**I am the One I Claim to Be**

John 8:21-30

Knowing someone is very important because it will lead you to decide whether you would trust that person or not, to make that person as your friend or not, make that person as your spouse or not. In the same way, knowing who Jesus is, your faith is built up and your relationship with Him is deepened. So John 20:31 says, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” Know Jesus better and better through John’s gospel study.

**1. If you do not believe Him (21-24)**

Verse 21 says, “So He said to them again, ‘I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.’” Here, the word, “again” suggests that Jesus spoke what He has been talking about. Jesus spoke about “where He came from” (14, 23, 26, 29), where He is going (14, 21-22, 28), who the Father is (26-27, 38) and who Jesus is (23-26; 38, 54-55). Jesus is from above and the Jews were from below; they were from this world and Jesus is not from this world (23); where Jesus goes, they can not come (21). God is His Father and theirs is the devil (26-27, 41-44). By “*I am going away*” Jesus refers to His death, the means by which He goes to His Father. When Jesus says, “*You will look for me*”, He didn’t mean that they would personally seek Jesus. They would rather be glad to see Him go. What Jesus meant was that they would keep on waiting; they would look for the coming Messiah. They will not find Him because they have rejected the only Messiah who has come. So they will die in their sin. Here, the singular sin refers to the particular sin of unbelief, rejecting Jesus. “*Where I go, Jesus says, you cannot come*.” To reject the Son is to reject the Father (5:23). How then shall they enter the Father’s presence in heaven? So Jesus was pleading with them to believe in Him and receive God’s kingdom. But the Jews ridiculed Jesus, saying, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’?” (22). Jesus said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 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” (23-24). When Jesus said that He was from above, He meant, He is from the realm of God Himself. When He said that the Jews were from below and from of this world, He meant that they were the realm of this fallen and rebellious world which hates Jesus because Jesus the light testified that its works are evil (7:7). In verse 24, Jesus said twice that the Jews who live in the realm of this world will die in their sins. Here, the plural sins contrasts with the singular in verse 21. The plural sins refers to the diverse and ugly forms of corruption that mushroom from the one sin of unbelief. That is why Jesus said, “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” Here, we see the truth that the only possibility of escape lies in genuine belief. Under this condition, men and women will not die in their sins but to have forgiveness and eternal life. Thus, we should come to Jesus now and receive Him. You then have the light of life and overcome this dark world.

What are they to believe? The conditional clause provides the proper object of faith: “*If you do not believe that I am He.*” In John 6:20, “*ego emi*” appears first when Jesus said, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” He also said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life.” In Exodus 3:14, God identified Himself to Moses, saying, “I AM WHO I AM.” It means, “I am the one who is” or “I am the existent one.” Through using the word, “I am”, Jesus identified about His deity. The full deity of Christ is present from the very first verse of the gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1). Yes, Jesus is God but He became flesh to be our Savior. Through His cross and the resurrection, Jesus defeated the power of sin and the devil. He is the only True light. Only by believing in Him, can we overcome the ugly corruption of the world. Otherwise, we die in sins.

**2. When you have lifted the Son (25-30)**

The Jews asked Jesus, “Who are you?” Jesus replied,

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning” (25). He said that His witness has been consistent from the beginning. What He is now claiming was the same what He claimed and declared at the beginning (5:19). He also said in verse 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.” Jesus has much more to say to the Jews. His word will be a word of judgment for they were evil. His word is not speaking on His own for all that Jesus tells to the world He has heard from the One who sent Him and that One is trustworthy. They needed to see who they were before God and come to Jesus in repentance. Yet they did not understand that He was telling them about His Father. In their sin, they became spiritually blind and deaf. So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He” (28a). Jesus didn’t despair with their spiritual blindness. He looked forward the day when the full disclosure of who Jesus is will take place. When will His glory be most fully revealed? When Jesus is lifted up on the cross, He is being also lifted up to His Father’s presence, returned to the glory He enjoyed with the Father before the world began (17:5). Thus, the cross of Jesus is the exaltation and glorification of Jesus. One of the functions of Jesus’ cross was to reveal who Jesus is. That is when the Jews will know the truth. When Jesus was crucified, there was darkness over the whole land for three hours (Mk 15:33). The earth shook, the tombs were opened and the holy saints were raised from the dead (Mt 27:52). The centurion who crucified Jesus confessed, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mk 15:39). However, John was not saying that all of Jesus’ opponents will be converted in the wake of the cross. But if they do come to know who Jesus is, they will know it most surely because of the cross. One day, everyone will come before Jesus, the Supreme Judge, kneel and confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil 2:10-11).

Jesus continued, “and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; He has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases Him” (28b-29). Jesus’ cross was the Father’s will. Jesus’ profound sense of the Father’s presence (He has not left me alone) even on the eve of the cross itself is the direct consequence of His perfect, self-conscious submission to His Father’s will (I always do what pleases Him). It is true when you do what pleases God, you live in the profound sense of God’s presence. Acts 13:22 says, “He raised up David to be their king, of whom He testified, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my own heart, who will do all my will.’” David would do all things of God’s will for He was a man after God’s own heart. “David became greater and greater, for the Lord of Almighty was with him” (1 Chr 11:9). Matthew 28:19 is the great commission that we make disciples of all nations. And verse 20 is Jesus’ promise to be with us to the end. David Livingstone dedicated himself 33 years as a missionary in Africa. He overcame all difficulties, holding the promise, “Surely I am with you to the the very end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

Jesus is God. He came to die so that He rescues us from sin and death. He is the true light. Without Him, we die in our sins. We can’t overcome the corruption of the world. Receiving Him, we have the light of life. We live as the light and live in the profound sense of God’s presence like Jesus.