

BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM

SMALL GROUP NOTES - 11/02/18

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SCRIPTURE

John 8: 31-59

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

Jesus is involved in a lengthy discourse with Jews in the temple. Interestingly, verse 31 tells us that these are 'Jews who had believed.' It is unclear the extent of their belief but that description suggests they are open to Jesus' teaching. How quickly that changes! The problems begin when they take umbrage with Jesus' claim that they are enslaved (v31). They don't need to be freed they claim; they are children of Abraham. Jesus tells them that if they were children of Abraham they would do as Abraham did but as they want to kill him they have more in common with the devil than with God.

The tension continues to rise as the conversation turns back to Abraham. The Jews are completely indignant; Jesus seems to be positioning himself as superior to the great father of their nation. 'Are you greater than Abraham?' they ask. Well, yes, and Abraham actually looked forward to my day, Jesus replies. They scoff at Jesus and mock him. How can you have seen Abraham, he died thousands of years ago, you're not even fifty! At which point Jesus responds with an explosive declaration: 'Before Abraham was, I am.' This tips the Jews over the edge. The implication of Jesus' words are clear. In their fury they pick up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hides and leaves the temple.

DID YOU KNOW?

- John was Jesus' cousin and had a very close relationship with him. He describes himself throughout the gospel of John as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.'
- Usually, in Greek, when someone wanted to use the word 'I am' they would use the word 'ego' or the word 'eimi.' However John uses both words which basically mean 'I am, I am.' His reason for doing this is to link back to Exodus 3 where in the Septuagint 'I am who I am' is translated 'ego eimi.'
- The reference to the devil being 'a murderer from the beginning' in verse 44 is probably referring to the devil inciting Cain to kill Abel.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read John 8:31-59. What surprises/shocks you about this passage?
2. Jesus' identity challenges the Jews' identity and it challenges ours too. Why was the question of who Jesus was so threatening to the Jews he was speaking with? How does Jesus' identity challenge ours?
3. Read verse 34-36. What do you think Jesus means in these verses and how do they apply to us?
4. What point is Jesus making in verse 31 and 39? Think about what he is saying in reference to your own life.

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Galatians 3 and consider what themes Paul draws out that relate to some of the things Jesus is speaking about in John 8:31-59

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY / DEVOTION

Unlocking the Bible, David Pawson

The Jesus I never knew, Philip Yancey