

It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.

Weekly Edition – December 15 & 22, 2017

Gospel According to St. John – Third Year

Jesus Goes to the Festival of Tabernacles (Part 5)

²⁵ At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill?” ²⁶ Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? ²⁷ But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.”

²⁸ Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, ²⁹ but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.”

³⁰ At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. ³¹ Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, “When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?”

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

³³ Jesus said, “I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

³⁵ The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What did he mean when he said, ‘You will look for me, but you will not find me,’ and ‘Where I am, you cannot come?’”

Two week Double-Header: Reflections on Nine Different Reactions Toward Jesus in Chapter 7

Reflection 1: The Reaction of Our Lord's Brothers (verse 3)

Both Mark and Matthew, in their Gospels, identify Your brothers as James, Joseph, Jude and Simon. We are never told if these are also sons of Mary and Joseph, or half-brothers or perhaps even cousins, but we know they are part of Your nuclear family. John tells us they do not

believe You, and they egg You on in a half-teasing half-contemptuous manner, urging You to go up the Jerusalem so to be seen on the big stage. Today we call it sibling-rivalry. Even today there are those who react to You and Your followers with teasing contempt.

Application: *When have I shown contempt towards a brother or sister in Christ?*

The Gospel of St. John

Part I

- Prologue 1:1-14
- First Year 1:15 – 2:22
- Second Year 2:23 – 6:71
- Third Year 7:1 – 12:50

Part II

- The Last Discourse 13:1 – 17:26
- The Arrest and Trial 18:1 – 19:16
- Death and Resurrection 19:16 (b) – 21:25

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Reflection 2: The Contempt of the Religious Authorities (verses 7 & 19)

Neither the Pharisees nor the chief priests can contain their contempt of You, Lord Jesus. They do not hate You for the same reasons and neither group could stomach the other. The Pharisees hated You because You dismissed their petty rules and religious regulations – exposing it for what it was. They loved their system of rules and the attendant minutia more than they loved God. Theirs was a self-righteousness wholly sustained by their obtuse rules, sprawling legal interpretations, and total religious-based domination of every aspect of daily life. It was devoid of love. The chief priests were Sadducees. They cared little for the Pharisees and their byzantine rules. They were political pragmatists. They loved the power and intrigue of being part of the ruling class under Roman occupation.

They hated You because the long-awaited Messiah was to establish a new kingdom, and they assumed their comfortable reign would be brought to an end once You ascended to the royal throne. We see the same with some church leaders, ministers and priests today – those who place more value in theological dogma than loving You and neighbor, as well as those who are driven more by political power or ideology within the church. Today, as then, our spiritual leaders can draw us away from You, point us toward things that don't matter, and betray their role as true compass pointing men and women to You and You alone. Devotion to You means the old things have passed away, including my dogma and ideology. You do not tolerate our prejudices; You put them to death.

Application: *Is there some aspect of personal belief or dogma to which I am attached that our Lord is presently putting to death in me?*

Reflection 3: The Arrogance of the Authorities (verses 15 & 47)

Lord Jesus, the claim of the authorities is that You have no proper training. You have not been educated in the finest rabbinic colleges. You have not been schooled by the leading scholars. You have no qualification and no training to be teaching as You do. They claim Your teaching has no authority because You lack proper credentials. It is academic snobbery rooted in arrogance and pride. So, they dismiss Your teaching altogether, and yes, they intend to kill You. In another place You praise Your Father because He has hidden these things from the wise and learned of the world and revealed them to little children. The kingdom of God is near to us – it is within me. It is as small as a tiny mustard

seed that when grown becomes a massive tree. You over-turn the social and political hierarchies – teaching that Your kingdom is found with the poor, the meek, with those who are hungry and thirsty. These are the ones who receive You with joy, whereas You scatter the proud within their own imaginations. There is only one credential that matters – it is the currency of love. The one who loves You with her whole heart, mind and soul is also the one who loves her neighbor as herself. This is the new credential. This is the currency of heaven. And the authorities know nothing of this currency. They are completely bankrupt.

Application: *The familiar marketing slogan is “what’s in your wallet?” What is the current value of my heavenly currency? Regarding love, is my spiritual bank account rich or am I penniless?*

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Reflection 4: He is a Good Man (Verse 12)

Among the crowd are those who call You a good man. Then, as today, we must beware of allowing this train of thought. You are the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Creator and the Sustainer of all things who gives me life and breath and who is always at work – even to this minute – loving, caring, sustaining, holding all things within Your hands. You did not emerge out of history, but rather inserted Yourself into it

from the outside. You teach that I must be born again – that Your life must be formed in me – coming into me from the outside. I must become a Bethlehem so that Your life can be born into me and formed up in my heart. You are so much more than a good man, and seeing You as merely a good man is to miss the opportunity to have Your life formed in me.

Application: When Christ is born in me, His nature begins to work through me. How is this true in my life right now?

Reflection 5: He is a Demon-Possessed Madman (verse 20)

Lord Jesus, the advent of sin inverted human nature to such an extent that our most basic instinct is to reject the true mode of thinking and being that was the original pattern for mankind. So, we call You delusional and even demon-possessed. And it is true that You must be completely insane, or completely God's Son, but there is no middle ground. You chose to endure the Cross when in You is all power, honor and glory. You chose to be a Suffering Servant when You are King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You chose to wash our feet when we should fall prostrate before Yours. You came to serve man when all men owe You our allegiance of praise.

You turn our standards upside-down and inside-out. Hence, Your disciples implore us to willingly take off our old self with its selfish me-centered orientation and to put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of our Creator. To teach us how, You send us the Comforter – the Holy Spirit – who guides us into all truth. To prevent us from the error of thinking we can do so of our own power and initiative, You tell us that it is You who gives us a new heart and puts a new spirit within us – You put Your laws in my mind and write them on my heart. I need only be willing to do Your will. You do all the rest – and it is amazing in our sight!

Application: What is my reaction to Jesus?

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Reflection 6: He is a Man of Courage (verse 26)

Viewed through the lens of our culture today which questions all authority, it is hard for us to grasp just how remarkable it is that You stood up to the religious authorities of Your day. It was not lost on the crowd. They marveled at Your courage. Courage is not the same as bravado. At the Last Supper Peter pledged his undying allegiance to You. Less than twelve hours later he denied You with oaths and curses. Following Your resurrection, You restored Peter by the sea, asking three times if he loved You. Two months later, on the day of Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit was given to us, we see a new Peter courageously preaching Jesus Christ crucified.

Between Peter's earlier bravado and his Pentecostal courage, Peter came to the end of himself and all his self-sufficiency. There was no part of himself Peter would ever rely on again. All of my promises and resolutions end up crashing down on me, because I have no power to accomplish them. Only when Your Spirit invades my life and transform me does my bravado become true courage – and this is always a quiet confidence, an inner-strength, the power of God made perfect in my weakness – that is void of the puffed-up, prideful bravado of my sinful nature.

Application: How has Jesus transformed my bravado into genuine courage?

Reflection 7: He is a Prophet (Verse 40)

A prophet is one who foretells the will of God, one who lives so close to God as to know His mind and His purposes. And while it is true that You are prophet, moreover, You are Son. The prophet borrows His authority from God and his office is delegated to him. A prophet's message is not his own; he is merely a messenger. But You are so much more than messenger. You speak with Your own authority, and You come as God-incarnate, as John says elsewhere, the Father has placed all things in Your hands. We must beware

of seeing You merely as prophet and not also as the Living God in whose hands are all authority and dominion, honor, glory and power. You are the One who speaks the words, "be clean" – who forms Your life within me and cleanses me from the stain of guilt and sin. No prophet ever did this – not even John the Baptizer. His baptism was with water, but Yours is with the Holy Spirit. You don't just reveal the mind of God to me, You form Your life in me.

Application: What is the evidence that Jesus has formed His life in me?

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Reflection 8: He is a Deceiver (Verse 47)

You were accused of nearly every crime against the law of Moses and religion. They called You a drunkard and a glutton. They call You a Sabaoth-breaker. They say You break bread with sinners and tax-collectors and prostitutes – that You surround Yourself with all the seedy elements in society. They take these as proof that You are not who You claim to be; You do not conform to the dictates of their Jewish institutions and are leading people away from true religion. The most damning charge is leveled at You – that You lead the people astray. This is the title and role of the great deceiver – Satan or the devil, who

leads the whole world astray. From the beginning he was a liar and the father of lies. Sin is chaos; it is the well-spring of disordered desires, selfish lusts and pride. You, Lord Jesus, have absorbed all of these and more, receiving in Your own flesh, the awful consequences and ultimate conclusion of the power and stain of sin and death. On Your Cross, and through Your rising to new life, You have led captivity captive, and ransomed me from death. In You I place my trust. You are my confidence, and the shield about me. You are the One who guards my life.

Application: The worry that somehow Jesus will lead me astray or fail me in the end is still, today, a barrier to simple trust in Jesus. Do I fear that Jesus will let me down in the end?

Reflection 9: Many Believed in Him (verse 31)

It is an awesome statement. Many believed in You, Lord Jesus. They were attracted by You and Your message. They found something in You to be attractive – even compelling, without necessarily being able to name it. It came from the heart – it was more than an intellectual decision. There is something in You that is simply irresistible. Surely their hearts burned within them as You taught them. And surely Your reinterpretation of the law as being God-based and life-giving stood in sharp contrast to the authorities. Moreover, Your works display wonder and grace – and everyone had heard about them even if they had not been a witness. Add to these another: Your very demeanor was different. They could sense in Your spirit none of the haughtiness of the priests, and none of the

coldness of the Pharisees. You are different. You cried out in the Temple court saying that those gathered knew You and knew where You were from. How could they not know? All creation celebrates You and points the way to knowing You. All of Scripture celebrates You and points the way to knowing You. These are Israel's children, these Jews at this festival. Of course, they know You and know where You are from. But believing on You requires more than knowing facts about You – it requires that we know You personally, intimately, as our personal Friend and Brother. You draw us into the most precious intimacy with Yourself. But we can resist – staying near the doorway of Your love and never entering too far in.

Application: How do I make a response to God's love in my life? How do I resist?