

The Gospel of John (52) Jesus, the Light of the World

Introduction:

Let us turn to John 8 and we will read a portion of this chapter beginning with verse 12 and ending with verse 20. This discourse of Jesus that begins with verse 12 is commonly understood as the fifth formal discourse of Jesus recorded by John in this Gospel. It is rather extensive, continuing through the entire chapter concluding with the last verse, John 8:59. It has been determined by some to be in the structural form of a *legal challenge dialogue*, which is set forth as a debate between Jesus and the Pharisees.¹ And so, as the Gospel unfolds, the conflict between our Lord and His detractors continues, and it would seem that our Lord becomes even more direct with His challengers, even as they become more hardened in their resistance to Him.

We have before us in the opening verse of this discourse one of our Lord's most significant and memorable declarations concerning Himself. It is briefly, but concisely stated in verse 12, and then the following verses record the challenge of the Pharisees to His claim and our Lord's response to them regarding the truthfulness of His claim. Let us read this section of our passage.

¹²Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

¹³The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."

¹⁴Jesus 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 and where I am going. ¹⁵You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. ¹⁷It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."

¹⁹Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?"

Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."

²⁰These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come. (John 8:12-20)

I. The setting and context of this passage

Verse 12 appears to be a rather abrupt change from the setting and context of the account we considered last week, the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11). We spent a fair amount of time last week explaining that this episode of Jesus and this woman was an authentic event in the ministry of our Lord, but that the account of these verses was not originally penned by John when he wrote this Gospel. It was inserted by a scribe at a later time when copying his manuscript. Understanding this to have been the case, verse 12 of John 8 as John had originally written, had immediately followed John 7:37-52. The setting of that episode is John 7:37f, which reads,

³⁷On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

¹ Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 404.

Then we may read John 8:12, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’” Jesus spoke these words on the same occasion, perhaps on the last day of the feast, or perhaps the day after. The use of the word “again” in verse 12 links our Lord’s words in this verse with what He had taught the people when He declared that He was the source of spiritual water that would quench the spiritually thirsty soul.

Recently we described that during the Feast the priests would daily carry water in a celebrative procession from the Pool of Siloam, which was then poured out at the altar of sacrifice in the temple. Here was the description that I had read when we addressed this several weeks ago:

On each of the seven days of the feast the priest drew water from the pool of Siloam in a golden flagon and brought it in procession to the temple with the joyful sounding of the trumpet. There the water was poured into a bowl beside the altar from which a tube took it to the base of the altar. Simultaneously wine was poured through a similar bowl on the other side of the altar. These symbolic ceremonies were acted thanksgivings for God’s mercies in giving water in past days (probably looking right back to the smiting of the rock in the wilderness and then on to the giving of rain in recent years).

This procession took place in the evening of each day when the entire temple mount was illuminated by very large candelabra. Here is a description of the event by the commentator, **Donald Carson**, in which he cited the ancient Jewish writing, the *Mishna*:

‘He who has not seen the joy of the place of water-drawing has never in his life seen joy’: this extravagant claim stands just before the description of the lighting of the four huge lamps in the temple’s court of the women and of the exuberant celebration that took place under their light Mishnah, *Sukkah* 5:1-4). ‘Men of piety and good works’ danced through the night, holding burning torches in their hands and singing songs and praises. The Levitical orchestras cut loose, and some sources attest that this went on every night of the Feast of Tabernacles, with the light from the temple area shedding its glow all over Jerusalem. In this context Jesus declares to the people, *I am the light of the world.*²

Another reference described the scene, “There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the ‘house of water-drawing.’”³ This light was to symbolize the Shekenah glory of God, or the very presence of God, that had led the children of Israel through their 40 year wilderness journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. When Jesus declared, “I am the light of the world,” He was asserting that He is not only the true source of God’s life-giving water to the world, just as God had provided water for the Israelites. Jesus is also the true light of the world, the true and full realization of the Shekenah glory of God, the very presence of God in their midst. This pillar of light that led the children of Israel through the wilderness unto their Land of Rest--the Promised Land. A brief description of God leading Israel in the wilderness is in Exodus 40:37ff, which read:

³⁴Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
³⁵And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. ³⁷But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. (Exo. 40:37-38)

² Donald Carson, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans. 1991), p. 337.

³ F. F. Bruce was quoting the Jewish Mishnah, tractate *Sukkah* 5:3. In his **The Gospel of John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 206, footnote 1.

And so, in this immediate context of John 7 and then here in chapter 8, Jesus is shown to be the true and full realization of those “types” in the Old Testament record. And when we consider that in John 6 Jesus showed Himself as the true Bread from heaven, over against the type of the Old Testament of God providing manna to feed the Israelites in their journey, we have three parallels set forth in this Gospel declaring our Lord Jesus to be the true realization of all that God had prefigured and displayed to Israel in the wilderness.

Yet, just as the reference to the water in chapter 7 seems to point us back to the rock in the wilderness rather than to the pouring of water from the golden pitcher, so the light may refer us to the pillar of fire in the wilderness. We have noted the reference to the manna in chapter 6, so that in three successive chapters the wilderness imagery seems consistently used to illustrate aspects of Jesus’ Person and work.⁴

II. The declaration of Jesus (8:12)

Again, verse 12 reads, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, *‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’*”

A. Jesus said, “I AM”

First let us draw your attention to the first two words that Jesus stated, “**I AM**.” We have addressed this before. This is the second of seven instances in John’s Gospel when Jesus declared, “I am.”⁵ This is the translation of the Greek phrase *Ἐγώ εἰμι*, (*ego eimi*).⁶ Here Jesus was making a declaration that He was Jehovah God who had appeared to Moses in the burning bush recorded in Exodus 3:1-14. There Moses asked God how he should respond to the Israelites when they ask for the name of this God who told Moses to deliver them from their bondage in Egypt. We read of this in verses 13 and 14.

¹³Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

¹⁴And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

In John’s Gospel Jesus repeatedly refers to Himself as *Ἐγώ εἰμι* (*ego eimi*) (“I AM”). And these references are universally acknowledged to be Jesus’ claims to deity. God had identified Himself to Moses as “I Am”, which signifies God’s eternal nature and His everlasting commitment to see that His Word and His promises are fulfilled and that He was ever faithful to His covenant commitments to His people. When our Lord was speaking before a crowd, He identified Himself as the great “I AM”, or the Jehovah (or Yahweh) of the Old Testament

B. The metaphor of “light” in the Bible

Let us consider the meaning of the metaphor of “light.” The imagery of “light” is a very rich and very frequently used metaphor in the Bible. It conveys a number of ideas, depending on the context in which it is found.

In the Old Testament God is presented as the Light to His people. The psalmist expressed:

⁴ Leon Morris, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 437.

⁵ We had pointed out an additional place earlier in the Gospel in which it is disputed whether or not Jesus was making the claim of being the “I AM.” This was the statement of John 6:20. If we do not consider this disputed verse, then our text of John 8:12 is the second declaration of Jesus that He is “I Am.” The first was John 6:35, “And Jesus said to them, *‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*”

⁶ In Greek *Ἐγώ* (*ego*) is the pronoun, “I” and *εἰμι* (*eimi*) is the verb ‘to be’, translated, “(I) am”.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid? (Psa. 27:1)

When the people were in the presence of God whose “face” radiated Light, they enjoyed His blessing of grace and peace.

²⁴“The LORD bless you and keep you;
²⁵The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
²⁶The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.” (Numb. 6:24-26)

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet foretold that the Servant of the Lord, that is, the Messiah, would be a “Light” to the Gentiles.

“And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,
So that Israel is gathered to Him
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),
⁶Indeed He says,
‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ”

Here the Messiah is said to be the Light of God’s salvation revealed to both Israel and the Gentile world.

The Old Testament declares the word of God--the Holy Scriptures—to be the light shining forth to give guidance to His people.

¹⁰⁵**Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.**
¹⁰⁶I have sworn and confirmed
That I will keep Your righteous judgments. (Psa. 119:105).

Proverbs 6:20-23 reads similarly that His Word is a lamp that gives forth light.

My son, keep your father’s command,
And do not forsake the law of your mother.
²¹Bind them continually upon your heart;
Tie them around your neck.
²²When you roam, they will lead you;
When you sleep, they will keep you;
And when you awake, they will speak with you.
²³**For the commandment is a lamp,
And the law a light;
Reproofs of instruction are the way of life,**

The metaphor of light is also found quite frequently in the New Testament. God is Light in 1 John 1:5: “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” The Lord Jesus declared that His followers, His disciples, were “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). The Apostle Paul described Christians as “lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

As we look to the Gospel of John itself, this is not the only place in which Jesus Christ is associated with light. In the prologue to this Gospel we read, “In Him (Christ) was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (John 1:4). In the same prologue John the Baptist is described in relation to the Light: “He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” (John 1:8f). In John 3 Jesus is also set forth through the image of light.

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” (John 3:19-21)

If we were to summarize how the Word of God uses the term, light, as a metaphor, consider this summary:

Apart from natural phenomena, light is used in Scripture of (a) the glory of God’s dwelling –place, 1 Tim. 6:16; (b) the nature of God, 1 John 1:5; (c) the impartiality of God, James 1:17; (d) the favour of God, Psa. 4:6; of the king, Prov. 16:15; of an influential man, Job 29:24; (e) God, as the illuminator of His people, Isa. 60:19, 20; (f) *the Lord Jesus as the illuminator of men (John 1:4, 5, 9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 36, 46; Acts 13:47; (g) the illuminating power of the Scriptures, Psa. 119:105; and of the judgments and commandments of God; Isa. 51:4; Prov. 6:23; cp. Psa. 43:3; (h) the guidance of God, Job 29:3; Psa. 112:4; Isa. 58:10; and, ironically, of the guidance of man, Rom. 2:19; (i) salvation, 1 Pet. 2:9; (j) righteousness Rom. 13:12; 2 Cor. 11:14, 15; 1 John 2:9, 10; (k) witness for God, Matt. 5:14, 16; John 5:35; (l) prosperity and general well-being, Est. 8:16; Job 18:18; Isa. 58:8-10.*⁷

I came across another list of how the word, light, is used in Scripture as a metaphor. **Ralph Robinson** (1614–1655) declared, “And so it (light) is put for several things, as they carry some resemblance to light:”

1. The Word of God (Psalm 119:105; 2 Pet. 1:19)
2. For the ministers of God (Matt. 5:14)
3. For regenerate men (i.e. true Christians) (Eph. 5:8)
4. For the state of conversion (Acts 26:18)
5. For prosperity and comfort (Esther 8:16; Psa. 97:11)
6. For deliverance from trouble (Isaiah 9:2)
7. For all the outward good (Job 30:26)
8. For the glory of heaven (Col. 1:12)
9. For knowledge (Dan. 5:11, Isaiah 60:3)
10. For God’s special favor (Psa. 4:6)
11. For posterity (Prov. 20:20; 1 Kings 11:36)
12. For God Himself (1 John 1:5)
13. For Christ, so this is used in this text. (John 8:12)

Peter also used the metaphor of light to suggest the clear path that the Holy Scriptures reveal Jesus Christ to us.

⁷ W. E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** (Fleming H. Revell, 1940), p. 340.

¹⁹And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed *as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*; ²⁰knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

But where Peter wrote of giving heed to the Holy Scriptures, Jesus Christ exhorted people to give heed to Him. Again, He said, “I am the light of the world. *He who follows Me* shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” To “follow” Jesus in this context speaks about believing in Him, but it also suggests the idea of obeying Him. By the way, “we should not overlook the present participle (“follows”) with its idea of continuous following.”⁸ We are to “follow” Him as He leads us through life in this world characterized by spiritual darkness. There may also be the suggestion that the time is urgent if Jesus as the Light is seen to be passing by and moving forward. One must stay close to the Light and follow the Light, because to fail to do so, one would soon find himself once again overtaken by darkness.

C. The metaphor of “darkness”

The metaphor of light cannot be fully appreciated unless it is contrasted with its opposite, that being *darkness*. For even though Jesus declared that He is the Light of the world, He mentioned it in the context of a dark world. Again we read, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in *darkness*, but have the light of life.”

Darkness is a metaphor that depicts lifelessness, aimlessness, confusion, deception, and evil. Light dispels darkness, in that light produces life, gives clear direction to the aimless, clarity of understanding to the confused, truth to the deceived, and exposure of evil by the appearance or presence of that which is good. The only certain remedy for darkness is light. Light dispels darkness. Only Jesus Christ can illuminate our darkened souls to the truth of who God is, what God would have us believe, and reveal to us and enable us to know how He would have us live before Him.

It is suggested here in verse 12 by the need to “follow” Him as the Light, that if we fail to do so there will be serious consequences. Later in John 12 we will read our Lord’s exhortation:

“A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, *lest darkness overtake you*; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” (John 12:35f)

If we fail to believe, even “follow” Jesus by looking to Him and His Word to direct us on what to believe and on how to live, we will be overtaken by darkness, even though we may have walked a while with some benefit of the light that had illuminated our path for a while. I could cite instances of people who seemed to have seen and believed on Jesus and it had appeared that for a while they had followed Jesus as lighting their way of thinking and living for a while. But then they gave off looking to Him and following after Him, and they were again enveloped in darkness. They are again clueless and often care-less about the things of Jesus Christ.

D. The significance of Jesus identifying Himself as the Light of “the world”

As we have already stated, the metaphor that Jesus used in our text of John 8:12 is an allusion to the light of the Shekenah glory of God that led the children of Israel through the desert unto their Promised Land. Our Lord identifies Himself as “the Light of *the world*.” Whereas the Shekenah glory in the days of Israel in the wilderness provided light only for (National) “Israel”, here the Lord Jesus declared that He was the Light “of the world.”

⁸ Morris, p. 438.

The absolute mastery of expression used by Jesus must not escape us. Words so few, so simple in themselves, in such lucid combination, to express realities so profound, so exalted, so heavenly, that our minds stagger in the effort to comprehend them. God, who is life and light, sent His Son Jesus as the source of light and life to all the world, to fill each individual soul with truth, holiness, and blessedness, and thus to give it life eternal. Note the universality in “the light of the world,” combined with the personal individuality in the singular, “he that follows Me.” Both reach out to the universe of men, far beyond the bounds of national Judaism. When we visualize the lowly Jesus in the Temple court uttering these words, astonishment overcomes us. But two thousand years of Christianity have verified these words in millions of individuals in all the “world.”⁹

The “world” is set forth in comparison and contrast to “the wilderness” in the Old Testament. The world is as a desert wilderness, a barren place, which is unable to give or sustain life. It is a metaphor for a spiritual wasteland, where no spiritual life exists. It is a foreboding place in which people wander about lost and in derision, for they do not see the way to go, the way to travel safely through and out of the wilderness of the world into a place of pleasant existence and security. But Jesus Christ is as a great light moving through the world. And as people who are in darkness see the light coming near them, they begin to follow it, being illuminated in the way they should go. Jesus Christ gives understanding of God and His ways and enables His people to proceed in that way as He leads them out of this dark, fallen world, that is steeped in the darkness of night into a world in which it is continual daytime with its daylight.

Like the pillar in the desert, Jesus as the light of the world must be followed: “he that follows Me.” While actual outward attachment is meant, even as many at that time followed Jesus about and kept in His company as much as possible, following Jesus here as elsewhere in the Gospels means permanent spiritual attachment. Of its own accord this gracious gift of God, this light, shines into the world’s night. It’s glorious, saving radiance attracts all whom it meets and draws them to remain with this light. Everyone who yields to this drawing power “shall not walk in darkness,” shall escape from its deadly power, shall no longer be lost, eventually to perish in the world’s desert. This negation, however, and its individual formulation intimate that some whom the light reaches and begins to draw to itself will turn from it and prefer darkness, 3:20. This is the tragedy that is connected with the coming of the light. Yet the positive “he that follows Me” intimates also that some will truly follow Jesus, and the effect shall be that each of these “shall *have* the light of life.” And so often in the words of Jesus, the positive is not made the mere counterpart of the negative. Jesus says more than that “he shall *walk* in the light.” To be sure, he shall do this too, but he shall do it because this light shall actually penetrate him and shall become his personal possession. This is another case where the figure used is really inadequate to express the spiritual reality, it only approximates the spiritual reality. Natural light never becomes part of our inner being, it only shines outwardly round about us. Jesus, the light of the world, shall do far more.¹⁰

And so we see that Jesus is the Light of God in this dark world. I came across a book this week that had been written by a Puritan I had never heard or read. **Ralph Robinson** (1614–1655) wrote a book entitled, *Christ All, and in All*.¹¹ One of his chapters was based on John 8:12, which he called, “Christ the True Light.” I included a portion of this chapter in an appendix at the end of these notes.

III. The challengers to Jesus and His defense before them (8:13-20)

We read in verse 13, “*The Pharisees therefore said to Him, ‘You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.’*” After the Lord Jesus made this claim before the people while standing in the court of

⁹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing, 1942), p. 596.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 595f.

¹¹ <http://digitalpuritan.net/ralph-robinson/>

the women of the temple, the Pharisees sought to discredit His claim. This is the most direct challenge that they have posed to Jesus. There has been a gradual escalation of hostility on their part and an increasing boldness as well.

The exchange of responses begin with a rejoinder of the Pharisees, who have become in this Gospel professional antagonists of Jesus. While they have normally plotted against Him silently (5:16, 18; 7:30, 32), spoken about Him to each other (7:11, 45-49), or even spoken about Him but not to Him while in His presence (6:41-42, 52; 7:15, 35-36), here the Pharisees confront Him directly.¹²

It is interesting that they did not attempt to refute what He declared, that is, they did not charge Him directly with teaching something false. Rather, they sought to discredit His witness by saying it was illegitimate or invalid. The effort of these Pharisees was a legal challenge to Jesus of His legitimacy for making such a claim. The Law of Moses required at least two witnesses in a court case in order to substantiate a claim. They were attempting to delegitimize our Lord's witness on this ground. They were basically claiming no one had to give any regard to His claim, because it was not validated by two witnesses.

The leaders of the opposition to Jesus are the Pharisees. They do not address themselves to the main question. Indeed, they do not speak of light and darkness at all. Typically, they fasten on a legal technicality. Jesus is bearing witness is not "true." This does not necessarily mean that it is false. It means that it is not valid. It has no legal worth. There is no reason to accept it. Cf. 5:31. The Pharisees' reaction to Jesus' claim to be light is at base the answer men always make when they do not wish to be convinced: "I do not see it that way. The evidence is not sufficient to establish the claim." But light establishes its claim. It does so, not by arguments, but by shining. Light must always be accepted for itself, and that notwithstanding the objections of the blind.¹³

But the Lord insisted that His witness was valid, and true. **Verse 14** reads, "*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 and where I am going.'*"

Now Jesus' words spoken here need to be reconciled with what He had declared on an earlier occasion. Back in chapter 5 we read of our Lord stating, "*If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true*" (5:31). But here He said, "*Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true.*"¹⁴ In the context of John 5:31, however, our Lord was simply acknowledging that His witness needed additional support before it could be regarded as valid. There He was asserting the legal principle they were now arguing in 8:14. But what was legitimate in the case of John 5:31 was not so here in John 8:14. Here He claims that His witness is indeed valid.

In the present passage He has two points to make, the one that He is qualified to bear witness though His enemies are not, and the other that in any case His testimony is not unsupported. The Father bears witness of Him. Here Jesus is contrasting Himself with the Pharisees. He knows both their origin and destination, but they know neither. They are not in a position to comment on His witness. They are totally unaware of the great heavenly verities (truths).¹⁵

Our Lord then declared to them in **verse 15**: "*You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.*" Jesus stated that they were in no way qualified to pass judgment on His claim, "I am the light of the world."

¹² Klink, p. 406.

¹³ Morris, p. 439.

¹⁴ An unbeliever who is somewhat knowledgeable of the Scriptures might 'surprise' someone not skilled in the word if he were to claim that this constitutes a clear contradiction in the Bible. He would be wrong, of course, but his initial charge might at first appear to have validity.

¹⁵ Morris, p. 440.

Now we are probably accustomed to think of the term “flesh” as used in many other parts of Scripture, thinking that it is speaking of the sin principle that resides in every human being excepting the Lord Jesus. But in John’s Gospel the word “flesh” does not carry the nuance of being “sinful.” The idea is that it is limited, it is only human or of this world, and therefore incapable of assessing and judging these spiritual matters.

Jesus continues His surrejoinder¹⁶ by expressing again the paradox of His authoritative function. Even though He has already stated that He is the Judge (5:22-27) and will say as much in the verse to follow (v. 16), Jesus here claims what might seem contradictory: “I am not judging anyone.” The explanation must be found in the contrast: “You judge according to the flesh”. Judgment according to “the flesh” is a reference to the limited perspective of the person who judges. This is the only time in the gospel this term is used as a qualifier. In this Gospel, “flesh” is not evil but limited and is to be contrasted with that “from above.” The judgment of Jesus, then, is different in kind (not degree) from the judgment of the Pharisees.¹⁷

But then Jesus declared in **verses 16 and 17**, ***“And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. ¹⁷It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.”*** Here our Lord declared that there were two witnesses after all, both Himself and His Father. Therefore, His claim is indeed valid. He was not out of order in what he had asserted, He is the light of the world. To these Jewish leaders, Jesus appeared to be alone, on His own. But this was not the case. His Father was with Him always. They stood together.

Of course this claim brought forth an expected question from the Pharisees. **Verse 19** records, ***“Then they said to Him, ‘Where is Your Father?’”***

And then we read, ***“Jesus answered, ‘You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.’”*** This sets the stage for a great conflict that will bring forth our Lord’s greatest denunciation of them. Later in John 8:44 we will read of our Lord saying to these men:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

The conclusion of this episode is John’s explanation of where this incident had transpired. It was in the “treasury” of the temple, the court of the women. We read in **verse 20**:

These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.

Conclusion:

As we are about to leave this place this morning, let us ask ourselves this question: Have we been and are we truly following the Lord Jesus as the true Light that God the Father has given us to lead us through this dark world? This is not to ask if you are in His house on the Lord’s Day week after week, I trust that you are. But do you follow Him day by day? He is the Light of the world, the only Light that God has given us to lead us out of this wilderness world into the glorious world that He has prepared for us.

¹⁶ Here Klink uses the legal term, surrejoinder, in order to keep with the judicial nature of the dialogue. What is a surrejoinder? It is a plaintiff’s pleading in response to a defendant’s rejoinder in court session.

¹⁷ Klink, p. 407.

To follow Jesus Christ as your light means that you have embraced Him in faith as your sole Savior and Lord. To follow Jesus as your Light means that each day you wake up, you renew afresh your faith in Him to lead you rightly through the day, to order your thinking, behaving, acting and reacting, according to the way that He would have you do.

Do you see Jesus Christ with the eye of faith? Do you see Him as His Father sent Him into this dark world, as His Light to lead us unto our eternal home? Do you see Him before you? Do you see the others following Him? Join yourselves to them. In faith purpose that Jesus Christ will be your Lord and Savior, and that you resolve by the mercy and grace of God to follow Him wherever He leads you, for you know the final destination to which He is leading His people is where you want to be.

Where and how do we discern Him guiding us? We do not visibly see a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. But He has given us a much better and more clear source of instruction, that being His holy, authoritative, instructive written Word, the Holy Bible. We will close with reading again the Apostle Peter's exhortation of how God's Word should lead us as we move forward:

¹⁹And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, *which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*; ²⁰knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

²⁸And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;
neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all;
and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand." (John 10:27-29)

Ralph Robinson
(1614–1655)
*Christ All, and in All.*¹⁸

One of his chapters was based on John 8:12, which he called, “Christ the True Light,” in which he set forth the resemblance between Jesus Christ and light in seven ways

1. Light hath a manifestive quality. It doth discover and cause to appear things that do in darkness lie unseen. Darkness is a thick vale and shadow under which things and persons are concealed, but light removes the shadow, and shows both itself and every other thing in its own nature. When you would see what a thing is, if you do not know it, you bring it forth to the light, and then it appears. Whatsoever doth make manifest, the same is light, Eph. 5:13. Jesus Christ in this respect is well compared to light. He discovers and makes manifest to men that which they never saw before. How many rare mysteries has Christ discovered to the sons of men? When He came into the world, He revealed those secrets that before were either not known, or not fully known. The Apostle speaks of this, Eph. 3:2-6, 8f. When Christ comes to a soul, what discoveries doth He make there?

(1) That sin which lay hid for many years is now manifest, that pride, that unbelief, that covetousness which was not discovered before, is now made manifest. The very secrets of the heart are made known when this light begins to shine, 1 Cor. 14:25. The soul wonders, that so much wickedness should be so long undiscovered.

(2) That shining beauty which is in grace, which was not before discerned, is now made manifest. He sees godliness to be another kind of thing then that he never apprehended it to be. He sees a loveliness in every duty of God’s worship, a loveliness in every act of holiness which he could not have believed, so that he is able to say with the blind man restored by Christ, ‘This I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.’ Christ has the discovering quality of light.

2. Light has a directive virtue. It guides men in their way. The traveler by the benefit of the light, sees what path to keep, which way to turn to his intended journey. Our Savior mentions this effect of light, John 11:9, 10. Now Christ is fitly called a light in this regard. He it is that doth direct the sons of men in the way to life. And therefore He is called, not only the light by which we see, but the guide that leads us, Luke 1:79. Yea, He is called not only the light and the guide, but the way in which we walk, John 14:6. Jesus Christ is sent by His Father in heaven, to direct His elect to heaven. He is the great Pilot of His Church, that doth steer it through the tempestuous seas of this world to the haven of glory.

3. Light has a penetrating virtue. Light is of all creatures that are material, the most immaterial; it is so subtle a nature, that it conveys itself into the least crevice. You can hardly make any fence to close, but His eye is in it; no conscience so dark, but He sees to the bottom of it. See what the Apostle says of Him, Heb. 4:13, *All things are naked and open to His eyes, and every creature is manifest in His sight.*

4. Light has a cheering and a warming virtue. The light contributes much to the vegetation, and growth, and life of plants, and other creatures. Light and motion are the cause of that heat which the heavenly bodies send down upon the earth. Light is that instrument whereby all the influences of heaven are communicated and dispensed to the world. The motions of nature are both quickened and comforted by the light, and by it all the births of nature are cheered and comforted. Jesus Christ has a cheering, comforting, and quickening virtue. ‘Tis by influences from Christ, spiritual life and comfort are obtained and preserved. The Prophet speaks of this virtue of Christ, under this very metaphor of light, Mal. 4:2. All the spiritual liveliness and briskness that believers have at any time in their hearts, is from beaming

¹⁸ <http://digitalpuritan.net/ralph-robinson/>

wings of Christ the Son of righteousness. He is a heart-cheering, a heart-warming, a heart-quickenning Savior.

5. *Light has a purifying virtue.* Fogs and mists that are gathered in the darkness are dispersed and scattered when the light comes. When a candle is lighted and set up in a room, if there be any damp, they gather about it. Light is the refining-pot of nature... Jesus Christ has a purifying and cleansing virtue. By virtue from Him it is, that those nasty filthiness of sin which are in the foul, are purged away, Heb. 8:14. All the Levitical purifications used in the Law, were types of Him. The Prophet compares Him to a refiner and purifier of silver, Mal. 3:3. By His blood He purifies the soul from the guilt of sin. The Prophet compares Him to a Fountain set open for purification, Eze. 13:1. All that ever were, all that ever shall be cleansed from the filthiness of sin are cleansed by Jesus Christ.

6. *Light is an undefilable nature.* Though it pass through sinks, and the most polluted places, yet it contracts no defilement. It cleanses all things, but is defiled by nothing. It is a quality so spiritual, that nothing can fasten upon it to pollute it. Jesus Christ is fully resembled to light in this respect. He is not capable of any defilement. He assumed sinful nature without the least sin. He had the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8:3, but not the least sin in His flesh. In the days of His flesh He did as a spiritual Physician, repair all sorts of sinners, but He carried away from them no pollution at all. He converted *Mary Magdalen*, with *Zacchaeus* the Publican, and other Publicans and sinners, without the least taint of corruption. He was born, He lived and died in a corrupt generation, in a very Pest-house of sin, without the least tincture of sin. He lived and died holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinner, as the Apostle said, Heb. 7:26.

7. *The nature of the Light is hard to be known.* The philosophers are much troubled about the defining and describing of it. Tis not a substantial form, because it is a perceived by the sight, which no substantial form is... The Scripture speaks of the difficulty of searching out the nature of the light perfectly by any mortal man, Job 38:19-21, 24. Only He who is the Father of lights doth perfectly understand it. Jesus Christ is not perfectly to be understood by any living man. Who is able to declare the mystery of the hypostatical union of the two natures in one person exactly? We believe these things, comprehend them perfectly we are not able. His name is Wonderful, Isaiah 9:6, there are such wonderful mysteries in the nature of this light, as no man, no creature can fully and perfectly comprehend.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ralph Robinson, **Christ All, and in All** (John Rothwell, 1660), pp. 145-148.