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JESUS IS THE I AM

"WHO IS JESUS?" FAMILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE - Week 29, February 25

JESUS IS THE I AM

"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered,
"before Abraham was born, I am!"

JOHN 8:58

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hings were starting to get heated. After Jesus spoke at the Feast of Tabernacles, the people were divided in their opinion of him. Some thought he was the great prophet they were expecting. Others thought he was the Christ and put their faith in him. The religious leaders, however, were getting angry. No one had ever talked like this before—saying he was bread and wanting people to eat his flesh? Saying he was going somewhere they couldn't find him and couldn't go? Where was that? Telling them they weren't Abraham's children? That their father was actually the devil? Crazy!

"You're demon-possessed!" they said.

"I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death" (John 8:49–51).

Never see death? "Now we know you are demon-possessed!" they said. "Everyone dies, even Abraham! Are you greater than Abraham? Who do you think you are?" (John 8:52–53, paraphrase).

Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (John 8:54–56).

Further proof that he is a lunatic, they thought. “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said, “and you have seen Abraham!” (John 8:57).

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58).

Now this made them really furious, and they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus quickly slipped away.

You might be wondering why they got so angry so fast. Of all the things Jesus said, this didn’t seem the craziest. And even if he was crazy, did he deserve to be stoned?

The key to understanding this is in two little, but very important, words: I AM.

Do you remember where you’ve heard these words before? It comes from the story of Moses and the burning bush. God is talking to Moses, telling him to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses

is fearful, and he asks God an important question: “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” (Exodus 3:13).

God answered Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14).

The Jews knew the Scriptures very well, and they knew exactly what Jesus was saying. Jesus didn’t say, “Before Abraham was born, I *was*.” He could have, but he didn’t. He specifically said, “Before Abraham was born, I *am*.” In other words, Jesus was saying “I am the eternal one. I am equal with God. I AM GOD.”

In their minds, this was blasphemy, worthy of death. And indeed it would have been blasphemy if he’d been lying. But it was the truth.

Jesus was God. Jesus IS God. Jesus always has been God. Jesus is the I AM.

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REFLECT

1. Why did the people want to stone Jesus?
2. What does the name “I AM” tell us about the character of God? And of Jesus?
3. In Hebrew, “I AM” is Yahweh, and is translated “the LORD” in our Bibles. Do some research as a family to discover how the Jewish people treated the Lord’s name. Were they allowed to speak it? Write it?

BIBLE REFERENCE EXODUS 3:13–14; JOHN 8:48–59

KEY VERSE JOHN 8:58