

Is Jesus the “I am” of Exodus?

A Study of the Translation of *ἐγὼ εἶμι* (ego eimi) in the New Testament

John 8:58 is often sighted in support of the belief that Jesus is the “I am” of the Old Testament where, in Ex. 3:14 it says, “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”.

Let’s consider this New Testament verse, but a word of warning, it does get a little technical but the reward is knowing the truth for oneself. John 8:58 (ASV) says: “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am.” This certainly is a strange statement to the novice but the question is: Is what we have in our English translations correct? Is there another way to translate this which is completely consistent with the way the same expression is translated elsewhere? Can the correct translation even be determined?

The purpose of this short study is to show that the correct translation CAN be determined and that Jn 8:58 should NOT be translated simply as “I am” because this is not consistent with the translation of the many other times that Jesus and others uses this exact same phrase. Thus if we were to adopt here the consistent translation used in all the other scriptures (I have used the ASV translation here but almost any other gives the same result), we would simply translate it “I am He,” not only for Jn 8:58 but also for Mk 14:62, Lk 22:70 and the 12 other occurrences of this expression used by Jesus. On the other hand, if we were to be consistent the other way and change all occurrences of *ἐγὼ εἶμι* from “I am He” to read just “I am” we would not only have made many nonsensical sentences but we would see Jesus seemingly claiming to be the “I am” along with all the apostles including Judas, the healed blind-from-birth man and John the Baptist. As we will see, there is much more to all this which the translators have not brought before the eyes of the reader of the English translations.

How then should Jn 8:58 be translated?

The Greek phrase translated “I am” in John 8:58 (and the 20 odd other scriptures where this Greek phrase occurs) comes from two Greek words *ἐγὼ εἶμι* (pronounced something like egg-oh i-me). *ἐγὼ* is the equivalent of the English first person singular personal pronoun, I, and *εἶμι* is the equivalent of the first person singular of the English verb “am” which we call the verb “to be”. These two Greek words go together various ways when combined with other words and the following example sentences will help this understanding. These example sentences show the various translations of *ἐγὼ* and *εἶμι* according to those accompanying words. Please bear with me as I need the reader to understand how the Greek verb works.

Example sentence 1.

εἶμι ὁ ἄρτος. (Accents and breathings have been removed so as not to confuse)

This is a made up statement to highlight a point. It does not occur in scripture.

The words translated, mean “I am the bread”. Here the verb *εἶμι* means “I am” and *ο* means “the” and *ἄρτος* means “bread”. This is a simple sentence in English where “I” is the subject, “am” is the verb and “the bread” is the object of the verb (actually the direct object but to keep it simple we will just call it the object). Notice in this sentence in the Greek that there is no separate word for the subject, “I”. It is not necessary, as all Greek verbs have a

subject built into the verb. We say the subject is an inherent part of the Greek verb.

Example sentence 2.

εγω ειμι ο αρτος. (John 6:48)

Here *εγω*, literally the personal pronoun “I”, is added to the previous example sentence. The purpose of adding *εγω* in this sentence is to give greater emphasis to the subject of the sentence which is already inherent in the verb *ειμι*. The words would now translate into “***I*** am the bread” with the emphasis on the “I” signified here in English by putting it in bold italic type. This adding of the personal pronoun to a verb to give emphasis to the already inherent subject of the verb is very common in the New Testament but alas not one major English translation makes the reader aware of this emphasis as being distinct from those which are not emphasised.

Example sentence 3.

εγω ειμι αυτος. (Lk 24:39)

This sentence is translated “***I*** am he,” again with the emphasis on the “I” signified here by bold italic type. Not only do we have the verb “to be” (*ειμι*) paired with *εγω* (“I”) which again functions here as a personal pronoun giving emphasis to the subject, but we also have *αυτος* (he) as the object of the verb. The *εγω ειμι* phrase occurs some 74 times in the New Testament and except for some 20 odd times, always has the object supplied in the Greek text.

Example sentence 4.

εγω ειμι.

Now we arrive at the problem phrase, *εγω ειμι*, where there is no object supplied in the Greek. How then do we translate these 20 odd occurrences where no object is supplied in the Greek text.

In the first two example sentences above, *ο αρτος* is the supplied object of the verb *ειμι*. In example 2 and 3 when *εγω* was added, we saw that the function of *εγω* was to provide emphasis to the subject. However, this last example is characterised by having no object at all. How then do we translate such an “objectless” sentence?

Superficially, there are three possible translations:

1) We can simply write, “***I*** am”. If this were adopted consistently, nearly all the 20 odd instances of *εγω ειμι* would make nonsense sentences. Since nearly everyone of these occurrences is translated in most bibles as “I am he” or similarly i.e. by supplying an object like, “he”, this possibility of expressing it as “I am” would seem to rule itself out.

2) *εγω ειμι* could be translated “I am I” where *εγω* is considered the object of the verb and the subject comes from the inherent part of the verb. Such use of *εγω* in the New Testament is never considered to occur by scholars. However, since *ειμι* is the verb “to be” and takes the same case after it as before (as in our English) there is the remote theoretical possibility that *εγω* could function, not as a pronoun giving emphasis to the subject, but as the object of the verb. Thus *εγω ειμι* could be literally translated “I am I” which in good English we would write “I am He”. This method of translation might also be ruled out since not one scholar would consider the personal pronoun here to be anything other than emphasis for an already inherent subject.

3) Finally “I am (*he*)” for *εγω ειμι* is the last way it could be translated, in which *εγω* emphasises the subject already inherent in the verb while the object, *he*, is supplied by the translator to complete the sentence and so is in brackets to indicate it is not in the Greek text but is supplied to make sense of the sentence. It is not unusual for translators to have to supply words in translating the Greek New Testament into English e.g. the verb to-be itself is often supplied in sentences not having a verb in the Greek and in another case, the article, the, often has to have “one” or “ones” supplied to make sense of the sentence, as, for example, Matt. 2:16 “he-took-up all the boys THE-(ONES) in Bethlehem...”. It should be noted here that this third method, “I am (*he*),” can also be translated “It is I” or even “Is it I?” if a question is posed. “It is I” is a valid alternative rendering of “I am (*he*)” and is sometimes necessary to better fit the context of the sentence in English. Examples of these different renderings in the New Testament will be seen in the next few pages.

Now to the main question. Which of these three methods of translation is the correct one? Can it even be determined? Should an object be supplied just like the verb “to be” is sometimes supplied when no verb is found in the sentence? Method 1 is already ruled out because it makes a nonsense of numerous other sentences. Method 2 is also ruled out because there is not a single scholar who would agree to it, thus leaving Method 3. As there are no rules of grammar which help in determining which of these is correct, and since context does not help decide (unless we demand that our pre-existing theology be allowed to have a say), we are left to turn to consistency in translation as the basis of establishing the correct translation.

A comment on consistency in translation is appropriate at this point. Whenever there is no good grammatical or contextual reason to do otherwise, consistency should be the only arbiter in such translation. Inconsistency in translation gives each translator the opportunity to say whatever his/her individual theologies demand. If we choose inconsistency then we adopt the intolerable situation that my view, though different to yours, is as valid as yours and we can each have our own version of scripture. This document shows that consistency can be found on this issue, in fact quite easily, and such consistency should be applied to all situations.

The rest of this short article will demonstrate that Method 3 is the only translation which can consistently apply to ALL occurrences of this type of Greek structure. It will show that, not only are there quite a number of examples of *εγω ειμι* from lips other than Jesus, (which obviously no one would translate as “I am”), but that this simple Greek construction extends much further afield than just the first person. These include pronouns other than the first person singular and pronouns with verbs other than the verb “to be”. For the purpose of this article, all these have been classified into the following four main groups according to the association of the pronouns with their verbs:

Group 1:— First person singular nominative personal pronoun, “I”, with the verb “to be” i.e. *εγω ειμι*

Group 2:— Other pronouns with the verb “to be”

Group 3:— Pronouns and Adjectival pronouns with verbs other than the verb “to be”

Group 4:— Other Verbs without any pronoun:

Remember to keep in mind we are dealing only with sentence structures which have no object supplied in the Greek text.

Group 1:— First person singular nominative personal pronoun, “I”, with the verb “to be” i.e. *ἐγώ εἰμι*:

Let us now examine all the instances of *ἐγώ εἰμι* found in the New Testament which have no object or appear to have no object supplied. I say “appear” because, in one case, the answer “I am” to the question “are you the Christ” (Mark 14:61-62) has an object implied in the question.

I have listed below the 20 occurrences and have divided them into three threads:

- a) — **13 which come from the lips of Jesus and apply to Himself**
- b) — **2 which come from the lips of Jesus but apply to others**
- c) — **5 which come from the lips of others and apply to themselves**

Yes, it may be a surprise to some readers to know that a number of other people used this “I am” phrase other than Jesus but of course these occurrences are never translated “I am” for any of them. In the 20 verses which follow, it will be seen that the overwhelming consensus of the ASV translators is for the translation, “I am (he)” (or its equivalents “It is I” or “Is it I?” if a question) since, in the 20 occurrences of *ἐγώ εἰμι*, they adopt this translation 17 times. The reader can check for himself that the consensus of the KJV, the NASB and the NIV is essentially no different to the ASV.

Consider now these three threads. The object supplied in the English is not present in the Greek and is therefore coloured blue. In each case the Greek text will be given first with the ASV translation immediately below it.

a) The *ἐγώ εἰμι* words spoken by Jesus and applying to Himself:

1. Matt. 14:27 *εὐθὺς δὲ ἐλάλησεν [ὁ Ἰησοῦς] αὐτοῖς λέγων· θαρσεῖτε, ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε.*

Matt. 14:27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying Be of good cheer; **it is I**; be not afraid.

2. Mark 6:50 *πάντες γὰρ αὐτὸν εἶδον καὶ ἐταράχθησαν. ὁ δὲ εὐθὺς ἐλάλησεν μετ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· θαρσεῖτε, ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε.*

Mark 6:50 for they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: **it is I**; be not afraid.

3. Mark 14.61-62 *ὁ δὲ ἐσιώπα καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκρίνατο οὐδέν. πάλιν ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς ἐπηρώτα αὐτὸν καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ; ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· ἐγώ εἰμι, καὶ ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.*

Mark 14:61-62 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, **I am**: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.

This verse perhaps should not be included in this listing. Even though *ἐγώ εἰμι* appears to have no direct object of its own, the words, the Christ, is clearly understood to be the object from the question posed in the previous verse. Thus He was asked, Are you the Christ and He said I am. Even so, a translation of “I am He” would still be acceptable. Certainly, the verse can not be taken to mean that Jesus is saying He is the “I am” of Exodus.

4. Luke 22:70 εἶπαν δὲ πάντες· σὺ οὖν εἶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ; ὁ δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἔφη· ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι.

Luke 22:70 And they all said, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that **I am**.

Jesus words “Ye say that” indicates that the scribes were saying this. Considering the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees toward Jesus, it is not even remotely possible that they would call Him the “I am” of Exodus. Again, this verse could easily be validly translated as: ...Ye say that **I am He**

5. John 4:26 λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἐγὼ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι.

John 4:26 Jesus saith unto her, **I that speak unto thee am he**. [Literally: **I am he**, the (one) speaking to you]

The underlined part here is the ASV translation, but what the Greek literally says is given in brackets.

6. John 6:20 ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε.

John 6:20 But he saith unto them, **It is I**; be not afraid.

7. John 8:24 εἶπον οὖν ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν· ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν.

John 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that **I am he**, ye shall die in your sins.

8. John 8:28 εἶπεν οὖν [αὐτοῖς] ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ὅταν ὑψώσητε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τότε γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ ποιῶ οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐδίδαξέν με ὁ πατήρ ταῦτα λαλῶ.

John 8:28 Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that **I am he**, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things.

9. John 8:58 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί.

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

If we are to be consistent, this should also be translated “**I am He**”. If it were translated “**I am He**”, it does not change the meaning of the sentence which states that He pre-existed Abraham. It does **not** however say that He is the “I am” of the OT.

10. John 13:19 ἀπ’ ἄρτι λέγω ὑμῖν πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι, ἵνα πιστεύσητε ὅταν γένηται ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι.

John 13:19 From henceforth I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that **I am he**.

11. John 18:5 ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ· Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον. λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ εἰμι.

εἰστήκει δὲ καὶ Ἰούδας ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν μετ’ αὐτῶν.

John 18:5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, **I am he**. And Judas also, who betrayed him, was standing with them.

12. John 18:6 *ὡς οὖν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ εἰμι, ἀπήλθον εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω καὶ ἔπεσαν χαμαί.*

John 18:6 When therefore he said unto them, **I am he**, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

13. John 18:8 *ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι. εἰ οὖν ἐμὲ ζητεῖτε, ἄφετε τούτους ὑπάγειν·*

John 18:8 Jesus answered, I told you that **I am he**; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

In 10 of these 13 instances in the ASV (and many other versions), the phrase is translated as “I am He” or the equivalent “It is I”. A further 2 of these 13 has Jesus simply answering “I am” to a question posed, e.g. Are you the Son of the Blessed/the Deity. The translators could also just as easily have put “I am He” for these two, without, in any way, straining the English. Only in one instance (Jn 8:58) do we see the translators write “I am” without the “He”. This could hardly be called consistent translating! To be consistent we must either translate all as “I am He” (or its equivalent “It is I”) or we must translate all as “I am” or “It is”. However, if we adopt the latter, we severely strain the meaning in most of these verses and this is evidenced by the fact the ASV translators and others put “I am He” or “It is I” some 10 times.

b) The ἐγὼ εἰμι words spoken by Jesus but applied to others:

There are only two instances here.

14. Mark 13:6 *πολλοὶ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ πολλοὺς πλανήσουσιν.*

Mark 13:6 Many shall come in my name, saying, **I am he**; and shall lead many astray.

15. Luke 21:8 *ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· βλέπετε μὴ πλανηθῆτε· πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες· ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς ἤγγικεν. μὴ πορευθῆτε ὀπίσω αὐτῶν.*

Luke 21:8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not led astray: for many shall come in my name, saying, **I am he**; and, the time is at hand: go ye not after them.

If we believe that ἐγὼ εἰμι should just be translated “I am” as if referring to the “I am” of Exodus, then, in these two instances, we would have to conclude that Jesus is telling us that many will come claiming to be the “I am” of Exodus, i.e. Yahweh! Now, it is conceivable that some will come claiming to be the Messiah (for they knew that the Messiah would be a man from among them) but no sane human would come claiming to be the Almighty Deity, Yahweh.

c) The ἐγώ εἰμι words spoken by others and applying to themselves:

Apart from any other considerations set out in this document, if Jesus were the only one to utter this phrase in relation to Himself, we might legitimately begin to think it has some special significance in relation to Him. But Jesus is not the only one to use this phrase. Let us now consider the 5 occurrences, listed below, which come from the mouths of others.

16. Matt. 26:22 καὶ λυπούμενοι σφόδρα ἤρξαντο λέγειν αὐτῷ εἰς ἕκαστος· μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, κύριε;

Matt. 26:22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began to say unto him every one, **Is it I**, Lord?

This tells us that ALL the disciples with Jesus used this phrase saying “**Is it I?**” (the question form of “It is I”), but then Judas is singled out and given special mention as doing the same in the next verse 25.

17. Matt. 26:25 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Ἰούδας ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν εἶπεν· μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ῥαββί; λέγει αὐτῷ· σὺ εἶπας.

Matt. 26:25 And Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said, **Is it I**, Rabbi? He saith unto him, Thou hast said.

18. John 9:9 ἄλλοι ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν, ἄλλοι ἔλεγον· οὐχί, ἀλλ’ ὅμοιος αὐτῷ ἐστιν. ἐκεῖνος ἔλεγεν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι.

John 9:9 Others said, It is he: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, **I am he**.

Here is a blind-from-birth man healed by Jesus who uses a very similar phrase to the words Jesus uses in Lk 22:70 (see first thread above). Surely to be consistent with their translation in Luke, the translators should also have translated these words here as “I am”! No one in their right mind would suggest that this healed man was claiming to be the “I am” of Exodus. Of course we don’t have to contemplate this thought because as this short study will show, “I am” is not the correct translation of ἐγώ εἰμι.

19. Acts 10:21 καταβὰς δὲ Πέτρος πρὸς τοὺς ἄνδρας εἶπεν· ἰδοὺ ἐγώ εἰμι ὃν ζητεῖτε· τίς ἢ αἰτία δι’ ἣν πάρεστε;

Acts 10:21 And Peter went down to the men, and said, Behold, **I am he** whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

Here the apostle, Peter, uses the phrase after Pentecost.

20. Acts 13:25 ὡς δὲ ἐπλήρου Ἰωάννης τὸν δρόμον, ἔλεγεν· τί ἐμὲ ὑπονοεῖτε εἶναι; οὐκ εἰμι ἐγώ· ἀλλ’ ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται μετ’ ἐμὲ οὗ οὐκ εἰμι ἄξιος τὸ ὑπόδημα τῶν ποδῶν λῦσαι.

Acts 13:25 And as John was fulfilling his course, he said, What suppose ye that I am? **I am** not **he**. But behold, there cometh one after me the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to unloose.

Paul in Acts 13:25 is recounting the words of John the Baptist who is quoted as saying in the literal Greek “not I am”. It might be noted this is the only instance where the ἐγώ comes after εἰμι and we can only wonder if there is any significance in this.

This verse is of further interest. The previous words in this verse include, τί ἐμὲ ὑπονοεῖτε εἶναι. Here we have the accusative form of the personal pronoun, ἐμὲ, followed

shortly by the infinitive form of the verb “to be”, *εἶναι*, and as such could qualify to be included in this analysis of “I am” phrasing but it depends on how it is translated. These few words could be translated in one of two ways. EITHER, What do-you-suppose me to-be? OR, What do-you-suppose, me to-be (him)? If the first alternative is accepted then John’s response has to be, “I am not (he)”, where “he” is the supplied object. As such, this verse would then qualify for a place in this last thread of Group 1.

However, if the second alternative translation is accepted, “What do-you-suppose, me to-be (him)?”, then John’s reply, “I am not” is perfectly sensible. In which case this verse should not appear here in this list. It must, nevertheless, still appear but in another new thread of this list because we still have the personal pronoun in accusative form (me) followed by the infinitive form of the verb “to-be” which necessitates the supplying of an object (him) to make sense.

Further comment will not be made here. Suffice to say, that, whichever way it is translated, an object needs to be supplied in one place or other to make sense of the sentence.

In nearly all the cases of Group 1, there is a need to supply the object “he”, otherwise the sentences make little or no sense. Thus on the basis of consistency, the most correct translation would seem to be “I am (he)”.

Group 2:— Other pronouns, apart from I, with the verb “to be”:

So far, I have only considered the first person singular occurrences of the personal pronoun with the verb “to be”. What about personal and other pronouns in the second and third person singular (e.g. you are, he/she/it is) and plural (we are, ye are, they are) with the verb “to be”? Several examples of these exist with the same pattern as *ἐγὼ εἰμι* i.e. the object has to be supplied by the translator to make sense of the sentence. In nearly all these cases the supplied object is “the one/s”.

Below I have 12 other pronoun occurrences and their literal translation. The supplied objects are in brackets. The forms found are:—

1. *οὗτός ἐστιν* — **he is (the one)**;
2. *οὗτοί εἰσιν* — **these are (the ones)**;
3. *σύ εἶ* — **you be/are (the one/he)**;
4. *τίς ἐστιν* — **what/who is (this/the one/he)**;
5. *ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν* — **that is (he/the one)**;

1. οὗτός ἐστιν — he is (the one);

This Greek phrase without anything supplied literally says: “he is”, and so “The one” or “he” or “this” or a similar word has to be supplied to make sense. Again the words in blue are the supplied object.

1. Matt. 11:10 *οὗτός ἐστιν* *περὶ οὗ γέγραπται· ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου.*

Matt. 11:10 **This is he**, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Who shall prepare thy way before thee.

Literally: **He is (the one)**. “the one” is the supplied object to make sense of the sentence. In good English though we could just as well write, “This is he” as the ASV has it.

2. Matt. 26:48 ὁ δὲ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς σημεῖον λέγων· ὃν ἂν φιλήσω αὐτός ἐστίν, κρατήσατε αὐτόν.

Matt. 26:48 Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, **He is the one**; seize Him”.

3. Mark 14:44 δεδώκει δὲ ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν σύσημον αὐτοῖς λέγων· ὃν ἂν φιλήσω αὐτός ἐστίν, κρατήσατε αὐτόν καὶ ἀπάγετε ἀσφαλῶς.

Mark 14:44 Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, **He is the one**; seize Him and lead Him away under guard”.

4. Luke 7:27 οὗτός ἐστιν περὶ οὗ γέγραπται· ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου.

Luke 7:27 **This is he** of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, Who shall prepare thy way before thee.

5. John 1:30 οὗτός ἐστιν ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εἶπον· ὀπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.

John 1:30 **This is he** of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me.

6. John 9:9 ἄλλοι ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν, ἄλλοι ἔλεγον· οὐχί, ἀλλ’ ὅμοιος αὐτῷ ἐστίν. ἐκεῖνος ἔλεγεν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι.

John 9:9 Others said, **It is he**: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am he.

We have already seen this verse in Group 1c above because of the presence of ἐγὼ εἰμι late in the verse. Surely, consistency demands that we treat ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν in the same way we treat ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι in the latter part of the verse and so supply an object as translators do to make sense of the sentence.

2. οὗτοί εἰσιν — these are (the ones);

This Greek phrase without anything supplied literally says: these are. “The ones” or a similar phrase has to be supplied to make sense.

7. Luke 8:15 τὸ δὲ ἐν τῇ καλῇ γῆ, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἵτινες ἐν καρδίᾳ καλῇ καὶ ἀγαθῇ ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον κατέχουσιν καὶ καρποφοροῦσιν ἐν ὑπομονῇ.

Luke 8:15 And that in the good ground, **these are such** as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Literally: **These are (the ones)**. “(the ones)” is the supplied object though the ASV here uses “such”.

8. Rev. 14.4 οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ μετὰ γυναικῶν οὐκ ἐμολύνθησαν, παρθένοι γάρ εἰσιν, οὗτοι οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ. οὗτοι ἠγοράσθησαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπαρχῇ τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ,

Rev. 14:4 **These are they** that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb.

Literally: **These are (the ones)**, where “(the ones)” is the supplied object. The ASV uses “they.” If the third word, οἱ, in Rev 14:4 is really the word “who” then this is a valid inclusion in this listing. On the other hand, if οἱ is really the word “the (ones)” then it is not a valid inclusion in this list since οἱ becomes the true object of the verb. The word “the” often occurs on its own in the New Testament and needs the word “one/ones” in brackets added to it to make sense in English.

3. σὺ εἶ — you are (the one/he);

This Greek phrase without anything supplied literally says: you are. “The one” or “he” or a similar phrase has to be supplied to make sense.

9. Matt. 14:28 Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν· κύριε, εἰ σὺ εἶ, κέλευσόν με ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σε ἐπὶ τὰ ὕδατα.

Matt. 14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if **it be thou**, bid me come unto thee upon the waters.

This is Peter’s response to Jesus’ first person example in verse 27 (see Group 1a above). Literally: if **You** are (the one)/(he). (the one) or (he) must be supplied to make sense. Of course, “it be thou/you” is also a valid expression with the “it” supplied.

4. τίς ἐστίν — what/who is (this/the one/he);

This Greek phrase without anything supplied literally says: what/who is. “This” or “The one” or a similar phrase has to be supplied to make sense.

10. Matt. 12:7 εἰ δὲ ἐγνώκετε **τίς ἐστίν**· ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν, οὐκ ἂν κατεδικάσατε τοὺς ἀναιτίους.

Matt. 12:7 But if ye had known **what this meaneth**, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Literally: What is (this). “(this)” is the supplied object. The ASV adds the word “meaneth”.

11. John 9:36 ἀπεκρίθη ἐκεῖνος καὶ εἶπεν· καὶ **τίς ἐστίν**, κύριε, ἵνα πιστεύσω εἰς αὐτόν;

John 9:36 He answered and said, And **who is he**, Lord, that I may believe on him?

5. ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν — that is (he/the one):

12. John 9:37 εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· καὶ ἐώρακας αὐτόν καὶ ὁ λαλῶν μετὰ σοῦ **ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν**.

John 9:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and **he it is** that speaketh with thee.

In all of these Group 2 instances, the translators supply an object for the pronoun-verb combination. Why then would these same translators apply a different translation standard in Jn 8:58? These further examples of Group 2 entrench even more the idea that this phraseology is quite commonly used by The Author of scripture and needs the object to be supplied to make sense of the sentences.

If Group 1 were all the evidence we had to consider, it would be sufficient to establish a consistency which demands that “I am (he)” be the correct translation of ἐγώ εἰμι.

But Group 2 provides further evidence, even more compelling, which demonstrates that this “emphatic pronoun—verb-to-be—no-object” combination is a common phraseology of the author of the Greek New Testament.

The examples of this phraseology however, do not stop here. Consider now Group 3.

Group 3:— Pronoun with a verb other than the verb “to be”:

There are 8 instances where a verb other than the verb “to be” combines with a pronoun and in which there is no object supplied in the Greek. Since these all vary in meaning depending on the verb, comment will be made for each individually.

1. Matt. 26:25 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Ἰούδας ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν εἶπεν· μήτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, ῥαββί; λέγει αὐτῷ· **σὺ εἶπας.**

Matt. 26:25 And Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said, Is it I, Rabbi? He saith unto him, **Thou hast said.**

Literally, You say (**it**), where “it” is usually the supplied object. The translators of the ASV have not added an object here because of the old English used but they have done so in the NASB, the NKJV, the WEB and many others.

2. Matt. 26:64 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· **σὺ εἶπας.** πλὴν λέγω ὑμῖν· ἀπ’ ἄρτι ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καθήμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

Matt. 26:64 Jesus said unto him, **Thou hast said:** nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Literally, You say (**it**). Again the translators of the ASV have not added an object because of the old English used here but they have done so in the NASB et al..

3. Matt. 27:4 λέγων· ἤμαρτον παραδοὺς αἷμα ἀθῶον. οἱ δὲ εἶπαν· τί πρὸς ἡμᾶς; **σὺ ὄψη.**

Matt. 27:4 saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said, What is that to us? **see thou to it.**

Literally, You see (**to it**). Here “to it” is supplied to make sense. Once again the NASB et al. add an object.

4. Matt. 27:11 Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἐστάθη ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ ἡγεμόνος· καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτὸν ὁ ἡγεμὼν λέγων· σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἔφη· **σὺ λέγεις.**

Matt. 27:11 Now Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, **Thou sayest.**

Literally, You are speaking (**it**). “it” is again the supplied object. Again the NASB et al. supplies an object and the ASV doesn't because of the old English used.

5. Matt. 27:24 Ἴδὼν δὲ ὁ Πιλάτος ὅτι οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖ ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον θόρυβος γίνεται, λαβὼν ὕδωρ ἀπενίψατο τὰς χεῖρας ἀπέναντι τοῦ ὄχλου λέγων· ἀθῶός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου· **ὑμεῖς ὄψεσθε.**

Matt. 27:24 So when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult

was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; **see ye to it**.

“to it” does not occur in the Greek but is supplied to make sense of the sentence. Literally it says, Ye see (**to it**).

6. Mark 15:2 Καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτὸν ὁ Πιλάτος· σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ λέγει· **σὺ λέγεις**.

Mark 15:2 Pilate questioned Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And He *answered him, “**It is as you say**”.

Literally, You are speaking (**it**). “it” is the supplied object.

7. Mark 15.12 ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος πάλιν ἀποκριθεὶς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· **τί οὖν ποιήσω** ὃν λέγετε τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων;

Mark 15:12 And Pilate again answered and said unto them, **What** then **shall I do unto him** whom ye call the King of the Jews?

The phrase “**unto him**” does not occur in the Greek. It is supplied to give sense to the sentence. This verse may be controversial since there are words in the Greek which occur in some manuscripts but not in others. It is included in this list as a possible occurrence.

8. Luke 23:3 ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ἠρώτησεν αὐτὸν λέγων· σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ ἔφη· **σὺ λέγεις**.

Luke 23:3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, **Thou sayest**.

Literally, You are speaking (**it**). “it” is the supplied object.

9. John 14:14 ἐάν τι αἰτήσητέ με ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου **ἐγὼ ποιήσω**.

John 14:14 If ye shall ask anything in my name, **that will I do**.

Literally, I will do. There is no object provided here in the Greek and so the translators add “**that**”, in the sense, I will do that.

Thus far, we have 3 major groupings, with 42 examples, all showing clearly that it is not uncommon in the New Testament to have pronouns with verbs and no object. In each case the object is supplied by the translator to make sense of the sentences.

Finally, there is a fourth group.

Group 4:— Verbs without any associated pronoun:

There is only one instance of a verb without any associated separate pronoun as subject, which has no object. The subject is inherent in the verb as is the case for every Greek verb.

1. John 1.45 εὕρισκει Φίλιππος τὸν Ναθαναήλ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· ὃν ἔγραψεν Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ οἱ προφῆται **εὕρήκαμεν**, Ἰησοῦν υἱὸν τοῦ Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ.

John 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, **We have found him**, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

The verb, **εὕρήκαμεν**, “We have found” does not have an object, so translators supply the word “**him**” to complete the sense.

Overall Conclusion

We see in the *ἐγὼ εἰμι* words and other Greek phrases listed above which don't have an object, that there is a Greek language construction here in which the object nearly always has to be supplied to make sense of the sentence. Answers to questions are the only exceptions and as such don't require an object because it is inherent in the question. The fact that the *ἐγὼ εἰμι* words (without an object) are spoken by others apart from Jesus should have highlighted to us that there was probably more to the Greek here. When we look beyond *ἐγὼ εἰμι* to other forms of the verb “to be” and associated pronouns and to other verbs without objects, we find the same pattern in the text, i.e. the necessity to add an object to complete the sense of the sentence. As I said before, having to supply words is not uncommon in the Greek New Testament. The verb “to be” itself is often missing and is a good example of the need to supply something to complete the sense of the sentence in English.

All this strengthens the argument that *ἐγὼ εἰμι* (without an object) should be translated consistently as “I am (he)”. Thus, to suggest that in some way that the use of the *ἐγὼ εἰμι* words by Jesus identifies Him with the speaker in Exodus 3.14 has no basis at all in the Greek. Though it is not the issue being discussed here, I hasten to add, that John 8:58 does clearly state that Jesus pre-existed Abraham but not as Jesus the human but in spiritual form as the Logos of the Father. This Logos is an ever present part of the make-up of the Father.