

Devotion on the Miracles of Christ (Striking Down the Soldiers) – 2 April 2014, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



As soon then as he had said unto them, **I am he**, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. 2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. 3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, **Whom seek ye?** 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, **I am he**. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, **I am he**, they went backward, and fell to the ground. 7 Then asked he them again, **Whom seek ye?** And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8 Jesus answered, **I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:** 9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, **Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.** (John 18:1-9)

Here we see one of the lesser recognized miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ. The miracle centers on a certain aspect of the Eternal Nature of Christ. Though simple in its setting, this miracle encompasses the mysteries of the ages. It reveals a nature of God that is seldom considered by mortals who are restricted to the boundaries of the Space-Time Continuum. Yes, we can readily admit that God is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent; but we have a difficult time conceiving of His All-Present, All-Powerful, and All-Knowing nature across the expanse of the universal time spectrum and beyond. In reading this remarkable account in the Garden of Gethsemane, have you noted the profundity of the event and the very oft-repeated Words of Christ.....**I AM?**

Today's text opens following the Lord's Last Supper in the Upper Room: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples." This was a night of agony and prayer for our Lord as He contemplated the shame and humiliation that would ensue. Moreover, one of His own chosen disciples, whom He knew to be a devil, had betrayed Him. Judas was not chosen for the purpose of betrayal at random. Jesus chose him from the beginning because the Lord knew his nature and his black heart. "And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons." Though Jesus had never lifted a hand in anger against any man (except for the money changers in the Temple) they now come for Him armed to the hilt. Not only was this armed contingent comprised of a part of the Roman cohort, but also the Jewish captains of the Temple and armed Levites – so both Jews and Gentiles are represented as having a part in this sordid affair.

This garden is a lovely spot – one of the most serene and beautiful of all Jerusalem. It abounds in olive trees and cedars that are fed by a babbling brook. Jesus often resorted to the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane for prayer. But tonight, it is a garden of treachery and wickedness. Jesus exercised courtesy even under such a grave circumstance as now confronted Him: *"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, **Whom seek ye?**"* He knew ALL things, yet He asked *"**Whom seek ye?**"*

Now develops the most profound exchange of all time: *"They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, **I am he.**"* The **Great I AM** existed before time began in the immortal ages of Eternity Past, and shall exist in the great Halls of Eternity Future, but forever existing, irrespective of time, as **"I AM!"** What does this Title for our Lord mean? It means far more than a simple explanation that our Lord exists in the present moment. It means that He forever exists in the present tense for He is the Presence that has been from ancient times and through the millennia immeasurable, and forever! There is not a time when Christ was not. He is in the Eternal Present Tense of God. He never WAS, or WILL BE, but forever IS the **I AM**. He is, likewise, with us always, even until the end of the world. It is His Presence that we observe in the Holy Communion, and not a tentative visitation.

This title of Christ is so powerful that it had a miraculous effect on His antagonists: *"As soon then as he had said unto them, **I am he**, they went backward, and fell to the ground."* Just the force of such a mighty expression had the effect and vanquishing every foe. This was not the ruse of a degenerate Benny Hinn, but the real power of Almighty God. The contingent of soldiers are so dazed by the power of His Word that they must be pressed again to identify their Prey: *"Then asked he them again, **Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:**"* Jesus spoke thusly *"That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, **Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.**"*

Rather than dwell upon this one instant of this title being uttered, let us look at others in both the Old and New Testament. It would be impossible, within the scope of a devotional, to cover the many times and circumstances of each reference to our Lord as the **"I AM."** But I will give some salient examples. You will remember at the rescue of the King of Sodom in Genesis 14 that Abram would receive no reward from that unrighteous source. The Lord said to Abram: *"Fear not, Abram: **I am thy shield, and***

thy exceeding great reward." (Gen 15:1)

Aside from considering the power of this name, we have a lesson in the next use of it for the necessity of reverence in worship: *"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."* (Ex 3:2-5) We learn from this passage, as well as a host of others, that we must approach the worship of God in Holiness. We do not come dressed immodestly or wearing shoes, for the place of worship is Holy Ground. But we also observe the use of God's powerful name next when Moses doubted that his message to the children of Israel would be believed: *"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."* (Ex 3:13-14) Are there remaining doubts of the majesty and intimacy of this Name of the Lord for His people?

When you consider the fullness and beauty of Christ to us, we are drawn close to His Heart by the terms by which He is known. Here are only a few:

1. *"I am the bread of life"* (John 6:35,48,51).
2. *"I am the light of the world"* (John 8:12).
3. *"I am the door of the sheep"* (John 10:7,9).
4. *"I am the good shepherd"* (John 10:11,14)
5. *"I am the resurrection, and the life"* (John 11:25).
6. *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6).
7. *"I am the true vine"* (John 15:1,5).
8. *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending"* (Revelation 1:8).
9. *"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last"* (Revelation 1:11).
10. *"Fear not; I am the first and the last"* (Revelation 1:17).
11. *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"* (Revelation 21:6).
12. *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last"* (Revelation 22:13).
13. *"I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star"* (Revelation 22:16).
14. He is the Ancient of Days: Daniel 7:9, 13, & 22

The greatest miracle of the event in Gethsemane was not the spiritual dispersion of the soldiers before

Christ, but the Great Name by which we know HIM. He is ever with us. He was with us at birth, but He was also with us BEFORE birth. He is with us NOW, but there has not been a moment when He was NOT with us. He will be with us at Death, but He will also be with us BEYOND death into the endless ages of Eternity. That, my friend, as they say in Alabama, is a "right smart" length of time!