

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

Weekly Edition – January 26, 2018
Gospel According to St. John – Third Year

Jesus Goes to the Festival of Tabernacles (Part 9)

8¹² When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

13 The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

14 Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. **15** You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. **16** But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. **17** In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. **18** I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

19 Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” **20** He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

21 Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”

22 This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’?”

23 But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. **24** I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

25 “Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied. **26** “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

27 They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. **28** So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. **29** The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” **30** Even as he spoke, many believed in him.

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 6: I Am

Lord Jesus, now You put it all out on the table. You say, "if you do not believe that I AM, you will indeed die in your sins." I AM. When You sent Moses to the Israelites in Egypt, Moses inquired about who he should say sent him. You replied, "say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" I AM who I AM. This is how You identified Your name to Moses. Now You identify Yourself in words that ring clear and unambiguous to Your listeners on this day. You use what may be the most well-known language of Torah – "I AM."

Bible translators insert "he" to make this read "I Am He." So we miss the connection, but Your listeners did not miss it. The Hebrew can be translated as "I Am who I Am," or "I Am He Who Is," or even "I Will Be What I Will Be." Each has a different nuance, and yet all are true of You. You are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord, the Being and The Was, and The Is To Come, the Almighty. And If I do not accept You for Yourself, and do not believe on You, I will surely die in my sins.

Application: *The offer is really very simple – believe on Jesus, believe that He is, believe that He is my maker, redeemer and friend – just believe. That is all that the Lord asks of me and you. Do I believe?*

Reflection 7: Missing the Target

You tell us that if we do not believe in You, we will die in our sins. The Pharisees would recognize what You say as a prophetic statement concerning their role as watchmen over the people. It echoes the words spoken through the prophet Ezekiel centuries before: *"When I say to a wicked person, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person and they do not turn from their wickedness or from their evil ways, they will die for their sin; but you will have saved yourself."* The word for 'sin' is a term used in

target practice and means "missing the target." The person who rejects You as Savior and Friend has missed the target of life. He dies with life unrealized, and with a life that has not been properly outfitted to be with You in the life to come. The essence of sin is that it separates us from God, and the first thing Adam did was to hide himself from You. Those who believe in You hit the bullseye, the sweet spot of life both now and later. The Pharisees hear You put the sin of the people on their heads – and they hate You for it. They have failed in their role as watchmen over Your people. They missed the mark. Help me improve my aim, Lord Jesus!

Application: *Are their ways in my life where I habitually miss the target? Have I grown so comfortable with my sinful behavior that it no longer troubles me? Do I believe Jesus can place His nature into me in this dimension of my life?*

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Reflection 8: Who Are You?

Having plainly said so, the Pharisees now demand to know who You are. Your opponent's demand an answer. They are pressing to identify You, to fit You into their tiny system. But You respond with something amazing – surprising – even shocking. You simply say, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning." You are not referring to the beginning of Your instruction on this day. You are not referring to the beginning of Your teaching from the middle of this Festival a couple days before, when You began to teach. You are not referring to the beginning of Your public ministry, now two and half years ago. You are speaking of THE beginning – and the very opening words of

sacred Scripture: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." From the beginning of creation, You speak. From the beginning of time, You speak. Throughout the course of human history, You speak. On that day in the Temple, You speak. Even right now, on the pages of my life, You speak. You speak in many languages – in the language of creation. In the language of nature. In the language of Holy Scripture. In the language of justice. In the language of love. You speak in so many ways and You have been speaking and still are speaking in ways that are as enormous as the universe, and as intimate as a quiet nudge. The Pharisees demand to know who You are.

Application: In what ways does God speak to me? In which form do I most often recognize His voice?

Reflection 9: Who Are You?

It is the most important question anyone can ever answer: "Who are You, Lord?" We each must answer it for ourselves. On that day many believed in You. What about me? If I think this is a question I can answer once for all time, I am living a very superficial faith. You are so much bigger than my thoughts or my imagination; so much deeper than my experience; so far beyond what I can grasp. The saying goes that life is lived forward, but understood in reverse, understood with the benefit of hindsight. So, if I am in vital relationship with You, there will surely be times of darkness and confusion; times when You are taking me through something I do not

understand; times when I will discover the inadequacy of the earlier answer, or when I lose confidence in it and will ask anew, "Who are You, Lord?" The question does not arise out of doubt – but from disorientation. It arises from being thrust out of my comfort zone by Your movement in my life and my circumstances. It comes from being introduced to some new dimension of who You are that reveals something about myself that I wish were not true. It comes because my belief in You is too small, too self-limiting. It mostly comes because You love me too much to leave me anywhere less than complete intimacy with You.

Application: When was the last time the question pressed from within me: Who are You, Lord?

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Reflection 10: The Proof

The Pharisees did not understand what You were saying. They did not grasp what You were telling them about the Father. So You give them a sign which will become the proof of what You are telling them. *"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught Me."* You tell them that they will understand Your Name and grasp the nature of Your relationship with the Father when You are "lifted up." The word is "exalted" and it means to elevate to the very summit of opulence; the very summit of dignity and honor. Your lifted-up body on the Cross is the summit of dignity and honor. It is also the means by which You achieve heavenly exaltation, completing the

work which the Father sent You to do. It is the moment when sin and death is defeated, and the way of life is opened to all who will believe. It is when You are exalted that we come to recognize that You speak what the Father has taught You. And it is by embracing Your Cross in my life that I come to know You as I AM. Your Cross was not the end – but was the means by which Your life came into the world. Your Cross in my life is also not the end, but rather the means by which Your life comes into me. To embrace Your Cross in my life is to allow the putting to death of everything in me that stands ruggedly opposed to Your love. When You are lifted-up in my life, I know with a certainty beyond certainty that You are the I AM.

Application: What does the Cross mean to me? In what ways am I learning to embrace it more and more? In what ways might I still be resisting?

Reflection 11: Where is Your Father?

It is a curious question. In response to Your statement that there are two witnesses – Yourself and Your Father, the Pharisees demand know, "Where is Your Father." The language has two nuances. On the one hand it can refer to the Father's location. Yet in direct questions, such as we find here, it has the connotation that a person or thing is gone, or cannot be found. It is the equivalent to it saying that God is nowhere, or implying that God does not exist. It is a stunningly brazen statement. It gets right to the heart of the matter. It has been nearly 500 years since the prophet Malachi. He was the last prophet of the Old Testament age. And in the years since, You have been silent. Without a prophet, the people had divided into parties and

factions, each claiming the right and authority to interpret Scripture and lead Your people. Knowledge of You greatly diminished over this time, until John the Baptist called Your people to repentance. That long night of prophetic silence dulled the spiritual organs of Your people and those who were appointed over them as watchmen. Now that You stand before them in the flesh, they cannot overcome their traditions and beliefs to accept You, or even to recognize You. Today many say that God is dead. It is a different way of saying "Where's Your Father?" It implies You cannot be found. It utterly rejects You. It cannot perceive You as the God of relentless pursuit.

Application: In what ways has God shown me that He is a God in relentless pursuit of me?