

Pastors' Introduction to the 2009 Annual Report

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58)! That short statement had the Jews ready to stone Jesus right on the temple grounds. To those who believed him it was a statement which revealed just who Jesus really was. To the Jews who rejected him it was the ultimate blasphemy. To us who call ourselves Christians today it brings the ultimate comfort.

Jesus had been discussing his relationship with his Father. He told his listeners that he was sent from above to carry out the Father's work and to bring glory to his Father, but the people did not understand what he was saying. They didn't understand what he meant when he was speaking about his Father and who he claimed to be. Jesus told them, "If you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31, 32). This made the people angry. "We're not slaves! We're Abraham's children!" Jesus granted that they were Abraham's descendants but also spoke about slavery to sin. Only those set free by God's Son can truly be free from that slavery. Jesus indicated that his Father was different than father Abraham and even more different than the father the Jews were following. They claimed to be Abraham's children, but really were children of the devil because they didn't believe what Abraham believed or do the things Abraham did. "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44). These children of the devil were ready to kill Jesus!

How different they were from father Abraham! Listen to Jesus. "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). By faith Abraham saw the day that God would fulfill his promise by sending the Christ to take away his sin and the sin of the entire world. Now Christ was here and the Jews wanted to kill him. They rejected him as their Savior. They rejected him as God's Son. "You have seen Abraham?!" That's when Jesus said those words that made them want to stone him right then and there. "Before Abraham was born, **I AM.**" Jesus revealed himself as eternal God. He always has been. He always will be. He is the great "I AM." God's eternal Son came into time, came into this world, came in the flesh to be this world's Savior, to save all human flesh from slavery to sin. The Jews of Jesus' day refused to believe that truth. Today many still refuse to believe it. By God's grace the Holy Spirit has convinced you of who Jesus is and what he did for you. He lived for you. He died for you. He rose again for you.

Thank the Lord that Jesus is our Savior, the eternal God. He was here long before us. He will be here long after us. Thank God he was with us in 2009 and will be with us to bless us in 2010 and as long as this world lasts. That's his promise. "Surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). This year may we all grow in the knowledge, faith, and confidence of who Jesus is. May we also be empowered to proclaim to those in our lives what Jesus has revealed about himself—he is the eternal God, our Savior and the Savior of the world.

To help us grow in God's grace this year we will be considering the "I am" statements of Jesus from John's Gospel in our newsletter devotions. In this series of seven statements found throughout the book, Jesus uses a figure of speech to describe who he is and what he does as our Savior. May God bless us through this devotional study of his Word this year and always!

Pastors Seifert and Quinn