

The Light of the World

Each of us faces many problems in this world and many important decisions to make. Who is going to protect us and who is going to guide us? Jesus gives us the answer in our text today.

John 8:12-20

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.

In this text we receive some extraordinary encouragement from Jesus Christ when He says, "I am the light of the world..."

I. **If you will follow Jesus, He will protect you and guide you (vs. 12)**

In the Scriptures the idea of light is very common in both the Old Testament (used 130 times) and the New Testament (92 times). In John's gospel, the concept of "light" is used 16 times to describe the work of Jesus Christ. The reason that John refers to Jesus as the light in Chapter 1 is because Jesus Himself refers to Himself as the light here in Chapter 8. The historical context here is crucial to understanding what Jesus means. We remember that the occasion for John 8 is the Feast of Tabernacles, during which time the Israelites celebrated God's provision for them during their 40 years wandering in the wilderness. As we have already studied, the issue of water was crucial to the wilderness, and the Israelites celebrated God's gift of water by taking water from the pool of Siloam and pouring it over the altar each day with prayers of thanksgiving and intercession for the rain to come again to end the year's drought. In our text today, Jesus is referring to another phenomenon in the wilderness. Just as Moses struck the rock and water flowed, also God provided a cloud by day and a fire by night to protect the Israelites from the Egyptians (Exodus 14:19-25) and to guide them through the wilderness (Numbers 9:15-23). Jesus is saying that He is the cloud of God who will both protect and guide His people. The equivalent for us today is God's Word and Spirit who are given to us for our protection and guidance. As the psalmist says (119:105), "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." And as David says in Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

II. **If you follow Jesus you can know this is true (vv. 13-20)**

A. You must receive truth as divine revelation (vv.13-18)

The Jews challenged Jesus in verse 13 by suggesting that His testimony was invalid since He did not have another witness. In verses 14-18, Jesus on the one hand acquiesces to the Old Testament standard of additional witness by claiming His Father as His witness, and, on the other hand, He explains that they are seeking to validate divine truth by fleshly standards. It is important for us to remember today that the most important things in life cannot be proven in a scientific laboratory or at the end of a mathematical equation. Absolute truth comes to us by divine revelation. This is the reason that we read God's Word; this is also the reason that we listen to preaching, because it is a declarative, authoritative *declaration* of God's Truth as recorded in the Scriptures.

B. You must know God personally (vv. 19-20)

Once again the Pharisees challenge Jesus and ask Him about His father. Jesus explains that the reason they don't know Him is because they do not know either Him or His Father. In order for us to know absolute truth we must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We must remember in this context that the Pharisees were outstanding citizens. They tithed, they gave to the poor, they gave to one another, they were law-abiding citizens, and they had a concern for the welfare of Israel. These were no moral slouches. Jesus was saying even to them that their religious behavior and formalities had not provided for them the ability to ascertain truth. Could it be true of us as well?

When we come to verse 20 we see that Jesus had been speaking to them in the area of the treasury. Most scholars believe that this was the assemblage of the 13 receptacles for offerings in the women's court. This was the same place where the widow had given her two copper coins for her offering. Jesus is standing in front of the second temple, which had been constructed upon return of the Babylonian exiles. We remember that the elder people at that time were greatly disappointed at the lack of grandeur in the temple. Although Herrod had recently expanded and made grander the second temple, it still suffered the reputation of the lack of God's glory; in fact, there is no record in the Scriptures or in early history of the cloud of God descending upon the second temple. Jesus now stands in front of this same second temple claiming that He is the cloud of God, the light of the world.

With this great blessing, we also see that we are the ones that take this same light to every tribe and language and people around the world of every generation.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the historical context (Feast of Tabernacles) in John 8 help us to understand when Jesus says, "I am the light of the world"?
2. If God protected and guided the Israelites in the wilderness by the cloud, how does He protect and guide us today?
3. What does John 8:13-18 have to say to today's postmodern who says that there is no absolute truth?

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4. What does John 8:19 have to say to the modern atheist who says that only what you can prove scientifically is real?

 5. Jesus doesn't always use modern leadership techniques; He seems to be dealing with extremely controversial/offensive issues without any support from His disciples as a "guiding coalition." Why does He do that?

Going Deeper

1. To what do you look for protection and guidance other than Jesus Christ and His Word to protect you? To guide you? Why?

2. How is your personal faith strengthened by John 8:13-20?