

“THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS”

John 8:12-20

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

As we have seen over the past few weeks, Jesus has been teaching at the Jewish feast of Tabernacles—the last and in some ways the most significant of all of the annual feasts outlined in the Pentateuch. Jesus has already made some astounding claims; he said that He was the source of “**living water**”, and that one who came to Him to drink (believe on Him) would have rivers of living water flowing from his inmost being. In saying this Jesus indicated that He was better than *the water out of the rock* that God provided for Israel during the days of wilderness wandering—the incident commemorated each day during Tabernacles at the pouring out of water ceremony.

Earlier, Jesus had claimed to be **the bread of life**, and that the one who comes to Him (in saving faith) will never hunger and thirst (6:35); by this saying Jesus indicated that He was superior to *the manna* that the Israelites ate during the wilderness wanderings.

Now, Jesus makes a third astounding claim—one that also had a direct connection with a ceremony observed during the feast of Tabernacles. During the first evening of the feast, and likely during some of the succeeding evenings, [but definitely not on the last evening of the feast] the priests lit two huge ceremonial candelabras that were positioned in the Court of the Women in the temple grounds. These were so huge that their light shined practically over the entire city of Jerusalem, adding to the joy and festivity of the Feast of Tabernacles. This lighting was reminiscent of the pillar of fire that led Israel by night in their wilderness wanderings.

So in these circumstances, Jesus makes His **third astounding claim: “I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. He who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.”**

This was a remarkable claim! It was not one to make the religious leaders of the Jews, who were already more than annoyed at Jesus and were looking for an opportunity to arrest Him and kill Him, very happy. Think of the implications of this statement in the words of Martin Luther:

*“Darkness rules wherever I am not; whenever I am extinguished, no one sees anything.” What becomes of Moses and all other teachers and doctors when He says “It is I”? He alone wants to be known as the Light of the world. He sets Himself apart from all other preachers. Therefore darkness reigns wherever He is not present. If He had only been more moderate and reasonable and had said: “I am the Light of this country, of this kingdom, of this home, of this nation, of this temple,” it might have been accepted as a fair claim. But to come out boastfully and take in the **entire world in one bite**, to speak so disparagingly and casually of the world, to say that it dwells in sheer darkness without Him—that is an arrogant claim, that is bidding everyone else be silent, that is calling all wise people fools. That is saying: “You know nothing; you see nothing; you are walking in darkness. If I do not shine, there is no light.”*

Yes, this was **an astonishing claim**. However, as usual, the hard-hearted religious leaders **adamantly refuse** to accept His claim. But Jesus is not going to ignore their challenges. He responds with some **amazing challenges** for them: **You don't know Me; I am not like you; I am not alone; You don't know God; You can't seize Me.**

ARE YOU WALKING IN HIS LIGHT?

I. THE ASTONISHING CLAIM (12)

This "I am" statement of Jesus is the second of **seven** in the Gospel of John: See also 6:35; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:5. These "**I am**" statements show that Jesus is indeed Deity (cf. Ex. 3).

A. In order to "walk in the light", one must "follow" Him.

B. One who becomes His disciple will not "walk in darkness"—moral and spiritual ignorance, impurity, gloom, death, etc. Darkness is the opposite of light. This will not be the lifestyle of the believer. **This is a strong negation—he will "IN NO WISE walk in darkness."**

C. Christ's Disciple has "the light of life"

Notice that the believer **HAS** life. The light *extends* to all men (1:5, 9), but only true believers **possess** light.

II. THE ADAMANT REFUSAL (13)

But the light **shines** as it must do, and establishes its own claims. The **objections of the blind (spiritually) really make no difference to the facts of the situation**. It is only light to us when it illumines and gives us life!

Jesus' witness is true, and He will not submit to their false denial. He challenges them to their faces!

III. THE AMAZING CHALLENGES (14-20)

A. "You don't know Me" (14)

1. If I do bear "self witness," my witness is "true"—that is both in point of fact and in sound evidence. Cf. 5:31—unsupported evidence has no legal value I am qualified to bear witness—even if you are not.

a. "I know where I am from"—Heaven is my **origin**.

b. "I know where I am going"—Heaven is my **destination**.

He who has such knowledge is qualified to bear self-witness.

2. You are unqualified to "sit in judgment of me."

a. You do not know where I am coming from—my relationship and harmony with my Father.

b. You do not know where I am going—and you won't get there!

B. "I did not come to judge." (15)

1. **You** judge "according to the flesh"—weak, superficial, incomplete, partial,

imperfect judgment.

2. I do not judge (emphatic *double negative*)

C. “I am not alone in my judgment” (16-18)

1. I follow My Commissioner (16)

He has been commissioned by, and acts in unison with, His Sender.

2. I follow the legal standard (17)

3. I have **two heavenly witnesses** (18)

“I AM” the one who bears witness of myself—and I am divine!

The Father who sent Me bears witness of Me

WHAT MORE WITNESS DO I NEED?

D. “You Do Not Know God, nor Me” (19).

“Jesus pointed out that He was inaccessible to them—the Father is revealed only in the Son. If they reject Him, they cannot know the Father (1:18). The Jews prided themselves in their knowledge of God.

LIKEWISE, IF YOU REJECT JESUS, YOU REJECT GOD.

E. “You Can’t seize Me” (20).

The location of the “treasury” in the Court of the Women—13 trumpet shaped collection boxes. *The chamber Gazith where the Sanhedrin met was between this court and that of the priests—the inner court.* **Thus they could likely hear Jesus teach! But they did not seize Him—because it was not God’s time—“His hour.”**

CONCLUSION

Jesus’ Astonishing Claim to be “the Light of the World” stands against the opposition of His opponents. Jesus’ witness is true. He and His Father—His Commissioner—are the only witnesses necessary. Human judges are “fleshly”—superficial and often unrighteous and incorrect. Mere human judgment is imperfect.

How then can man contradict Jesus’ testimony? Jesus **knows Himself**, and He knows His purpose and destiny. He also has the intimate relationship with the Father who sent Him. **Those who reject Him also reject God!**

But, Jesus did not come to judge—He came to save. He is **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.** One who follows Him will not walk in darkness, but will have the **LIGHT OF LIFE.**