is also saying that He is sufficient for everything that we need. Jesus, in his revelation in this passage repeats that same thought, but now we have God in a human form that we can relate to.

The ancient folks, like the Greeks and the Romans and others before them, in order to have a human representation they could relate to made idols in human form. This was not only to have some deity to relate to but also one that they felt they could either control or manipulate. Does that sort of sound familiar? Don't we too often try to control God, ourselves?

All of this brings us to the point. If God is the ruler of the universe, how does He rule? If God is I AM, how does he run the universe?

Along in the early days of this country there was a form of religion called Deism. This came about from what was called the Enlightenment, a time that man had become so intelligent that he was "enlightened." Thomas Jefferson, for instance, subscribed to this notion. In their belief, Jefferson and the others felt that there was a God but He was far removed from the day-to-day operation of the world. Sort of like an absentee landlord. They believed that God set up the universe and that then we went on an extended vacation, so to speak, and the universe just ran itself.

Then there were the day of the Greeks, when there were scores of gods, all attempting to manipulate the world for their own gains and power. They were involved in the most minute acts of man and had all the attributes of man, both bad as well as good. In fact we have a term, "Deus Ex Machina," that comes from the use of a crane to lower a "god" onto the stage of Greek plays to intervene in the problems of the play's protagonist. That has to come to mean the manipulation, or rather the attempt to manipulate, God.

But, let's go back to the point. How does God run the universe? Saint Teresa said that God allows us to help him run the universe through our prayers.

Let's go back to today's Collect for a hint of the answer. We prayed "We beseech the, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul."

God rules the universe mercifully by his great goodness. Think about that. God rules the universe mercifully by his great goodness.

He does not control us by a set of inflexible rules, by a set of externally imposed rules but rather He guides us gently and mercifully.

Here is the Almighty I AM who has every means available to force us, even against our own wills, to do His will by his goodness.

Man needs guidance. Otherwise man will slip into disobedience and eventually back into chaos. God has to be in charge. But what is he does, he does it through love.

Paul wrote, **Romans 11:33-35 (KJV)** *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?*

Only God can search the mind of God. Only God the Holy Spirit who searches all things, even the heart of God can comprehend the knowledge of God.

We cannot.

We can only know that God is in control. We can only know that God is in control, not us.