

"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.'Jn.8:12

How do these verses relate to what has come before?

John 7:1-13 was the record of events associated with the beginning of the feast. John 7:14-36 was the record of events associated with the middle of the feast. John 7:37-53 was a record of events associated with the last day of the feast. But even though it was a record of the events associated with the last day of the feast, it was not a complete record which brings us back to the passage that we will begin to examine this weekend, which is John 8:12-59. John 8:12-59 will be a continuing record of the events associated with the last day of the feast.

You might say, "If John 8:12-59 is a continuing record of the events associated with the last day of the feast, then why doesn't this section of Scripture immediately follow John 7:1-53 in our Bibles?" The answer is that when the Gospel was originally written, John 8:12-59 did in fact immediately follow John 7:1-53.

John 7:1-53 and John 8:12-59, when originally written by the Apostle John, formed one seamless narrative. Or in other words, when John 7:1-53 and John 8:12-59 were originally written, these texts were not separated by the story of the woman caught in adultery.

Therefore all the events recorded for us in John 7:1-53 and John 8:12-59 took place during the Feast of Booths, and all the events recorded for us beginning in John 7:37 through John 8:59 took place on the last day of the feast. Within this section that records for us the events that took place on the last day of the feast, Christ gives us two major teachings.

Christ's first major teaching on the last day of the feast, recorded for us in John 7:37-38, used the Feast of Booths "water ceremony" as its backdrop, which I explained to you several weeks ago. Christ's second major teaching, which we will begin to look

at this weekend in John 8:12, used the Feast of Booth's "illumination ceremony" as its backdrop.

What is the "illumination ceremony"? This ceremony required that four torches would be set up in the center of the treasury. Some accounts say that the torches were as high as the highest walls of the temple. There was a ladder for each torch, and in the evening young, healthy priests would carry oil up to the top of these ladders in order to fill up large bowls that fed the wicks that would then be ignited. The light from these torches, once they were lit, could then be seen not only in the temple area but throughout Jerusalem as well.

The light coming from these great torches celebrated the pillar of fire that accompanied the children of Israel at night during their wilderness wanderings. It celebrated God's leading and protecting presence as they journeyed toward the Promised Land, even when the light of the sun was not available to them. It is in the shadow of these torches on the last day of the feast that Christ shares John 8:12 with them, which is the passage that the message this morning will be based on.

The passage begins with a claim by Christ that He was the light of the world (John 8:12). Let me read for you the first part of John 8:12. "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world.'" What an extraordinary claim. How many people do you know would make such a claim in respect to themselves? I would assume that the answer would be none. This is exactly what Christ claimed, but what exactly did He mean by what He said?

First of all, notice the first two words of His claim: "I AM." The words "I Am" in the Greek are grammatically emphatic and therefore mean "I and I alone," "I and no other." Jesus in essence was saying to the Jewish multitude that He and He alone was the light of the world. Jesus in essence was saying that He and no other was the light of the world.

To the Jews these words would have, at the very least, bordered on blasphemous. Why? The Jews had been celebrating the illumination ceremony.

The light coming from the great torches during this ceremony commemorated the pillar of fire that accompanied the children of Israel at night during their wilderness wanderings. It celebrated God's leading and protecting presence as they journeyed toward the Promised Land, even when the light of the sun was not available to them.

When Christ communicated that He and He alone was the light of the world, with the illumination ceremony as a backdrop for what He said, it could have easily communicated to the Jews that He was declaring Himself to be the very cloud, the very pillar of fire, who accompanied them throughout their wilderness wanderings. This could very easily have been how they understood His words in light of the illumination ceremony which provided the backdrop for what He just taught them.

Therefore, in light of the illumination ceremony, Christ's declaration that He was the light of the world could have led the Jews to believe that Jesus was claiming to be God.

Did they understand Christ's words precisely in this way? I don't know. But I would think that His words, at the very least, would have raised this issue in their minds.

But even if they did not understand the precise meaning of the words, hopefully, we understand the precise meaning. And why is this? Let me read for you 1 John 1:5. "And this is the message that we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." If Jesus told His disciples that God was light and in Him was no darkness, then what would we have to conclude Christ was communicating by His statement to the Jewish multitude here in John 8:12 when He declares to them that He and He alone is God? I think it is obvious He was declaring to them that He, in fact, was God, and that He, in fact, was the pillar of fire that accompanied them in their wilderness wanderings.

Though the words of Christ may have led the Jews to think that He was declaring Himself to be God, 1 John 1:5, lets us know that He was declaring Himself to be God.

So, hopefully we now know what Christ meant when He told this Jewish multitude, in John 8:12, that He and He alone was the light of the world.

But in what sense is Christ the light of the world? Does He shine on each and every person so that each and every person walks in the light? And the answer is absolutely not! Let us continue to read

John 8:12. "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness.'" Just because Jesus is the light of the world does not mean that everyone in this world will therefore be walking in His light. Certainly, everyone in this world could be walking in His light since He, in fact, is the light of the world, but this is something that should not be taken for granted. A choice is involved.

And of course, this means that those who are not disciples of Christ will therefore be walking in the darkness, since there is no other light in this world but Christ.

The only people who walk in the light are those who choose to follow Christ, since He alone is the light of the world.

There are two groups and only two groups of people in this world. There are those who are following Christ, who are walking in the light, and there are those who are not following Christ, who are walking in the darkness.

The implication is clear. In the Old Testament, if the nation of Israel was going to have any hope of reaching the promised land, they would need to entrust themselves to the light supplied to them by God. The same thing is true for us today.

If we are going to reach our promised land, our rest in Him and the glory of heaven, then we also must entrust ourselves to the light that God has provided. We must believe in Him but also as an expression of that faith we must follow Him. Isn't this what John 8:12 communicates to us? "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness.'"

Why do people believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior in such a way that it will produce in them a desire to follow Him? They believe that He is, in fact, the Christ, the Son of the living God who through His death, burial, and resurrection opened a door to heaven. And of course, each person who has chosen to follow Christ certainly believes these things, but there is something even more basic, which precedes what they believe about Christ.

Before a person comes to Christ, who is the light of the world, they must come to the place where they hate their sin (John 3:16-20).

John 3:16-20. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. (18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

And,

(19) "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. (21) But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Before a person comes to Christ and receives the gift that He is offering, they must have come to the place, by God's grace, where they hate their sin and want to turn from their sin. If this were not true then certainly they would not want to come to light, which in fact would expose their sin. The Holy Spirit must bring this conviction through the declaration of the Gospel.

But hopefully, this does not describe you. Hopefully, you, by an operation of God's grace, do hate your sin. Hopefully, this is the reason why you came to Christ, who is the light of this world, so that you might be set free from your sin. Set free not only from its penalty, but also from its power, and one day from its very presence.

Because a person who exercises faith in Christ exercises that faith in order to be set free from their sin, it should be expected therefore that they would seek to follow

Christ. They will follow Him because He, as the light of the world, is able to expose their sin, which they hate. And as they continually remain close to Him, allowing their sin to be exposed and confessed, they will demonstrate that they, in fact, are walking in the light and not walking in the darkness.

In which group would you place yourself this weekend? Are you one of those that hate your sin so much that it drives you to follow Christ so that you might walk in His light, or do you love your sin so much that it drives you away from Christ so that you might continue to walk in the darkness? Where are you?

If you are confident this weekend that you, in fact, do hate sin and that you have come to Christ, who is the Savior of this world, to be set free from that sin, then you know in coming to Him in this way that you are not only delivered from what you have hated, but you have received something that you have come to love. And what is that?

According to John 3:16 you have received the gift of eternal life, or in the words of John 8:12, you have received the light of life. Let us go back and read John 8:12 one more time. "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.'"

When we receive Christ, who is the light of this world, we are joined to the life of Christ, and He becomes within us the light of life.

Let me ask you a question. Why did John 3:16 speak of what we receive as eternal life but here in John 8:12 He describes what we have received as the light of life? He is seeking to emphasize the same truth that He had shared earlier with the Jews on the last day of the feast, they are two of the many aspects our salvation.

John 3:16, John 7:37-38 and John 8:12 emphasize the blessings that comes to us when we believe, and Jn. 8:12 also emphasizes the blessing that can come to others through us.

What had Jesus taught the Jews earlier on the last day of the feast in John 7:37-38. "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If

any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. (38) He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."

Then Jesus taught in John 8:12, later on that same day, "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.'"

We cannot be the living water for anyone but we can be light. When we receive Christ, who is the light of this world, we become light to this world through Christ (Ephesians 5:8). Let me read for you Ephesians 5:8. "For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

Remember the command of Christ in Matthew 5:16. Be who I have made you.

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

The Lord Jesus is saying, I didn't give you light, I didn't make you light, I didn't enlighten your hearts and your minds so that you could keep it to yourself. I did it so that you would share it with the world, so that you would influence the world by truth. You are to be spiritual light in the midst of depravity. You are to be spiritual wisdom in the midst of untruth. And that requires you to have a burning desire to do good for the world. To be an active witness in the world is to show genuine concern of the world. It is a fact that many of the advances made on behalf of helping the world maintain any sense of hope for the masses has come from kingdom people. The greatest advances in prison reform, orphanages, medical care, abolition of slavery, abolition of child labor and so on came first from God's people especially since the 17th Century.

Yet, this can lead to a great temptation.

And what is our temptation? What is the great temptation if we do have a heart to bear witness to the world, a true concern for the world? Well, isn't the great temptation there to actually compromise with the world? It many times are those who desire to influence the world the most, who are most tempted to give in to the thinking

of the world. And so Jesus again reminds us that the great temptation in effecting our concern for the world is a compromise with the world, becoming like the world, ceasing to be light, but the only way we can do good to the world is to be light. If we become darkness, we can do the world no good.

And so, we learn that we must hate the world without hating the world, but we must learn to love the world without loving the world. That is what Jesus is saying here. We must love the world without loving the world. Our love must be in accordance with truth and it must be without compromise.

Now lets look at the first statement of the Pharisees in response to Christ's claim was "Your witness is not true" (John 8:13-18). Let me read for you John 8:13. "The Pharisees therefore said to Him, 'You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.'" Should this response surprise us? Of course not! According to the doctrine of total depravity, the fall of man resulted in the whole of the human race being rendered totally incapable of pleasing God in any way, and very much a part of this phenomenon was the total corruption of their ability to spiritually reason, which we see here in the initial response of the Pharisees to Christ's claim.

Did the Pharisee's dismiss the claim of Christ? Absolutely! And what was their reason for doing this? What was their stated reason for not taking His claim seriously? The Pharisees, in declaring that His witness was not true because He was bearing witness of Himself, were challenging the legal competency of His testimony.

What was their point? Their point apparently was this: The Law of Moses required, in a legal proceeding, that there would be more than one witness testifying to the truthfulness of what was being alleged if the testimony was to be received as true.

We see this teaching in Deuteronomy 17:6 and Deuteronomy 19:15. It, obviously, was meant to protect innocent individuals. This particular provision, sanctioned under the Law, apparently became for the Jews a principle that could either be used or

abused in respect to other matters outside the court. Unfortunately, in the case before us here this weekend, we see the Pharisees in John 8:13 choosing to abuse this principle. Why?

The Pharisees, choosing to believe that Christ was bearing witness to Himself, mishandled Deuteronomy 17:6 and Deuteronomy 19:15 in order to reject Christ's claim. What did they say?

"You are bearing witness of yourself; Your witness is not true."

In what sense did they mishandle these verses? They did it by trying to make these verses say what these verses did not say. The verses taught that when you had multiple witnesses saying the same thing, the testimony of those witnesses should be considered true. This is clearly what it taught. But just because the testimony of multiple witnesses saying the same thing should be considered true does not mean that we should therefore conclude the testimony of a single witness is necessarily false.

The Pharisees did not understand.

Their hearts were hard, and their reasoning had been corrupted by the fall. They were totally unable to discern spiritual truth. They were spiritually blind and didn't even know it. What a pathetic condition. Sure they, from the standpoint of the Jewish multitude, might have an attractive appearance but at the core of their being they were spiritually dead, unable to please God and certainly were not in any position to exercise spiritual discernment. And this is sad considering the whole of Scripture until there day was God's truth for them. Therefore, it should not be surprising to us at all that when Christ told them that He was the light of the world that they would respond, "Your witness is not true."

In mishandling these verses and declaring that the witness of Christ was not true, the Pharisees, in essence, attacked Christ's credibility as a witness. They were in effect saying, "Jesus, you are a liar. You are bearing false witness." How does Christ respond to this attack on His credibility?

John 8:14. "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true.'" Jesus, as the light of the world, could have appealed to His divinity or to His personal holiness as a guarantee of His credibility, but He doesn't. He simply declares His testimony to be true for the simple reason that His testimony states the true facts regarding Himself.

Let's continue with John 8:14. "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.'" What is Christ's point? Tune in next week.