

Born to Win

The Words of Jesus #27

by Ronald L. Dart

I think we have discovered why Jesus was often obscure in the things he said. Deep into the years of his ministry there were so many people laying in wait for him, and I don't mean just laying in wait to trap him in his words or try to embarrass him—they were looking for an excuse to *kill him*. So he often spoke in riddles and allegories which he later had to explain to his disciples, and even when he's not using riddles and allegories, some of the things he says are so elliptical—that so much is missing—that you really wonder what exactly he's driving at. I don't think he was really afraid. He would repeat, "I'm sorry, my time has not yet come."

At the Feast of Tabernacles—that is, the last Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus attended—he went there secretly, and he didn't even begin to teach at all until the feast was half over. And you might wonder how he managed that, but with the *hundreds of thousands* of people in Jerusalem to keep the feast, he just blended in with the crowds and didn't say very much. This is found in John 7 and verse 14:

John 7

AKJV

¹⁴ Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

¹⁵ And the Jews marveled, saying, How knows this man letters, having never learned?

In other words, he sounded to them like a scholar. He knew the things that scholars knew, but everybody knew he had not gone to school like they had.

John 7

AKJV

¹⁶ Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

That's an interesting statement all by itself, because he's here saying, "The reason why I seem to know letters to you is because I didn't come here with my own ideas, I came here with the doctrines of him that sent me." Now, I have to stop here and take note of a theological doctrine that Jesus and the Father are co-equal from eternity. I'm not exactly sure of the line of reasoning that comes to that (in fact, that line of reasoning is probably a little beyond most of us) but the average reader, in making his way through the four gospel accounts, will naturally and easily assume that the Father is greater than Jesus. Did you notice what he said, "My doctrine is not mine. It is *his that sent me*. I'm a messenger. Somebody gave me this and sent me here." Now, generally speaking, we think that one *sent* is not as great as the person *who sent him*. Now, there's no simple way of getting around that fact, and the message that Jesus taught originated with the Father. Now, if that's not enough for you, consider what Jesus will later say to his disciples in John 14 and verse 28. He said:

John 14

AKJV

²⁸ You have heard how I said to you, I go away, and come again to you. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

So, consequently, we might not be too inclined to think that Jesus and the Father are just co-equal from eternity because of what Jesus himself said. Now, the most natural way to understand Jesus is that he didn't think that he was as great as the Father. Jesus and the Father are two separate and distinct persons: one on earth, the other in heaven; one greater, one lesser; one, the sender, and the other, the one sent. Now, I'll leave it to you to work that into your ideas about God, but Jesus went on to say:

John 7

AKJV

¹⁷ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

Now, Jesus said something like this before. What he said is that, "If you are a person who does God's will, you will immediately know whether I'm telling you the truth or not." How did that work? Well, you don't need credentials or long, convoluted explanations if you have been a habitual reader of the Old Testament. In other words, if you read the Old Testament (the Scriptures) and if you live by them—if you're actually a person who *does* the will of God—and someone else comes along and teaches you something *from God*, you're going to know whether it's true or not. People who had studied and lived the Old Testament would recognize *immediately* that Jesus' doctrine was true because they had a standard to go by.

And while I'm on the subject of doctrine...you know, it seems to me that Christian churches have *entirely* too many doctrines. Let me explain to you what I mean. Imagine that there is a church somewhere that holds very strictly to four and *only* four doctrines. It doesn't matter which four doctrines they are for the sake of our argument. What matters is that these four are doctrines of belief and practice that they feel are *absolutely necessary* for full membership in their church. Let's imagine this is a big church—it's got a lot of members. Now let's imagine that the ruling body of this church decides in the course of time that it must add a fifth doctrine to the required set of four. Mind you, everyone has been happy with their four doctrines, but now they have to make a decision about a fifth.

What do you think the consequences of this will be? Well, human nature being what it is you can be sure that you will shortly have two churches where you before had only one. The first church will hold to the original four doctrines and will have added and said, "Yes", to a fifth. The second church will have held the original four and said, "No", to the fifth. They will be holding, as they would put it, to the faith once delivered to the saints—they don't want to go changing things. And you'll have two churches that are essentially in 80% agreement, but because they're required to believe these things and practice these things...well, they can't meet together anymore.

Now, let's follow through with the inevitable—let's add a *sixth* doctrine to the mix upon which everyone has to decide: "Yes" or "No". The result? Four churches. Oh, yeah. Four, not three, because the two churches we *now have* will each split along the lines of the new doctrine. These churches will be in $\frac{2}{3}$ agreement, but that $\frac{1}{3}$ that they disagree on is enough to keep them apart. Every time you add a new doctrine that's required for faith and obedience, you will *double* the number of sects. Sit down and do the math. It won't take long for you to come up with the reason why we have *hundreds* of Christian sects and denominations, and more coming along, it seems, every day.

Now, the superficial reader will assume that Jesus came bringing a *new* doctrine—but that's not what Jesus did. What Jesus was doing was stripping away all the doctrines the Pharisees had been building up for generations. Jesus was *simplifying* and narrowing the doctrines that a person has to believe. Now,

none of what I'm saying is to say that we should not follow our conscience and believe about God—those things that we know to be true. But when we make them official for other people to observe—when we *require* them as matters of faith and obedience for the church—we're going to *split* the church wide open. Now, Jesus went on to talk about these things and said:

John 7

AKJV

¹⁸ He that speaks of himself seeks his own glory: but he that seeks his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law? Why go you about to kill me?

Now, that statement should have dropped like a *bombshell* in the middle of the crowd, because these people were sitting here listening to him and there were men in that crowd who *knew* that their purpose in being there was to kill him. It was a real zinger. Now, *Jesus* knew it and *they* knew it. Many people the crowd must have been amazed by that statement and looked around and said, “I wonder who it is?”

John 7

KJ2000

²⁰ The people answered and said, You have a demon: [...]

Well, just translate that as saying, “You're crazy!”

John 7

KJ2000

²⁰ [...] who goes about to kill you?

²¹ Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and you all marvel.

What they were marveling about was the fact that *he knew*. He dropped this zinger among them. He said, “Some of you here want me dead! You're trying, actually, to kill me.” And *they* didn't know that *Jesus* knew that they were there trying to kill him. He said, “I've done one thing; I've told you this one thing and you're all amazed.”

John 7

KJ2000

²² Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and you on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

²³ If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are you angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

²⁴ Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

So the issue was *still* that Jesus had broken *their* rules against healing on the Sabbath day. You know, any time you have a religion that has rules, you just can't make enough rules to cover every circumstance—and sooner or later, two of your rules are going to come into conflict. Now, the law of Moses required that every man—every Israelite—had to be circumcised on the eighth day, but the Fourth Commandment said that no work could be done on the Sabbath day. So, if that eighth day fell on the Sabbath day we have a problem, don't we? Circumcising a child is deemed to be work. Surely that would be true. If healing is work, then that's got to be work. And so Jesus says, “Look, the decision you people have made is that you will go ahead and circumcise a baby on the eighth day in order not to break the law of Moses. How is it that you can make *that* decision and we *can't* make the decision that

it is perfectly alright to heal a sick man on the Sabbath day?” Jesus has to continue walking this tight rope, as it were, between the men who want to see him dead and the obligation of continuing to teach.

Jerusalem must have been a hotbed of rumors about this time, and the talk about Jesus went far and wide. Some people said:

John 7

AKJV

²⁵ [...] Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

²⁶ But, see, he speaks boldly, and they say nothing to him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

It was a question that people wanted to know—inquiring minds wanted to know. They went on to say:

John 7

AKJV

²⁷ However, we know this man from where he is: but when Christ comes, no man knows from where he is.

I don't know where they got that, because there were many reasons to know where the Messiah would come from, but that's what they thought and that's the kind of talk that was going on the streets.

John 7

AKJV

²⁸ Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, You both know me, and you know from where I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom you know not.

²⁹ But I know him: for I am from him, and he has sent me.

It's fascinating listening to this and hearing the cadences of it. If you've noticed (as we made our way through these gospel accounts and the words of Jesus) when we come to John, John has his own interesting cadence in the way in which he puts these here. It would trouble a person, I would think, who believed in the word-by-word dictation of the Holy Spirit to these men. Because, in fact, they didn't have tape recorders, you know, and they didn't sit there with shorthand, taking down every word of Jesus. They listened carefully, they remembered what he said, and later they sat down and did the best job they could—with the help of the Holy Spirit—in writing down the message of Jesus and doing so honestly. But it would be a mistake to assume that they got him word-by-word. In truth, as you read them and you actually feel the style—the vocabulary, to some extent, and even the sentence syntax—of the evangelist coming through. But the words of Jesus here are true enough. There's no chance of us mistaking that. But Jesus said:

John 7

AKJV

²⁹ But I know him: for I am from him, and he has sent me.

And we're right back here again. “I didn't come of myself. He that sent me is true.” Jesus *was sent by* the Father, who was greater than he.

John 7

AKJV

³⁰ Then they sought to take him [*badly*]: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was

not yet come.

You know it would be hard to overstate the fever and the ferment that Jesus caused at Jerusalem at this, his last Feast of Tabernacles. People would go up and they would be of a mind...they would *try* to jockey around for position to take him, but they just were *afraid* to do it. Remember, there were hundreds of thousands of people here and they were afraid of an uproar.

John 7

AKJV

³¹ And many of the people [*who listened to Jesus*] believed on him [...]

And that was inevitable, too. Because here he was, speaking the truth—and gathered all around him were people who loved God, who loved the law, who believed God, who obeyed his law—and when they heard Jesus speak, their heart burned within them and they said:

John 7

AKJV

³¹ [...] When Christ comes, will he do more miracles than these which this man has done?

³² The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

³³ Then said Jesus to them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go to him that sent me.

³⁴ You shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither you cannot come.

Now, that's a strange statement, and it seemed very obscure to his listeners because they said among themselves:

John 7

AKJV

³⁵ [...] Where will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

³⁶ What manner of saying is this that he said, You shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither you cannot come?

I think John is digesting here all the different kinds of things that people were saying in the crowd around Jesus.

Now, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles was a kind of water festival. The place—all around the Temple—was almost awash with water. There's nothing in the law about it, but it was a custom that they had at the time. And Jesus used that custom as a kind of springboard, because as it was going on:

John 7

AKJV

³⁷ In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink.

³⁸ He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

³⁹ (But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Now, John inserts a little theology in here. He's talking about the Holy Spirit, which *would* fall on the church *in power* on the day of Pentecost. And he tells us that the reason why the Holy Spirit was not given was because Jesus was not yet glorified. And, elsewhere, Jesus will seem to say that he has to be glorified—he has to be at the Father's right hand—in order to give the Holy Spirit in power. But what is truly astonishing about this statement is that Jesus is not merely suggesting that the believer would receive the Spirit. Everybody knows that. What he is saying is that the believer would become a *source* from which the spirit flowed. Notice he didn't say, "He that believes on me, that the Spirit shall flow *into* him like rivers of living water." He said, "Out to his *innermost being* shall *flow* rivers of living water." Which means that those who believe in Jesus—those who have received the Holy Spirit—can actually be a source of power in the world that can affect the lives of people who are around them.

John 7

AKJV

⁴⁰ Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

Now, there's an Old Testament prophecy that says:

Deuteronomy 18

AKJV

¹⁵ The LORD your God will raise up to you a Prophet from the middle of you, of your brothers, like to me; to him you shall listen[.]

They said, "This must be that man."

John 7

AKJV

⁴¹ Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

⁴² Has not the scripture said, That Christ comes of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

Ha! If they only knew. That's where he came from.

John 7

AKJV

⁴³ So there was a division among the people because of him.

⁴⁴ And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. [*Nobody was willing to do it.*]

⁴⁵ Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said to them, Why have you not brought him?

⁴⁶ The officers answered, Never man spoke like this man.

⁴⁷ Then answered them the Pharisees, Are you also deceived?

And they used the oldest ploy known to man, I think:

John 7

AKJV

⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him

⁴⁹ But this people who knows not the law [*They're just rabble.*] are cursed.

They just appealed to authority. “Have any of the *chief people* believed on him? Well, then how could *you* possibly believe on him.” Standing among this group was a man named Nicodemus, the same Nicodemus that had come to Jesus by night back in **John 3**. And he said to the group:

John 7

AKJV

⁵¹ Does our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he does?

That’s interesting. Here’s Nicodemus, who actually has met Jesus—he’s talked to him privately—and he’s trying to slow this thing down. And they turned on him and they said:

John 7

AKJV

⁵² [...] Are you also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee rises no prophet.

What they mean is, “Look at the scriptures. Prophets don’t come out of Galilee.” Well, Nicodemus couldn’t say much. I guess because the emphasis had not been laid, or that they didn’t really know, that Jesus was of the house of David and had been born in Bethlehem—not that it would have made any difference.

John 7–8

AKJV

⁵³ And every man went to his own house.

¹ Jesus went to the mount of Olives.

I guess there’s a point in all the confusion and disagreement where you just throw up your hands and go home. And that’s what they did. The very next morning, when Jesus returns to the temple, one of the most encouraging, uplifting, profoundly-moving events in Christ’s entire ministry takes place.

All night long, the scribes and the Pharisees had been planning their next move. So when Jesus came into the temple very early the next morning, and all the people gathered around, he sat down and began to teach. And then the scribes and the Pharisees came into the midst (making quite a bit of noise) and pushed into the middle of the crowd a woman who had been taken in adultery.

John 8

KJ2000

³ [...] and when they had set her in the midst,

⁴ They said unto him, Teacher, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

What he says it, “We’ve got witnesses; we’re not guessing.”

John 8

KJ2000

⁵ Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what say you?

⁶ This they said, testing him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

He pretended not to hear them. Now, I think that’s utterly fascinating. Several times in Jesus’ ministry he will tell us that he and the Father are one—that if we’ve seen him, we’ve seen the Father, and he is a

manifestation of the mind and the attitude of the Father in heaven. And it makes one wonder that whenever Satan, who is the accuser of the brethren, comes before God to accuse us, if God tries in every way he can *not to hear him*.

Now, the Pharisees felt on this occasion that they had Jesus pretty well in a bind, because he was already well known as a merciful, a compassionate person—and yet they felt that, since the law required this woman to be stoned, that Jesus would have to say, “Yes, let’s stone her.” If he didn’t, well, they could accuse him of that. But, you know, it’s *amazing* to me how little these men *really understood* about the law of Moses. Because, you see, in order that someone should actually be stoned to death for committing adultery, somebody had to *want* to do it—somebody had to bear witness and somebody had to actually want to kill her, had to follow through with it. They pressed Jesus:

John 8

KJ2000

⁷ So when they continued asking him, he lifted himself up, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

⁸ And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground [*and ignored them, again*].

“We can do this”, he said, “but, basically, if you’re going to follow the law of Moses, someone out here has got to pick up a stone and throw it at that woman.” They’ve got to want her dead. “And I’m just saying: Whichever one of you has no sin—you go ahead; you start the ball.”

John 8

KJ2000

⁹ And they who heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest,

Which makes a certain amount of sense.

John 8

KJ2000

⁹ [...] even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing before him.

¹⁰ When Jesus had lifted himself up, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those your accusers? has no man condemned you?

¹¹ She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.

What I find *profoundly* encouraging about this passage here is that it reveals that God is not interested in hurting people. The woman had already wrecked her own life—she’d already made a mess of things—and she done enormous amounts of damage to herself. And God was not the least bit interested in making it worse. Jesus, with all of his grace, did not *condone* what she had done, but he didn’t *condemn* her to die for what she had done. The legalistic approach would have said, “We’ve got to kill her.”, but the merciful approach would have said, “No, we don’t. Let her go and encourage her not to do this anymore.”

John 8

KJ2000

¹² Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

You know, knowing the truth and walking out in the broad daylight instead of skulking around in the dark is a *wonderful* way to live. The Old Testament tells us that the Word of God is:

Psalm 119

AKJV

¹⁰⁵ [...] a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

So we don't stumble over things. And Jesus said, "I'm light. You follow me you're going to be able to see where you're going." The Pharisees couldn't stand it, though, and they would not leave him alone.

John 8

KJ2000

¹³ The Pharisees therefore said unto him, You bear record of yourself; your record is not true.

¹⁴ Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know from where I came, and where I go; but you cannot tell from where I come, and where I go. [*You don't have a clue.*]

¹⁵ You judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

¹⁶ And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

¹⁷ It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

Okay. You like the law, I'll give you the law.

John 8

KJ2000

¹⁸ I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me.

That's two witnesses. And they then came right back:

John 8

KJ2000

¹⁹ [...] Where is your Father? Jesus answered, You neither know me, nor my Father: if you had known me, you should have known my Father also.

²⁰ These words spoke Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

²¹ Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: where I go, you cannot come.

And they sat there trying to make sense of what Jesus was saying, and they said:

John 8

KJ2000

²² [...] Will he kill himself? because he said, Where I go, you cannot come.

²³ And he said unto them, You are from beneath; I am from above: you are of this world; I am not of this world.

²⁴ I said therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins.

They just couldn't stand it. They said:

John 8

KJ2000

²⁵ [...] Who are you? And Jesus said unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

²⁶ I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

You know, through all of this, it tells us they never figured out that he was speaking to them about the Father. It's funny, isn't it? Here we are, nearly 2,000 years later, and we know who he was talking about.

Until next time, this is Ronald Dart—and you were not born to lose, you were *born to win*.

Transcript of a *Born to Win*
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