

Let in the Light John 8:12-30

Introduction

John places the text of Chapter 8, verses 12-30, between two interesting stories. In the earlier verses of chapter 8 is the story of the woman taken in adultery. Chapter 9 begins with Jesus healing a blind man.

In our text verses, we find Jesus in the middle of an ongoing debate with His adversaries. They interrupt Him ten times in this chapter alone. These Jews don't have a clue about what Jesus is saying and misinterpret everything He says. When they finally do catch on at the end of the chapter, they try to stone Jesus.

This passage doesn't leave you with any warm, fuzzy feelings. You have to concentrate to hear and understand what Jesus is saying. The things Jesus claims about Himself draw some people to faith (verse 30) and drive others farther away (verse 59). That was true then, and it's still true today!

It all depends on how much of the "light of Christ" you are willing to let in.

I. The Perfect Setting

The setting for this text is the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. A water-drawing ritual would begin the festivities every morning. A priest would stand at the top southwest corner of the Temple Mount and blow the shofar (ram's horn), announcing the start of the festival. Then, a priest would exit from the Water Gate on the south side of the main Temple building. The priest would lead a joyous musical procession carrying a golden pitcher to the Pool of Siloam in the old City of David. At the pool, the priest would plunge the pitcher into the water and recite Isaiah 12:3, "Therefore with joy, you will draw water From the wells of salvation." ([Isaiah 12:3 NKJV](#))

The priest says, 'And in that day you will say: "Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted."[\(Isaiah 12:4 NKJV\)](#)

Then the Priest would say, "He who has not seen the joy of the place of water-drawing has never in his life seen joy." The priest would then recite the Sukkot's Joyous Water Drawing, "He who has not seen the joy of the place of water-drawing has never in his life seen joy.'

This claim is made just before lighting the four huge lamps in the temple's court of women. Mishnah *Sukkah* 5:1-4 says, 'Men of piety and good works' would dance throughout the night, holding burning torches in their hands and singing songs and praises.

The Levitical orchestras would then begin to join in, 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 declared to the people that *I am the light of the world*. This setting gives us a very unique glimpse of God's revelation of Jesus as his true Messiah.

The feasts are essential to the Jews. They were very devout in their observance of them and rejoiced in their symbolism. The candelabra were in the Court of the Women, the most frequented part of the temple and where Jesus delivered His address.

1 John 1:5 says that God is light! Jesus said in Matthew 5:14 that His followers were 'the light of the world,' an expression identical to the one John uses here. In Philippians 2:15, Paul also speaks of Christians as 'lights in the world.'

The connection between God and light was not a new one. But what was new was that Jesus claimed to be that light that they associated with the presence of God. Isaiah 49:6 says that the servant of the LORD was appointed as a light to the Gentiles, that he might bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

The coming eschatological (Meaning the final age) age would be when the LORD himself would be the light for his people. Zechariah 14 promised continual light in the last days, followed by the promise of living waters flowing from Jerusalem. It's a passage that formed part of the liturgical readings of the Feast. It's an important passage because they traditionally did not light the candelabra on the feast's last day. The people would meditate and reflect on the purpose and meaning of Sukkot.

Jesus always seized the opportunity to teach. All of his great sayings were uttered in perfect settings. But they were not just teachings about historical events. Jesus points to these historical events as a personal witness of His coming as the awaited Messiah.

II. A Personal Witness

It was in this setting that Jesus speaks these words of John Chapter 8, "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*" The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." 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. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.*" Then 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.*" 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." (John 8:12-20 NKJV)

The Feast of Tabernacles is just concluding as Jesus speaks out in the temple, "I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

God had chosen Israel to be his witness to the world. In Isaiah 49:6, 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.'" (Isaiah 49:6 NKJV)

But Israel failed to fulfill her mission as God's "witness" (Exodus 4:22-23), and Israel's kings failed in this same role according to 2 Samuel 7:13-14. What Israel failed to do as God's "witness" to the nations, Jesus, as the "Son of God" came to fulfill, making Jesus the perfect "Son of God." What Israel failed to do as the "servant of the Lord," Jesus accomplished as the "Suffering Servant." Israel was commissioned to carry the "good news" of God's salvation to the Gentiles, but they refused to do so. So Jesus comes as the "Light of the world."

It was this part of the "gospel" the Jews hated (Luke 4:16-30; Acts 22:1-24). None of the audiences choose to argue about who Jesus claims to be. Instead, they quibble with Him over technicalities. Jesus points to His credibility as a heavenly eye-witness as His defense. This is ironic, especially in the light of the story of the woman caught in adultery at the beginning of this chapter. The scribes and Pharisees insisted that the woman be stoned to fulfill the Law of Moses. Jesus did not disagree about her guilt or even her punishment under the law.

What Jesus did caught His adversaries completely off guard. Jesus appeals to the Law of Moses on how they should proceed with the stoning. Under the law, there must be two eyewitnesses. When Jesus required that the two witnesses be innocent and that they "cast the first stone," no one was willing to do it, and the case was dropped for lack of witnesses.

The most important thing about any witness is that they are, in fact, a witness. In John 5, Jesus says, "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved." (John 5:31-34 NKJV)

In verse 36, Jesus says, "But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe." (John 5:36-38 NKJV)

In John 8:38, Jesus says, "I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do

what you have seen with your father." (John 8:38 NKJV)

Jesus' defense here is awesome. The first qualification of a witness is that they are a witness—that they have personally experienced that of which they testify. The Jewish religious leaders spoke with great authority about things they never experienced. Now, they seek to challenge the Lord's authority and credibility as a witness.

Only Jesus and the Father can testify about heavenly things because they have firsthand knowledge of them. Jesus knows where He has come from and where He is going. His opponents think they know where He is from — They think He is from Galilee. And on that basis, they reject Jesus as the promised Messiah.

John 7:25 says, "Now some of them from Jerusalem said, "Is this not He whom they seek to kill? But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from."

(John 7:25-27 NKJV)

Verse 41, "Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" (John 7:41-42 NKJV)

Obviously, no one checked out the actual birthplace of the Lord. They assume it simply based on appearances. His parents were Galileans, though providentially, He was born in Bethlehem of Judah (Luke 2:2-7). He grew up in Nazareth and was called a Nazarene, again fulfilling prophecy (Matthew 2:23). Many of His disciples and followers were Galileans (Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:40-41). He was raised in Galilee and probably had a Galilean accent (see Mark 14:70). Had anyone done even a little inquiring, they would have realized that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and was a descendant of David.

These Jews think they are qualified to judge Jesus, yet He is the One who is uniquely qualified to judge them. However, judging is not the mission in His first coming. But His judgment is true because He and the Father are united in this activity.

Jesus is teaching in the temple. He is in the temple courts where the offering boxes are kept. "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." (John 8:20 NKJV)

John's point is that no one seized him because his time had not yet come. And Jesus is literally outside the door of the room where the Sanhedrin meets. You can almost hear the hushed whispers of the voices of those men plotting to kill Jesus - while outside, you can hear the booming voice of the Savior proclaiming that He is the "Light of the world."

Jesus is the Divine Witness and cannot be silenced. The light always overpowers the darkness. That is the powerful message of God's love and grace.

III. A Powerful Message

In John 8:12, Jesus invites people to follow Him as the "Light of the world." But when He is rejected as the true light, He issues a strong word of warning.

Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come?'" And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (John 8:21-24 NKJV)

He says He is going away. When He is gone, they will look for Him but won't find Him. Jesus is saying that these people will "die in their sins," and they will not be able to go where He is going. He is speaking of His death on the Cross and His return to the Father in heaven. He is speaking of His sacrificial and substitutionary atonement. He is speaking of paying the penalty for our sins and breaking sin's power over us.

But Jesus' adversaries presume they are going to heaven and that since Jesus is their enemy, then He must be going to hell. They reason that if Jesus is going to a place that they cannot go, then Jesus (in their minds) must be going to hell. And so they jump to the conclusion that He must be speaking of His own death by suicide. You can almost hear them mumbling under their breath, "Good riddance! Go ahead and take your own life!"

It's no surprise that they can't recognize Him. After all, He is from above, and they are from below. Sadly, they think they are going to heaven, and He is going "below." They don't believe He came down from heaven, and because of this, they will die in their sins.

Jesus came to bear the sins of every person. And He was willing to be rejected and crucified as a sinner for those who would believe in Him to inherit eternal life. Jesus was the only One who could tell them of God's heavenly plan, yet they rejected His testimony. Unless they believed Him, they would bear the penalty for their sins and die in their sins.

Jesus can hardly be more precise in what He says, but they do not understand Him. And so they respond, "Who are you?" "Or, just who do you think you are?" Jesus responds: "I am the same person I have been claiming to be from the outset of My ministry, but you have not been listening. I have a lot more to say to indict you for your sin, and you're not going to like it any more than what I have said, but it is all from above, from My Father."

And as clear as this is, John makes an almost astounding statement: "They did not understand that He was talking about His Father." Now that's pretty amazing! Their eyes are blind and cannot see the "light." Their ears are dull of hearing. Jesus speaks of being equal with God and says God is His Father, and, at first, they don't even recognize what He's saying. And yet, He is doing His Father's will, and His Father is with Him in all He does. The powerful message of Christ reminds us that God is with us in our sufferings and persecutions just as the Father was with the Son when Men rejected him. Not even death or the grave or hell itself could triumph over Jesus because He is God. That is the powerful message of eternal life!

It is a *dark* moment in Israel's history—when Israel rejects the Light of the world. But even in this dark hour, there are rays of light and hope. John tells us that the words that draw some to faith drive others away.

Conclusion

We cannot change the message to make it appealing to unbelievers. We must declare the truth and realize that unless it is "enlightened" by God, a person will not come to faith in Jesus as the "Light of the world."

As we proclaim the gospel's truth, some will be blinded and hardened by it, while others will be enlightened and saved. Our task is to proclaim the truth, tell our story of faith, and pray that God will open blind eyes to see the truth and respond to it in faith.

Jesus makes it clear that those who "follow" Him cease to walk in darkness and walk in the light. The more you 'let in the light,' the clearer your vision of God's purpose and plan for your life becomes. The choice is simple: Believe in your own brand of salvation and walk in darkness, or believe in Jesus and 'let in the light' of God's joy and eternal salvation.