

**AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY - Studies in John's Gospel - Part thirty-five - Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 10 a.m.**

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## **HOW SIN-DARKENED MINDS ASSESS THE GLORY OF CHRIST**

**John 8:12-20 - "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."**

I chose this title - ***"How Sin-Darkened Minds Assess the Glory of Christ"*** - because the text demands an explanation as to why people would rankle and rage against the grace-filled offer of Jesus in **verse 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.'" - IPAD TEXT**

Jesus is a **gift-bearing** Savior. He comes with **light** and **life**. This offer is what irritates these religious scholars. How shall we account for that? Either there is something wrong with Jesus or there is something wrong inside their hearts.

There is something else that makes this text challenging. Jesus makes the astounding claim that He is the light of the world (**12**). Not surprisingly, they respond that anyone can **say** he is the light of the world, but if Jesus is the **only** one who says so, how can they take His word for it. It's like me claiming I'm Superman. That's their objection in **verse 13 - "So the Pharisees said to him, 'You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.'"** - IPAD TEXT

And immediately our minds ought to go back to **John 5:31-39** where Jesus gives these same leaders a whole *list* of witnesses to His true identity and mission - **“If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. [32] *There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. [33] You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. [34] Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. [35] He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. [36] But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, *the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me* that the Father has sent me. [37] *And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.* His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, [38] and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. [39] You search *the Scriptures* because you think that in them you have eternal life; and *it is they that bear witness about me....”* -***

**IPAD TEXT**

And yet in our current text Jesus mentions only ***Himself*** as His own main witness and, just briefly, the ***Father*** as well. So what is going on here? Why the change in response from Jesus? He had said earlier there were many other witnesses to His person. Why such an abbreviated response now? And the answer to that question explains the title I gave this teaching - **“How Sin-Darkened Minds Assess the Glory of Christ.”** Jesus won’t play games with these truth dodgers. He ***still*** doesn’t. We’ll look into this together in just few minutes.

1) **JESUS CLAIMS FULFILLMENT OF THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES IN HIS OWN COMING AND MINISTRY**

**IPAD TEXT - John 8:12 - “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.’”**

Jesus isn’t just waxing poetic here. There is deep purpose in this descriptive sentence. He is claiming His rightful title in front of these religious leaders by pushing them back into their own Scriptures:

**IPAD TEXT - 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, 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.*”**

**IPAD TEXT - Isaiah 49:6 - “....It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a *light for the nations*, that my salvation *may reach to the end of the earth.*”**

All of this is behind Jesus’ great missionary proclamation of Himself as the ***light of the world***. Both the terms ***“light”*** and ***“world”*** are telling. This light is ***Christ-exclusive***. There are no ***other*** lights. He reserves this title for Himself and no one else. And this light is ***world-inclusive***. This is the designated light for ***everyone*** on earth. Christ is not a ***parochial*** light. He is ***everyone’s*** light. There are no other lights offered. Jesus, God the Son, is ***the*** light for the ***whole*** world.

- 2) **ALL QUALITIES AND STYLES OF LIFE THAT MARGINALIZE OR IGNORE CHRIST AS LORD ARE DESCRIBED AS “DARKNESS”**

**IPAD TEXT - John 8:12 - “ 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.*”**

I’m sure these scholars resented this statement. Jesus summarizes the key thought of the prophets when He says His rejecters “*walk in darkness.*” Actually, the prophet Isaiah pictures those without the Messiah as people walking in “*deep darkness*” - **Isaiah 9:2 - “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.*”**

**- IPAD TEXT**

***Deep darkness.*** There is no other condition without the light. Darkness is all that remains. The Puritan **George Hutcheson** wrote of these words, “***Without Christ mankind is as the world is without the sun.***”

Remember the Christmas ice storm? Hundreds of people were left in ***darkness*** and ***cold***. That’s a quick snapshot of what darkness is like. You miss out on everything that ***could*** be. You are on the outside of life. You imagine what you would do if the power were on and you had ***light*** and ***warmth***.

This is only a pale picture of the darkness of life outside of Jesus Christ. The kind of darkness described by Jesus in our text is ***spiritual*** darkness. But it is the kind of darkness that, as it grows, leaves you increasingly unaware of its presence. Jesus says life outside of His redeeming grace is the kind of darkness people continue to ***walk in*** - verse 12b - “....**Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.**”

This is a highly ***functional blindness***. People continue to travel. They walk. They work. They laugh. They eat. They play. The deeper the ***darkness*** the less their ***awareness***. As the level of inner darkness and potential judgment increases they ***feel fine*** about their own state. Just like these religious leaders, they ***imagine*** a relationship with God they do not in fact possess.

Paul gives his own descriptive expression of the same condition Jesus described as ***“walking in darkness”***:

**IPAD TEXT - Ephesians 2:1-3, 4:17-19 - “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— [3] among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind....4:17-19...Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. [18] They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. [19] They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”**

The important idea here is, once again, as the **darkness** deepens the awareness of it **lessens**. That’s because, unlike **physical** darkness, **spiritual** darkness, says Paul, is a darkness of the **mind** and the **understanding**. It’s a darkness of **perception**. What it destroys is accurate **self-awareness**. That means this is a **subtle** darkness that keeps the blind **in the dark** about its own existence.



Stay with me for just a minute longer on this because now we're in a position to look again at an issue I raised earlier about our John 8 text. Remember how I pointed out that in **John 5** Jesus listed many witnesses to His divine person and work while in **John 8** He doesn't?

Here's why - and it matters a lot. As these leaders continue to **resist** the light Jesus brings - as they **walk in their own darkness** - the darkness **increases**. The fruit of that darkness is they get less and less from Jesus. Their chances are diminishing. We're seeing the fulfillment of **Luke 8:18 - "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."** - IPAD  
**TEXT**

This is not divine cruelty. And it's not a matter of someone just having a string of bad luck. No one can **choose** to walk in darkness and **find** the light. This relates to our **third point**:

3) **LIGHT AND LIFE COME FROM FOLLOWING JESUS, NOT JUST BELIEVING IN JESUS**

Jesus takes all guess work out of receiving divine grace and light - **verse 12 - "...I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** - IPAD  
**TEXT**

Just as living for our own plans and desires defines walking in **darkness**, so **denying ourselves** and **following Jesus** defines having the **“light of life.”** Jesus intends to say it’s not our **religious belief of doctrines** that, by itself, brings light and life into our hearts. The light and life come from actually **following** of Jesus. Not just **thoughts** about Jesus.

Please understand. This is **not** salvation by **works**. Rather, it is **faith** manifested in our **will**. It is **grace** that reaches deeper than mental assent.

I say this because it is increasingly common in church circles to find people who think they can **define** Christian discipleship on their own terms. They massage their own values and life-styles into some kind of admiration of Jesus Christ and think Jesus will accept them on **their** terms rather than **His**. It will never work. Jesus gives **light** and **life** to those who **follow** Him. It is at the point of **following**, and not before, that the darkness leaves.

#### 4) **JUDGING JESUS “ACCORDING TO THE FLESH” AND WHY THIS IS SO DISASTROUS**

Our text holds a clump of verses around this thought and they need to be studied all together:

**IPAD TEXT - John 8:13-18 - “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.”**

I’m calling your attention to the two references to *judging* in verse 15 - “**You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.**” Both phrases need explaining. I’m going to start with the second and finish with the first.

In the last part of that verse Jesus says, “*....I judge no one.*” What does this mean? Is Jesus not the coming judge of all the earth? We know He *is* that from what Jesus Himself said in **John 5:22 - “The Father judges no one, but *has given all judgment to the Son....*”** -

**IPAD TEXT**

But ***right now*** is not the day of the manifestation of the Son's final judgment. He will do that when He comes ***again***, but in His ***first*** coming it wasn't for the purpose of judgment - **John 3:17 - "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."** - IPAD TEXT

So Jesus speaks the truth when He says to these blind religious leaders, ***"I judge no one"***(15).

But the first part of that verse is more difficult. What does Jesus mean when He accuses them of ***judging "according to the flesh"***(15)?

Many commentators take Jesus to imply that these leaders are judging ***Him*** according to His fleshly, earthly existence. That is, they are only seeing Jesus as a ***human*** teacher or leader. They do not consider ***divinity*** to be in Jesus as part of His person. They only see Him ***"according to the flesh."*** And while there's certainly much to be considered in that interpretation, Jesus didn't say they were judging ***Him*** according to the flesh. He simply said they were ***judging*** according to the flesh.

I think the better explanation is when Jesus says these religious leaders are ***judging according to the flesh*** He is explaining why they are so bound in darkness. True, Jesus came offering both light and life, but they will have none of it because ***they are too invested in themselves to follow Jesus.***

Jesus means they approach all that Jesus came to graciously give in a way that can't possibly receive it. They walk in their own value system. They decide for themselves what will give the most satisfaction and security to their lives. It's all geared to their ***present*** accomplishments and desires. They already think they know what will give their lives the most purpose and joy. In short, like many people today, they form their own ***judgments*** about light and life.

And Jesus' diagnosis leads to the last point of our study:

- 5) **NO ONE CAN FIND FATHER GOD WITHOUT BOWING BEFORE HIS SON, JESUS THE MESSIAH AND REDEEMER AND LORD OF MANKIND**

**IPAD TEXT - John 8:19-20 - "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."**

Note the order of divine enlightenment. Jesus *didn't* say they could know God and then know and value Himself (Jesus) too. He places Himself *first* in terms of coming to terms with the living God. This is what Jesus was driving at when He told them He came *from* the Father and was going *back* to the Father. He is the *revelational bridge*. He is the *link* to divine light and life.

Everyone must start with Jesus Christ to find *saving life* and *relational knowledge* of Father God. Proving God exists, apart from Jesus Christ, merely acknowledges your eternal Judge. It's like a thief proving the existence of a prison.

Make no mistake. Jesus alone brings light and life. He takes eternal, encroaching darkness and blindness from your soul. Trust Him. Yield. Embrace His freely offered grace. And *follow* Him. There is simply no excuse left for remaining in the dark.