

The Light of the World
John 8:12-30

Introduction

Light is an amazing thing. Even from the standpoint of physics it is a marvelous aspect of creation. In some ways light behaves as material particles moving very rapidly, and in other ways it has all the qualities of waves - an energy force moving through a substance but not a material substance itself. Physicists now tell us that light is affected by gravity and theorize about black holes with gravitational forces so strong that even light cannot escape. They also tell us that the speed of light can vary. Light can be concentrated or diffused. It travels in straight lines, but it can also be bent. Darkness is the opposite of light, or more accurately the absence of light, for where there is light, there cannot be darkness. For those who are interested in the properties and qualities of what God has created, light is a fascinating subject.

But it is not the physical aspects of light that we are so interested in this morning, but the understanding of spiritual truths that we can gain through the use of analogies to light. In our text this morning, Jesus is going to make such an analogy of Himself to give us a greater understanding of His own nature and work. Turn to John 8:12.

Let me set the **context** for our study this morning. Recall that Jesus has come down to Jerusalem sometime during the middle of Feast of Booths (which is also called the Feast of Ingathering since it occurs at the end of the Fall harvest). It was one of three “pilgrim” festivals in which the Jewish men were supposed to gather before the Lord for religious ceremonies and celebrations (Exodus 23:17). This particular feast was a very joyful occasion as people praised God for the harvest they had just taken in and prayed for His blessing in the coming year. The Feast itself was actually a commemoration of God’s provision for the nation of Israel after they had left Egypt and entered the desert on their way to the promised land.

Many of the particular aspects of this celebration were directly related to what had occurred during their journey through the desert. The booths or tabernacles that they constructed and lived in during this week of celebration were reminders of the tents they had lived in during those years. As we saw a few weeks ago when we studied John 7:37, there was also a special ceremony which commemorated God’s provision of water at Marah (Exodus 15; Numbers 33). Jesus used this ceremony to show that He was the fulfilment of the type. Jesus is the living water that satisfies spiritual thirst and brings eternal life (John 8:37,38).

There were mixed responses to Jesus’ teaching during this feast. Some thought Jesus was a good teacher and prophet, but not the Messiah. They incorrectly assumed He could not have fulfilled the prophecy to have come from Bethlehem in Judea since He sounded like a Galilean and had been raised in Nazareth. They did not bother to ask and find out where Jesus was born. Others contended that Jesus was the Messiah because of the miracles He had done. Most of the religious leaders had rejected Jesus and were plotting to kill Him, though there were exceptions to this such as Nicodemus (John 7:50f). Others would have been just confused by all the debate.

The seven days of the Feast are now over and it is the required Sabbath that followed it (Numbers 29:35). Jesus has come back into the temple and is teaching again. Verse 20 tells us that He is in the “Treasury” which a section of the Court of Women where the treasury boxes (or “trumpets” - since they looked like trumpets set on end) were kept. This is where the people would leave their “temple tax” as well as free will offerings.

During the feast this area would have been lit up at night by four very **large menorahs** (lampstands) as part of the festival ceremonies. It is reported that these menorahs were so large that young priests had to periodically climb up long ladders with large pitchers of olive oil to refill their bowls. The light from these large lamps would have filled the temple area. The lamps were part of the commemoration of the God's guidance during the Exodus when He led them by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21; Numbers 14:14). The pillar of fire not only led them by night, but was a protection as well. Before they crossed the Red Sea, it was the pillar of cloud and fire that stood between them and the Egyptian army. Exodus 14:19 states, *"it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night."*

The Light of the World - John 8:12

It with this background in mind that we can understand how the people would have understood Jesus' statement in John 8:12 which was made in the same area where these large menorahs stood. *Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."* The people would have immediately thought of the Exodus and the pillar of cloud and fire. They would have understood this to be a statement related to this display of God's presence among them.

In addition, **Hebrew prophecy** spoke of Messiah in terms of a coming light. Isaiah 9:1-2 states, *But there will be no [more] gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make [it] glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. ² The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.* Matthew 4:16 references this prophecy as fulfilled in Jesus.

Malachi 4:2 prophesied concerning the coming Messiah, *"But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.* Luke 1:78 references this verse in Zacharias' prophecy that the messiah was the *"Sunrise from on high"* that would visit them.

In addition, light is often used as an **analogy** to describe God or what extends from Him to us. For example: Psalm 27:1 - *The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?* Psalm 36:9 - *For with Thee is the fountain of life; In Thy light we see light.* Psalm 43:3 - *O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Thy holy hill, And to Thy dwelling places.* Psalm 89:15 - *How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O Lord, they walk in the light of Thy countenance.* Psalm 104:1 - *Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with splendor and majesty, ² Covering Thyself with light as with a cloak, Stretching out heaven like a [tent] curtain.* Psalm 119:105 - *Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path.*

Those present should have understood clearly that when Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world,"* He was making a proclamation concerning Himself that He was the promised Messiah and was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi and in keeping with the many statements in the Psalms about God.

The analogy of light used here is in reference to its providing the illumination needed to find one's way. Most of us have tried at one time or another to navigate through a dark room only to find ourselves bumping into something. I remember one night when I still lived at home with my parents and older brother when my mom decided to rearrange the living room furniture. There had been a fairly straight path from the front door into the dining area and then into the kitchen. If you just stepped to the right about a foot you would avoid the stuffed chairs that were against the north wall. My mom decided to switch the couch and coffee table with those stuffed chairs. My brother came home from work that night unsuspecting of the change in the home environment. He was in the habit of just coming in without

turning on the light and going back to his room. We all woke up that night as he went sprawling over the coffee table and began to groan over his bruised shins. He started turning the light on.

Have you ever been on one of those cave tours where they take you way down under the earth and then turn off the lights? Your eyes cannot adjust to total darkness. How would you like to try to find your way out of that? Usually they light a match or candle and you are reminded just how important light really is. That is the way it is spiritually for those who are without Christ. Satan has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving (2 Corinthians 4:4). They cannot perceive the truth. They stumble around in their sin and cannot find the path of righteousness. They need a light to show them the way.

The analogy would have been clear to those who heard Jesus because the pillar of fire guided the nation of Israel through the wilderness. It not only illuminated their camp and provided safety, but it led them to where they needed to go. The people did not use the light from the pillar to find their own way. They followed the pillar of fire. That is an important aspect of this analogy Jesus is making about Himself. Notice that it is, *“he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.”* Jesus is not a light you use for your own purposes to find your own way. Jesus is a light that you are following. He is lighting your path so that you are not in darkness and can go His way. In fact, if you try to go your own way, you will not be following Him and you will end up in darkness.

Jesus’ claim is to be the Messiah, the promised one that would be the Sun of righteousness that would shine on those living in darkness. He would bring the light of life. John has mentioned this aspect of Jesus ministry before back in chapter 1:4-5 & 9, ⁴ *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it . . .* ⁹ *There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.*

The Validity of Jesus’ Witness - John 8:13-18

In John 8:13 we find there were some Pharisees that are present that **challenge** Jesus on His proclamation. They understood what Jesus meant by it and they could not let it go undisputed. ¹³ *The Pharisees therefore said to Him, “You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.”*

In view of what these Pharisees say later, I don’t think they mean this in the sense that they believe that what Jesus is saying is true and that He just needs an additional witness for it to be legally true. They are disputing Jesus. I believe the sense here is that they have rejected what Jesus is saying and are charging Him with making unsupported boasting. Jesus would need additional confirmation for His statement to be true, and since He does not have it, His witness is not true. In short, they are stating that Jesus is lying.

Jesus takes up their challenge and shows that what He is saying is true and that He does have the witnesses to prove it. Jesus’ assertion that His testimony is true is based on three arguments. 1) His own testimony for He knows His origin and destination. 2) Jesus’ intimate union with God the Father. 3) The Father’s witness.

The **first argument** is in verse 14, ¹⁴ *Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true; for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from, or where I am going.* Jesus knows Himself, but the Pharisees do not know Him. They have not even bothered to find out where He was physically born (John 7:47-52) much less about His origin in Heaven. Jesus knows that He will be returning to Heaven. The Pharisees are also ignorant of this. Jesus is from heaven and will be returning there, and as a heavenly being who dwells in the presence of God, He must be sinless. He does not lie. His testimony is true.

The **second argument** is in verses 15-16, ¹⁵ *“You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. ¹⁶ “But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone [in it,] but I and He who sent Me.* Notice that Jesus does not mince words in His counter argument with these Pharisees. He contrasts Himself with them as being opposites. They are judgmental with the wrong basis for their judgments. They judge by how they perceive things and do not investigate the reality. As already pointed

out, they had judged Jesus as disqualified from being the Messiah because He appeared to be from Galilee for Jesus had grown up in Nazareth, His friends were Galileans, and He probably had a Galilean accent. They judged by the flesh rather than investigating to find out that He had actually been born in Bethlehem in Judea just as the prophecy had said.

This is a good warning to us as well, for it is easy to fall into this trap of judging others by the appearance rather than the truth. We are to be humble and make our judgments with righteous judgment (Galatians 6:1f; Leviticus 19:15).

In contrast, Jesus did not judge. He came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), or as Jesus said in John 3:17, *“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.”* There is a time coming when Jesus will judge (Revelation 20), but it was not then. And when Jesus does judge, it will be a righteous judgment made on the actual facts (Revelation 20:12) and not appearances, and that judgment will be in complete agreement with God the Father who sent Him.

Jesus’ **final argument** is in verses 17-18,¹⁷ *“Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true.”*¹⁸ *“I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.”* Jesus’ testimony is true because God the Father is a witness to it. Jesus cites Deuteronomy 17:6 showing His argument is in keeping with the Law. Of course, the two witnesses have to be trustworthy for their testimony to be true, for the testimony of a false witness was to be rejected and that witness punished (Deuteronomy 19:15-21). But what more trustworthy testimony could there be than God the Father?

Jesus’ Father - John 8:19-20

The **Pharisees** challenge Jesus again in verse 19, *And so they were saying to Him, “Where is Your Father?”* They completely rejected what Jesus had just said. They were hardening their hearts, which is an extremely dangerous response to the truth, because God may treat you like He did Pharaoh and confirm you in that hardness so that you can never repent. These men were already blind to what Jesus was claiming. Eventually these Pharisees blasphemed the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12) when they claimed that the work the Holy Spirit had just done was instead the work of Satan. They were sealed in their condemnation and there was no longer any hope for forgiveness.

Jesus does not back away in the least and further charges them in verse 19, *Jesus answered, “You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.”* The reason that they rejected Jesus and would not recognize the truth of His claim is because they had already rejected God the Father. They were not interested in knowing Him and obeying Him. The religious system they had created by perverting the Mosaic Law was all about earning their way to heaven according to their own self-righteous system. There are many people around today that are the same way. They have replaced the law of God with their own rules and regulations. They have turned God from the loving creator who desires a personal relationship with His creatures to an uninterested judge who can be manipulated by man. They did not know Jesus because they did not know His Father.

John adds a comment in verse 20, *These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.* The purpose of these comments is to point out the location where all this took place and note that Jesus still had not been arrested. This area of the Temple was in immediate proximity to the hall where the Sanhedrin held its sessions. If ever there was a time to arrest Jesus and put Him on trial, this would be it. Even though there were people around in the Temple, they were so close to the Sanhedrin’s hall, that they could have quickly arrested Jesus and brought Him into their court. They understood what Jesus had just been claiming and could have charged Him then with blasphemy just as they would later. But, as John points out, God is in control and this was not yet Jesus’ hour for trial. That would not come for another six months when He would become the Passover lamb and be the substitute sacrifice for our sins.

Future Destinies - John 8:21-24

The confrontation did not end there. Jesus does not let these Pharisees get away but again challenges them by contrasting Himself with them. Verse 21 is actually a very serious warning, ²¹ *He said therefore again to them, "I go away, and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."*

They continue in their charade and act as if they did not understand, but they did get the point. They began talking among themselves, and certainly loud enough for Jesus to hear - verse 22, *Therefore the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"*

This statement is even more obnoxious than it might seem at first glance. It is a mocking statement. Jesus had just very directly told them that they would die in their sins. That sets the context that He is talking about the location where they would spend eternity and where He would spend eternity. They mock Jesus saying that perhaps He would commit suicide, which was not uncommon during that time. But there is added to this the idea prevalent at that time, just as it is in some churches today, that a person who commits suicide will go to hell because they have committed self-murder.

Jesus tells them they will die in their sins with the clear implication that they are heading for hell, and they in turn mock Him by saying that perhaps Jesus would kill himself with the implication that it would be Jesus that would go to hell. The irony of this is that Jesus did come for the purpose of dying as the substitute for man's sin. Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for many (John 10:11,18; Matthew 20:28).

Jesus now becomes even more direct in verse 23-24, *And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world."* ²⁴ *"I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am [He], you shall die in your sins."*

Jesus contrasts Himself with the Pharisees again. Jesus is from Heaven and they are from Earth. Jesus is part of the heavenly system and they are part of the worldly system. What is amazing here is that Jesus still gives them room to repent. He still gives them the opportunity to change their minds and recognize what He is saying and believe and inherit eternal life. But He also is clear about the consequences of rejecting Him. If you do not believe, you will die in your sins with no one to blame but yourself. You will not have an advocate when you stand before God for judgment. There will be a prosecutor, but no defense. It is a horrible thing to die still in your sins for the condemnation is received is for all eternity. Whether you consider the sin great or small, God judges it according to His own standard, not yours. You may not regard lying, cheating, coveting, petty theft, blasphemy, or idolatry as serious as grand theft, adultery, or murder, but the penalty of eternal punishment and separation from God is still the same. The only hope for forgiveness is faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus' Identity - John 8:25-30

The Pharisees challenge Jesus again in verse 25, *And so they were saying to Him, "Who are You?"* This is not a sincere question seeking information, but a challenge to Jesus for making such a statement. It is more the sense of, "Who are you to say we must believe in you or we will die in our sins?"

Jesus is again very direct with them. *Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you [from] the beginning? 26 "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world."* Jesus' answer to their question is simply a challenge to think back to what He had already said. He does not allow Himself to be sidetracked more than that. He then proceeds to explain that He has much more to tell them and then continues in His explanation of His relationship with the Father. The one that sent Jesus is true and Jesus is only declaring to them what He had heard from the Father.

The problem, as verse 27 points out, is that *They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.* They were blind to the truth, but ignorance, willful or involuntary is not an excuse.

Jesus is declaring the truth and they are responsible for it. I hope you also understand that you are responsible for what God has declared to mankind in the Bible. Your ignorance of it, whether willful or involuntary, will not be an excuse before Him.

Jesus continues on in verses 28-29 explaining what the future would bring. ²⁸ *Jesus therefore said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [He,] and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."* ²⁹ *"And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."*

The phrase, "lift up," in verse 28 refers to Jesus being lifted up on the cross just as it did in John 3:14. The point here is that in the future these men would finally figure out what Jesus was saying about Himself and that He was telling the truth. This is not a prediction that they would be saved in the future, though some might have. It is that in the future they would finally recognize the truth of Jesus' claim to be from Heaven and that He did only the Father's will. After Jesus' resurrection, the Pharisees knew the truth about what had happened for the soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb told them, but they were committed to their own plan anyway and bribed the soldiers to lie (Matthew 28:11-15). They knew the truth, but they still rejected it.

Responses - John 8:30

Jesus is the light of the world. Most people reject that light for they love the darkness, even as John 3:19 states. Yet, there are those that do believe, as verse 30 states. *As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.*

What about you? What do you believe about Jesus? He is the light of the world and He gives the light of life. But if that will be of value to you, then you must follow Him. It does not do you any good to claim to believe in Jesus if you refuse to follow Him and walk in His light. You do not have to stumble in the darkness of sin and its consequences. Turn on the light. Open His word and obey what you read. Spend time in prayer and become sensitive to the Holy Spirit and follow His prompting. In that way you will become as a city set on a hill shining its light for all to see. Jesus' light will shine through you to those still in darkness all around.

Sermon Notes: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 8:12-30

Introduction

Amazing qualities of light: _____

Jesus is teaching during the Feast of Booths - a celebration of God's _____ in Exodus & present

There are _____ responses to Jesus' teaching and His identity

The temple was lit up by four large _____ - symbolic of the pillar of cloud and fire in the Exodus

The Light of the World - John 8:12

Prophecy / Fulfillment: Isaiah 9:1-2 / Matthew 4:16 _____

Prophecy / Fulfillment: Malachi 4:4 / Luke 1:78 _____

Light as an analogy of God: Psalm 27:1; 36:9; 43:3; 89:15; 104:1; 119:105 _____

Jesus is proclaiming that He is the _____ fulfilling the prophecies and analogies

The analogy here is the light needed in order to _____ the right way

Jesus is the light that guides those who will _____ - as did the pillar of cloud and fire

John 1:4-5, 9 _____

The Validity of Jesus' Witness - John 8:13-18

Verse 13 - The Pharisees challenged Jesus' assertion and essentially call Him a _____

Verse 14 - 1st argument - Jesus testifies of what He _____

Verses 15-16 - 2nd argument - Jesus' witness is according to the One who sent Him - not on _____

Jesus came to seek and _____ the lost, not judge (John 3:18)

Verses 17-18 - 3rd argument - Jesus' testimony is true because God the _____ is a witness to it

Jesus' Father - John 8:19-20

Verse 19 - The Pharisees _____ Jesus' claim and challenge Him

Verse 19 - Jesus asserts they reject His claim because they _____ God the Father

Verse 20 - Though Jesus is in a vulnerable position in the _____, they do not arrest Him

Future Destinies - John 8:21-24

Verse 21 - Jesus challenges them and gives a very serious _____

Verse 22 - They mock Jesus - the question of _____ also insinuates going to Hell

Verse 23-24 - Jesus directly confronts them on their origin and destination - yet gives room for _____

Jesus' Identity - John 8:25-30

Verse 25 - This is not a sincere question, but a _____ to Jesus' right to speak against them

Verse 25-26 - Jesus challenges them to _____ back about what He has already said to answer their question

Verse 27 - They had been blind to the truth because they remained _____ despite Jesus' teachings

Verse 28-29 - They will know the truth _____ after Jesus has been crucified - but they would still reject it

