

**Find Life in the Son:
Light of the World
John 8:12-20**

Introduction

My goal in our study of the Gospel of John has been for us to see Jesus for who He really is in contrast even to those who claim to know Him, let alone those who have chosen to put their faith in the changing dogma of the age, who listen to the lying voices who dominate a world that hates God.

With each successive passage, we have seen Jesus unveiled. I hope you are falling in love with Him all over again. Our passage this morning will continue that process.

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." ¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." ¹⁴ Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony 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. ¹⁵ You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶ Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. ¹⁷ In your Law it is written that the testimony

of two people is true. **18** I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.”
19 They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” **20** These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

We are going to see that what Jesus is claiming here is stunning. He does so publicly in the face of determined, hateful opposition. What He offers is exactly what every dying sinner needs and should desire more than anything else in the world. But this passage continues to expose just how wicked, dishonest, and stubborn His detractors are, even though they wrap themselves in the robes of respectable religion.

1. Declaration (12a)
2. Promise (12b)
3. Denial (13-19)
4. Invincibility (20)

1. Declaration (12a)

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world.”

Jesus has talked about His giving the water of life and His being the bread of life. Now he uses the metaphor of light.

Jesus says these words at the end of the feast of tabernacles. The whole feast recalled the nation's years in the wilderness and looked forward to the messianic age. During that feast there was a ceremonial lighting of the lampstands, some say on the first day, some say on each day. Lighting the lamps commemorated God's having led and protected Israel in the wilderness in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. That shekinah (dwelling place) glory was the visible manifestation of God's presence with Israel throughout all the years between the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. They were not alone. God was with them. When Jesus describes Himself as the light, He is identifying Himself as our Immanuel, God with us.

Further, the OT talks about the coming Messianic age in terms of light.

Isaiah 9:1-2

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali [through the Assyrian invasion and captivity of the northern tribes], but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of

the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Matthew notes the connection of this prophecy with Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

Isaiah 42:5-7

⁵ Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶ "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 60:1-5

¹ Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³ And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. ⁴ Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your

daughters shall be carried on the hip. ⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

The promised Messiah would be a divine light not just to the Jews but to all nations of the earth. So it is not without significant that Jesus not only says, "I am the light." He says, "I am the light of the world." Every tribe and people in every time and place have only one light: Jesus the Messiah. The salvation He brings is for all people not just the Jews. He will not fail to rescue every single person who embraces Him as the light.

No wonder then, early in John's gospel the aged apostle records, John 1:4-9
⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. ⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

Paul expresses a similar concept in 2 Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Jesus as God the Son in the flesh is the shining light of God's presence with humanity. As God He brings the light of truth breaking through the darkness of falsehood, revealing what the darkness obscures. He brings the light of joy and hope to a world drowning in the darkness of despair. And He brings the light of life to a lost humanity dominated by death.

If you turn from the light of truth, all you have left is lies. If you turn from the light of joy and hope, you are left in sorrow and despair. If you turn from the light of life, you have nothing to embrace but death.

Applications

- What evidence can you show that you are embracing Jesus as your light?
- If you are a believer, how are you testifying by your lifestyle and by your words that Jesus is the light of the entire world?

2. Promise (12b)

"Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

To follow Jesus is to trust Him as your Shepherd, your Savior, your Master and Lord. More than any other mentor, you look to Him to show you the way. His disciples deny themselves, take up their cross—whatever suffering is necessary in the will of God, and follow Him. They believe there's no better way to live. It is acknowledging that you are not captain of your own fate. You are no longer living life self-absorbed and self-directed. You are following Jesus in faith. You rely on what He taught. You live according to what He promised. You depend on Him to bring you safely through each day till you are safely home. Those who reject Him believe the words of others, not Him. Simple as that. Choose wisely.

Whoever trusts Jesus this way—no matter who you are, no matter your past, no matter your hangups—will not walk—will not live your walkabout life in darkness. By definition you cannot trust darkness. *When you follow Jesus you no longer grope your way along. You are following the Light of the world. You are living in His light. He shows you the way. He leads you on paths of righteousness. He will never ever ever leave you or forsake you. He is with you to the consummation of the age.*

1 John 1:5-7

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Instead of walking in darkness, if you follow Jesus you have as a present possession forever the light of life. Death no longer reigns. Sin no longer reigns. Falsehood no longer reigns.

Applications

- If you believe Jesus is the light of the world, what darkness have you let get a foothold in your life?
- Would those who know you best testify that your life shines with the life light of Jesus? Why or why not?
- In what ways are you living your daily life leaning into the light of life instead of filling your mind and heart with the darkness?

3. Denial (13-19)

¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."

The Pharisees are trying to use the Scriptures against Jesus. They are known for their study of the Bible. They believe it is inerrant. They believe in miracles and angels and the resurrection. But the vocal majority of them do not believe in Jesus. They would have been well aware of the significance of Jesus' making this declaration at the end of the feast of tabernacles. They would have known well the prophecies of Isaiah. But they do not pursue that line of questioning. Instead they tap into the requirement in a court of law that every allegation be confirmed by at least two witnesses. That requirement does not mean a single witness is inherently unreliable, but that in legal matters you need confirmation. They make the leap that Jesus is an unreliable witness—a liar—because He is talking about himself. It is a legal technicality to avoid dealing with what Jesus is teaching.

Jesus first responds by underscoring that His testimony is from firsthand experience. It is not hearsay evidence. He testifies not merely to the appearance of reality.

John 8:14

Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony 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 is teaching from the unique perspective of having come from heaven to earth. He has come on mission and once He's completed His mission, He will return to heaven. Nobody else in history can make such claims.

He also makes the point that their ignorance of this reality makes them incapable of making an accurate judgment. They are judging merely by appearances. Jesus was not trained in their schools. He does not have their stamp of approval. He is not wealthy or powerful in terms of the world they control. He does not subscribe to the club rules. He is not impressed by their external pretense of righteousness. He sees their hearts. He knows their intent. They cannot fool Him as they fool the rest of the public. Remember they were very popular at the time, considered the paragons of holiness. He knew otherwise.

John 8:15-16

15 "You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. **16** Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me."

A year earlier Jesus had declared that the Father had delivered all judgment to the Son. So why does He say here, "I judge no one"? First, Jesus does not judge in the way the Pharisees did—by mere appearances, the

externals of religion. He knows the heart. Second, it is not yet the time for Jesus to act as the judge. He has come as the Savior, and right now His mission is to testify to the way of salvation. Third, His judgment is not merely His own judgment. It is perfectly aligned with the Father who sent Him, as is everything Jesus does or says.

That leads to a further point of refutation to the Pharisees' accusation. Jesus appeals to the very requirement which they used to sidestep listening to Him.

John 8:17-18

17 "In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. **18** I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."

In other words, if you men want to argue courtroom technicalities, even that won't get you off the hook. Jesus made this same point a year earlier in John 5. He pointed to the witness of John the Baptist. Then He cited the witness of the Father through the miraculous works the Father gave Him to do. Finally, He cited Scripture itself as testifying to Him, including Moses, in whom they put their trust. Remember that the incident that led to the whole interchange a year earlier was His healing a man who'd been an invalid for 38 years with only words, "Rise, take up your

bed, and walk." But it was on the Sabbath. Never mind the astonishing display of compassionate power. He broke the rules of the Pharisees' manmade tradition. Who cares if He set the paralyzed man free! *Beware those who can't see past manmade traditions and trends to the obvious display of God's power.*

Jesus has multiple witnesses to who He is. The OT prophecies, John the Baptist, miraculous works, words from the Father Himself, and later on a host of eyewitnesses who testified regarding what He said and did. He's not just making it up. What He says has been prophesied and verified by multiple witnesses. You can't just throw that kind of testimony out of court. You can't claim to want the truth about Jesus and then dump all the firsthand evidence.

But they are undeterred. They get cheeky.

John 8:19

They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

They knew He was talking about God the Father. A year earlier they wanted to kill Him not just because He did miracles on the

Sabbath, but also because He made Himself equal with God by calling Him His Father.

They want Him to have His Father stand before them in visible, physical reality. If He's going to be your witness, Jesus, produce Him in front of us here. They are playing games. God is spirit, and they know it.

I am reminded of what Jesus reiterated to His disciples in the upper room the night He was betrayed.

John 14:6-11

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

The Pharisees quipped insincerely, "Show us your Father." But the reality is that they were looking at the visible, physical manifestation of the Father when they looked on Jesus.

They were looking at the Light of the world, but they chose blindness. They turned into the darkness. They did not want the light. They preferred pretense. They preferred temporal power. They preferred to leave their sin covered. They preferred to reign over their own lives. They would not bow even to God Himself.

John 3:19-21

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. **21** But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

You can throw out your little cheeky objections to trusting in Jesus. Trick questions like "Can God make a stone He cannot lift?" You can find multiple things that are hard to explain like the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God. You can stump sincere

Christians who are trying to share the truth with you. You can congratulate yourself with every aha moment, every little gotcha.

But don't forget who holds your lifebreath in His hand. You can wish God out of existence. But He's still there. Your life literally hangs on air. All God has to do is cut the electric impulse that makes your heart beat, and you're done. Don't forget that your determined stonewalling of gospel claims will be nothing but evidence for your condemnation when you stand before God. And then it will be too late.

Look, Jesus has given you all the evidence you need. If it does not suit you, you will die in your sins. There will be no escape. Your arguments will not impress the God who created you, who sustains you, you gives you life and takes it, who will be your judge and executioner at the end of your days. There'll be no debate then. Every mouth will be stopped. The great tragedy is that He could have been your Savior and Lord.

Applications

- What arguments (from you or others) against receiving the testimony of Jesus are actually efforts to sidestep dealing with His call to follow Him?

- What friends who thus far have refused Jesus do you need to encourage to get honest about why they resist Him?

We look at this scene with dismay that human beings, especially those who are the supposed champions of Biblical religion, would be so unbending in their resistance to the Son of God Himself. We live in a world where we see such rebellion everywhere. Even those we want to trust prove untrustworthy. But not to fret. Not to worry.

4. Invincibility (20)

These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

The treasury was the most populated area of the temple where both men and women attended. Hundreds and hundreds heard Jesus testify. Among them were those who believed or who would believe. Even members of the party of the Pharisees would end up trusting in Jesus. Even those who persecuted the early church. For instance, Paul the apostle.

This was where the seat of the power of darkness was. For Jesus to teach this way publicly in the temple and not be arrested when these men hated Him so much is shocking. Unless Jesus is actually telling the

truth about Who He is and what He came to do. Then it all fits.

We can grow greatly discouraged at the resistance to Jesus, at all the lies and tricks to avoid dealing with the truth of the gospel of Christ. But Jesus will not fail in His mission to save His people, no matter the opposition. God still rules the timetable. Jesus will go to the cross on schedule, not a day too soon or too late. He will accomplish our redemption. He will rise from the dead. He will ascend to heaven. He will send the Holy Spirit to indwell every believer. He will intercede for the saints. He will return. He will see them safely home into His eternal kingdom. He cannot and He will not fail.

John 1:5

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Applications

- When are you tempted to grow fearful or discouraged by the many who resist and oppose Jesus?
- How can you let God's lordship over history and the sure success of redemption keep you faithfully declaring the gospel no matter what?

Conclusion

Come to the Light of the world. Follow Jesus and leave the darkness forever. Bask in the light of life!

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2. Promise (12b)
3. Denial (13-19)
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Applications Summary

- What evidence can you show that you are embracing Jesus as your light?
- If you are a believer, how are you testifying by your lifestyle and by your words that Jesus is the light of the entire world?
- If you believe Jesus is the light of the world, what darkness have you let get a foothold in your life?
- Would those who know you best testify that your life shines with the life light of Jesus? Why or why not?
- In what ways are you living your daily life leaning into the light of life instead of filling your mind and heart with the darkness?
- What arguments (from you or others) against receiving the testimony of Jesus are actually efforts to sidestep dealing with His call to follow Him?
- What friends who thus far have refused Jesus do you need to encourage to get honest about why they resist Him?

- When are you tempted to grow fearful or discouraged by the many who resist and oppose Jesus?
- How can you let God's lordship over history and the sure success of redemption keep you faithfully declaring the gospel no matter what?