

The Gospel of John
25. Light and Darkness
John 8:12-30

This morning we're picking up our journey through the Gospel according to John in John 8.

Over the past two weeks we've been taking a look at the amazing, radical declaration that Jesus made concerning Himself.

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world.

He declares that **HE** is — in and of Himself —

the LIGHT of the presence of God

the LIGHT of salvation

the LIGHT of life

the LIGHT shows us how and where to walk

the LIGHT that exposes our darkness and our sin

the LIGHT that shows us God

the LIGHT that gives us God's wisdom

the LIGHT that shows us God's justice.

Ya!! That's stunning!!

But Jesus **didn't stop** at **revealing** the truth about Himself. He moves from REVELATION to RELATIONSHIP

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

We spent the good part of 2 Sundays together learning about what it means and what it looks like to FOLLOW JESUS.

We learned that in John's Gospel, the words believe and follow are essentially synonymous. I came across this amazing quote by Ray Ortlund on Wednesday that drives the idea of believing in Jesus into the domain of following Jesus. Here's some bits of it:

What then does it mean to believe in him? Here is what it does not mean. In English, we might say, "I believe in the free-enterprise system," that is to say, "I agree with it, I like it." But try that out on John 3:16:

"For God so loved this evil world, that he gave the sacrificial gift of his only Son, so that we could say, 'Sure, that's what I believe in—along with Motherhood and Apple Pie.'"

The massive love of God calls for more and creates more than mild agreement... Real belief destroys aloofness. We stop treating him as a religious garnish to be placed on the side of life. Rather, we find in him our all. He becomes our new sacred center.... When I believe into Christ, I stop hiding and resisting. I surrender my autonomy.¹

My handwritten note beneath that sentence is "I WILL FOLLOW."

THE TITLE of this morning's study is "**Light and Darkness.**"

We are going to zero in on the two very different responses of the people to the **declaration** of Jesus (*I am the light of the world*) and the **invitation** of Jesus (*who ever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life*). To this day everyone on the world exists in one of these two spaces.

¹³So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."

Jesus said — with absolute authority — that He is

¹ Ortlund, Ray. *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ* (9Marks: Building Healthy Churches) (p. 29). Crossway.

the very LIGHT of the presence of God

the very LIGHT of salvation

the very LIGHT of life

the very LIGHT that shows us how and where to walk

the very LIGHT that exposes our darkness / exposes our sin

the very LIGHT that shows us God

the very LIGHT that gives us God's wisdom

the very LIGHT that shows us God's justice.

The Pharisees said — You're a liar!

They challenged His authority. In the Old Testament God established the rules for valid testimony in legal cases.

Deuteronomy 17:6 (NLT) ⁶*But never put a person to death on the testimony of only one witness. There must always be two or three witnesses.*

Deuteronomy 19:15 *"A single witness shall not suffice Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.*

HERE'S THE DEAL — God gave these laws to the nation of Israel for a reason. God is passionate about truth! He's passionate about justice.

Lesslie Newbigin — *The rule that at least two witnesses are needed is in fact a sign of the real character of the world—that it is a world which is not ruled by the truth. If everyone spoke only the truth no second witness would be needed*²

² Newbigin, L. (1982). *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (p. 103). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Handsel Press Ltd.

Here's the truth — You and I have the propensity to be less concerned with truth and justice than we're concerned for self-preservation and self-gain.

Unlike fallen man, Jesus is full of grace — Jesus IS the truth.

¹⁴Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true,

But Jesus says that He is qualified to give testimony about Himself because He is **nothing** like you and me.

¹⁴ for I know where I came from

John 5:37 and John 16:28 — Jesus said that He was sent from the Father

¹⁴ and where I am going

John 13:1 (ESV) ¹Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

John 16:28 (ESV) ²⁸I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

John 17:5 (ESV) ⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

In other words: *I know who I am. I'm the Son of God come down from heaven — I have a work to accomplish and when I've accomplished that work I'm returning to My Father in heaven*

THAT'S *why My testimony is true in and of itself*

Then He looks at them and says:

but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

In other words: *You have no idea who I am.*

15 You judge according to the flesh;

This is not a one-dimensional indictment. REMEMBER — These men had already passed judgment on Jesus

***John 7:45–52 (ESV)** ⁴⁵The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why did you not bring him?” ⁴⁶The officers answered, “No one ever spoke like this man!” ⁴⁷The Pharisees answered them, “Have you also been deceived? ⁴⁸Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.” ⁵⁰Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ⁵¹“Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?” ⁵²They replied, “Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”*

The judged Jesus *according to the flesh* — One way of understanding this is that they judged Jesus according to fallen human nature.

Galatians 5:17 (Handbook on Galatians) — *“For what we as human beings want is against what God’s Spirit wants, and what God’s Spirit wants is against what we as human beings want”³*

Apply that to these men. These men refused see Jesus as the One promised by the prophets because Jesus threatened what they wanted!

Lesslie Newbigin — *The authorities, secure in their well-ordered world, reject something which would break that world open.*⁴

The Light of the world exposed them as power loving, self-righteous hypocrites.

But there’s another dimension to how they judged Jesus *according to the flesh*: They judged Jesus *according to the flesh* in the sense of the finite perspective of humanity

³ Arichea, D. C., & Nida, E. A. (1976). A handbook on Paul’s letter to the Galatians (p. 134). United Bible Societies.

⁴ Newbigin, L. (1982). The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel (p. 104). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Handsel Press Ltd.

1 Samuel 16:7 (NLT) ⁷*But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”*

2. They couldn’t see Jesus as the One promised by the prophets because Jesus didn’t look or act like they thought the Messiah should look and act

The **NET** gives that very sense to **John 8:15**

John 8:15 (NET) ¹⁵*You people judge by outward appearances;*

In his commentary of the Gospel of John, William Hendriksen paraphrases Jesus —

*So judged, I am not the light of the world but merely a countryman from Galilee, the son of Joseph*⁵

THIS IS SO JUGE — Jesus was — and still is — outside of, beyond and other than anything men and women think He is.

Think back to the Sermon on the Mount. The crowd on the side of that hill above the Sea of Galilee was made up of people who held fundamentally different beliefs, world views, ideologies and Messianic expectations.

The Pharisees believed that the Kingdom of God would be ushered in by rigid adherence to the law and to the countless traditions built upon interpretations of interpretations. The Sadducees were basically materialist and pragmatists — “The Romans are here so let’s just make the necessary compromises so we can make the best of our lives.” There were the Essenes who said, *Israel is hopelessly corrupt! We’re out of here!* — and they took off to the desert near the Dead Sea. Then there were the Zealots. The zealots advocated the violent overthrow of the Roman presence in Israel. Some of them were assassins. They were like the

⁵ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Vol. 2, p. 43). Baker Book House.

“Students for a Democratic Society” (SDS) in the 1960s — Blow it up and burn it down. It is hard to imagine the tensions *and* the anticipations in this crowd.

And along comes Jesus! They were dying to hear how His vision of the Kingdom would be just as they envisioned it — and how He would bring about the Kingdom just the way they thought He should bring it.

Jesus opens His mouth and says: “Blessed / Flourishing are the poor in Spirit!” WHAAT?! He didn’t fit anybody’s expectations! His Kingdom wasn’t anything like the kingdom they were expecting. His Kingdom agenda didn’t fit any of theirs! His Kingdom is unlike any of the kingdoms of man. That’s because Jesus is a King unlike any other king!

We cannot impose our very human ideas upon Him as King

We cannot impose our very human ideas His Kingdom.

So these men in [John 8](#) had Jesus all wrong.

[15](#) I judge no one.

Jesus means that He doesn’t judge anyone according to *the way his opponents do*

***The Message** — [15](#)You decide according to what you can see and touch. I don’t make judgments like that.*

He sees what no man can see — everything is open and naked before Him.

[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.

Jesus now brings the Father forward as His corroborating witness — the Sent One calls on the Sender as His corroborating witness.

[17](#)In your Law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. [18](#)I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.”

You want a witness? How about God the Father. Let's bring Him to the bar and He can put His hand on His own book and He can make an oath that He'll tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth — so help Himself!

They ask Jesus to produce his witness.

¹⁹They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?”

Newbigin says that “This question was framed to be food for malicious gossip!” They were inferring that Jesus was illegitimate!

Where's your dad? Oh — That's right — you don't even know who your father is. Your mother got pregnant outside of wedlock.

That's what people thought about Jesus and His mother throughout the course of His life. These guys thought they had just shredded on Jesus by outing Him as illegitimate. But God Incarnate has some radical words for these religious professionals!

¹⁹ Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

Your problem is you don't know God!

Lots of people will say — *Well I don't necessarily buy into Jesus — but I really believe in God.* **Jesus says that we can't say that!**

Jesus says, “*If you knew Me, you'd know My Father.*” You **cannot** know the Father except through the Son.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”

HERE'S THE DEAL — “The only answer to the man who sincerely asks ‘Where is God?’ is to say ‘Look at Jesus.’”⁶

²⁰These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

his hour is a reference to His death on the cross.

On a number of occasions John points out that human attempts to kill Jesus were thwarted because their plans did not conform to God’s timetable for the suffering and death of Jesus.

²¹So he said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.”

The word SIN is singular.

D.A. Carson — *the singular sin refers to the particular sin of unbelief, of rejecting Jesus*⁷

By rejecting Jesus they were rejecting **the one and only** remedy for their sin.

Ray Ortlund — *There is no other Savior. The world has no other hope. No one else will appear out of heaven to come rescue us. It’s either God’s only Son or despair now and damnation forever.*⁸

²²So the Jews said, “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’?”

They think he’s talking about killing himself.

⁶ Newbigin, L. (1982). *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (pp. 104–105). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Handsel Press Ltd.

⁷ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 341). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁸ Ortlund, Ray. *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ* (9Marks: Building Healthy Churches) (p. 29). Crossway.

The irony is so incredibly thick here! Jesus wasn't going to take His own life — but He was going to willingly allow those very men to hand Him over to Pilate to be crucified.

John 10:18 (ESV) ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Jesus is talking about his sacrificial death, bodily resurrection and return to the Father.

²³ He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above.

Jesus points out the infinite gulf between Himself and fallen man — even the most religious of men!

²³... You are of this world; I am not of this world.

D.A. Carson defines *the world* as "*this fallen moral order in conscious rebellion against its creator.*" ⁹

Jesus tells these men that they belong to the collection of men and women organizing themselves without God and against God — in which man, not God is the centerpiece and ultimate reality — in man seeks his own glory, not God's.

Jesus says — *I am from above* — I'm from the realm of God Himself who lives in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16) — *I bring the light.*

You're from the realm of His fallen and rebellious creation — *you live in darkness and you are darkness (Eph. 5:8).*

²⁴I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

⁹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 342). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

Jesus keeps driving this home — the **only** possibility of escape lies in genuine belief!

KEY QUESTION — But what are they to believe?

QUOTE: A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament

Jesus can mean either “unless you believe that I am from above” (verse 23), “unless you believe that that I am the one sent from the Father or the Messiah” (7:18, 28), “unless you believe that I am the Light of the World” (8:12), “unless you believe that I am the Deliverer from the bondage of sin” — You will die in your sins.

HUGE INSIGHT: The Greek text has simply — *Unless you believe that I am* — *period*

I am = ego eimi

A.T. Robertson notes that the phrase [ego eimi] occurs three times in this chapter: Here in **verse 24** — again in **verse 28**. In few weeks we are going to see Jesus use this expression for the third in **verse 58** — and in **that** moment the meaning of what they have to believe about Jesus becomes CRYSTAL CLEAR — so clear that they take up stones to kill him (8:59).

Without getting too far ahead of ourselves — by using the expression *I am* — Jesus is asserting that He is the great **‘I am’** of the OT (**Ex. 3:14**). He is declaring that He is the Self-Existent God of Israel! **Jesus is saying to this crowd**

Unless you recognize Me as God — And bring your sin into the light of who I am — and into the light of my nature as messiah and redeemer — you will die in your sin.

THIS IS HUGE — Unless we step into the light of God — as revealed *in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6)* — we can never know our sin — and as a result we will never see our need for a savior

QUOTE: D.A. Carson, Scandalous —*the hardest truth to get across to this generation is what the Bible says about sin.... There is so much in our culture that teaches us that we define our own sins, either individually or socially.... We live in an age where the one wrong thing to say is that somebody else is wrong.... we all have our own independent points of view, and we look at things from the perspective of our own small interpretive communities. What is sin to one group is not sin to another group. But not only does the Bible insist that there is such a thing as sin, it insists that the heart of its ugly offensiveness is its horrible odiousness to God—how it offends God.*

²⁵So they said to him, “Who are you?”

Literally — “*You, who are you?*” He had virtually claimed to be the Messiah; equal in nature with God. They want to pin him down and to charge him with blasphemy.

Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. ²⁶I have much to say about you and much to judge,

I could sit here and judge you for a really long time — I have a lot to say about your judgment, but I’ll answer your question.

But he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.” ²⁷They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.

²⁸So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man,

Jesus is pointing to His death — being lifted up on a cross outside of the walls of Jerusalem.

Then you will know that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.”

What a sweet and succinct summary of the life of Jesus — ***I just do what pleases him.***

THAT is what following Jesus looks like. THAT is walking in the light of life looks like — just doing what pleases the Father.

And in this moment, we see that a lot of people — a lot of powerful and influential RELIGIOUS people reject this. They hate Jesus for what He has to say. They are opposing Jesus because Jesus has called them into his light so that their darkness would be exposed.

In the face of this rejection John adds these words — words that give us a glimmer of hope —

³⁰As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

THIS IS AWESOME — While the religious movers and shakers were rejecting Jesus — There were people listening in on this whole exchange. And MANY of them said — *Well then, that's it. I'm making my choice right here and now — I'm going to live in the light of God. Here's my sin, here's what I've done. Here's how messed up I've been. Here is my pride. Here are all of my futile attempts at trying to be a good person and hold my life together. I'm in — I'm going to follow Jesus, the Light of the Word*

By the way — when you are sharing Jesus with a group of people — and they are shutting down — don't limit the Lord. You never know who is listening in. There might be the person or persons on the fringe that are drinking it in and are going to step into the light!

So there were MANY who put their faith in him, who said — *I trust you. I don't know where this is going. I don't know what you're going to do with me — but I trust You! Whatever you say — that's what I'm going to do. You do whatever pleases the Father. I'll do whatever pleases you. That way I'll be doing whatever pleases the Father.*

It is so amazing — so incredible — to step into the light of God.

AS WE CLOSE — I want you to hear what happens to those who step **into** and **abide** in the light of God. And if I weren't reading to you from the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God, all of this would be unbelievable.

Acts 26:16–18 (ESV) ¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

The moment you step into the light of God —

You are delivered from the power of Satan to God.

Your sins are forgiven.

You are cleansed, and set apart unto God —

your life is transformed by the grace and the power of God and his light.

2 Corinthians 4:4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God... ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The light of God is not just something that operates apart from us. It is a personal and relational knowledge of God that is placed **into** the very essence of who we are

Ephesians 5:8 you once were darkness — but now you are light in the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

As you **live in** the light of God you discover new life by God's grace.

You delight in righteousness and justice because His ways are righteousness. You delight in truth because He is the truth. There is goodness instead of selfishness and wickedness and rebellion. All of that by virtue of believing Jesus — following Jesus, the light of the world.

As a bi-product of believing Jesus / following Jesus you are a part of a new humanity (Ephesians 2:15), part of the **work** and **family** and **plan** of the kingdom of God.

FINALLY — There is going to be a new creation — a new heaven, a new earth, a New Jerusalem.” Even as God spoke light into the first creation — God will have light in his second creation. For those who allowed the LIGHT of God expose their sin and then received the grace of Jesus who died and rose on their behalf — here is what we receive at the end.

Revelation 21:23-25 (ESV) And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

“The city” — that's the New Jerusalem — does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives its light and the lamb as it's lamp.”

THAT is what we — as men and women who have believed Jesus / follow Jesus, the Light of the World, are going to walk into!

When Jesus came to this earth in His first coming — His glory was veiled in a tent of Humanity. But in that day we will see Christ face to face — and his glory will be completely unveiled for us! It is such glorious light that it will illuminate all of the new creation. There will be no darkness whatsoever. Sin is gone. Spiritual, Moral and Physical Darkness is gone.

Revelation 22:5 (ESV) And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

God's light permeates all of His new creation — and we become lamps through which His light shines to all of His new creation. And we reign with him. There will be no darkness **in us**. There will be no darkness **around us** — forever and ever and ever.

THAT is what we were MADE for!

What glorious GOOD NEWS — GOSPEL!

What a glorious SAVIOR!

What a glorious DESTINATION!

BUT HERE'S THE DEAL — As we live between the already and the not yet
Our stories are folded into the movement of HIS glorious Story

In very broad strokes — THE GOSPEL is defined by movement.

It begins with God *“who is Light”* moving towards His fallen creation— **moving towards us** in His glorious, merciful rescue mission. Men and women who believe in Jesus **move away from** darkness to **follow** Jesus, the Light of the World.

Then — Even as Jesus left His throne of glory to shine into this lost world the light of the knowledge of the glory of God — those rescued men and women **move** back towards the world of darkness with the light of the Gospel.