



Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN
LESSON 9

The Light of the World (Part 1) John 8:1-59

Introduction

A. Two Divine Statements

This lesson is based on two of Christ's great self-authenticating statements: *"I am the light of the world"* and *"before Abraham was, I AM"* (John 8:12, 58.) Humanly speaking, only a lunatic, an arrogant liar, or a demonically possessed worshiper of Satan would make such statements. But Jesus Christ demonstrated them with His wisdom, power, justice, love, compassion and words (1 John 1:1-5.)

B. Introductory Verses

There has been controversy over the years concerning the placement of the first 11 verses of Chapter 8 as being in John's original Gospel. Many commentators believe that this story about the adulterous woman is misplaced because it did not conform to John's style of Greek writing and because the oldest and best manuscripts of John did not contain it. However, most scholars and theologians teach that the story was inspired by the Holy Spirit and must be retained in one of the four Gospels.

C. Where Does It Fit?

All the evidence seems to suggest that the event represents a genuine episode in the ministry of our Lord, but the scribes were not sure of its exact location. The instructive value of Christ's wisdom, mercy, compassion and loving forgiveness is obvious. It fits very well into the context of the rest of John 8 since the adulterous woman had been walking in moral darkness. Jesus dispelled her darkness. Hence, Jesus' exacting statement in the very next verse (8:12) states, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

D. Reminder

As we continue our study, keep in mind that Jesus truly is the Son of God, the Holy One sent by the Creator and Father of mankind. And remember that John wrote these things, *"That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name"* (20:31).

Outline of John 8

- I. The Woman Taken in Adultery (8:1-11)
- II. Setting for Christ's Discourse (8:12)
- III. Jesus as the Revealer of Truth (8:13-20)
- IV. Jesus as the Judge of Sins (8:21-30)
- V. Jesus as the Redeemer of Souls (8:31-47)
- VI. Jesus, the Express Image of His Father (8:48-59)

I. The Woman Taken In Adultery (8:1-11)

A. The Setting

The setting was the Temple in Jerusalem where the people gathered to hear Jesus. It was common practice in those days to assemble around a rabbi in the Temple for teaching and instruction. The scribes and Pharisees thought they had a "fool-proof" trap for Jesus, one in which they could discredit Him in front of the people. This would give them grounds for accusing Him and proceeding with their plans to kill Him. So they brought a woman caught in the act of adultery and sat her in the middle of the meeting.

There is no mention of her male partner in sin, even though Mosaic Law required that both parties involved in adultery be stoned (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22.) We can only speculate what happened to the man. Maybe he escaped, or perhaps the authorities released him because their interest was more in trapping Jesus than in prosecuting the offenders.

B. The "Trap" Question

The self-righteous scribes and Pharisees thought they had Jesus cornered on this one. There was no way He could escape. If He advocated pardoning the woman, they would accuse Him of breaking the Law of Moses and charge Him with teaching people to break the Law. If He said she should be stoned, He would be contradicting His own teaching about forgiveness, alienating Himself from the Jews and becoming a criminal in the eyes of the Roman government who did not allow Jews to sentence a person to death. So, the prideful scribes and Pharisees

eagerly probed the Lord for an answer to this sin of adultery.

C. The Answer of the Lord

1. Jesus Discerned Their Intentions

Jesus recognized the Jews' motives and desires. Their concern about complying with the letter of the law associated with their failure to realize the truth about their own nature and their own status with God. They saw clearly the wrong-doing in others, but were blind to the evil in themselves. Their human tendency, like ours today, was to be ever ready to identify the sins of others and at the same time, fail to see their own self-righteousness as sin.

Application:

Do you get a hidden sense of self-satisfaction or self-righteousness when you hear about a moral failure in our culture? Or does it make you prayerfully sad that sexual promiscuity and sensuality have become so commonplace in our secular society? Do you feel accusatory about adultery and fornication, or does it make you more conscious of your own sinful nature and vulnerability?

2. Jesus Wrote in the Temple Sand

Jesus ignored them at first, but then as they persisted, He stooped down and wrote something with His finger on the sands of the temple floor. There is much conjecture about what Jesus wrote. J.Vernon McGee suggested that since (a) In Jeremiah 17:13 it states, "*All who forsake God shall be ashamed. Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth*", and (b) John 8:6 is the only record we have of Jesus writing anything, He may have written the names of these Jewish leaders and their sexual sins. No one but God knows for sure what Jesus wrote.

3. The Verbal Dagger

Then Jesus looked up and pierced their hearts with this verbal dagger, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.*" His statement meant that this kind of judgment starts with God. To be qualified to make this judgment, you need to be sinless. The qualification of being without sin puts all of us out of the stone-throwing business doesn't it?

Jesus wrote again in the sand and the silence must have been deafening. The accusers saw not the woman, but themselves at the judgment seat of God. They were deeply moved in their own con-

sciences, and one by one, they drifted slowly away. The fact that the oldest left first may have meant that he had a longer record of sinning, or a greater sense of the wrongness of his sin in God's sight.

2. Go and Sin No More

After all had left except the woman, Christ looked up and said to her, "*Woman . . . has no one condemned you?*" No one had thrown the first stone. She said, "*No one, Lord.*" And He said, "*Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more*". She called Him "Lord" because she recognized something so superior about Jesus, something so different from any man she had ever met – Jesus, the Holy One of God.

Jesus' compassion and forgiveness should be taken more as a charge to her than a simple acquittal. Gerald L. Borchert writes,

"Jesus' verdict was not rendered as a simple acquittal or noncondemnation. The verdict was in fact a strict charge to her to live from this point on very differently – to sin no more. The liberating work of Jesus did not mean the excusing of sin. Encountering Jesus always has demanded the transformation of life, the turning away from sin. Sin was not treated lightly by Jesus, but sinners were offered the opportunity to start life anew."

Application:

Because of our human, prideful nature, we often judge the sins of others before examining ourselves and coming to God's terms about wrongful thoughts, words or actions in our own lives. Do you consciously make an effort to not see the speck in another person's eye when you have a plank in your own eye (Matthew 7:1-3)?

II. Setting for Christ's Discourse (8:12)

1. The Gift of Divine Light

The time of this passage is right after the Feast of the Tabernacles of Chapter 7. Historians tell us that one of the beautiful ceremonies connected with the Feast was called "The Illumination of the Temple." Four large candelabra were lit after dark. This sent out a blaze of light that illuminated the entire Temple compound. Sometimes, the people danced all night with flaming torches and sang hymns and songs of praise with musical instruments accompanying them. When the first rooster crowed they turned toward the Holy Place to worship the Lord for His gift of light and the new day.

All this took place in remembrance of the night when Israel left Egypt and the Egyptians pursued them in a cloud of darkness. But God gave them a pillar of cloud and fire to show them the way (Exodus 13:21-22.) There are many instances in Scripture where divine light represented various characteristics of God, particularly His revelation, holiness and salvation.

2. Christ's Great Statement

In this celebratory setting, it was fitting for the Lord Jesus, as the ultimate fulfillment of Old Testament ceremonies, symbolism and prophecies to make this astounding claim, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."* Not only did His statement associate fittingly with the ceremonies of lights, but it followed His practical demonstration of bringing the adulterous woman out of her personal darkness into His marvelous light.

III. Jesus as the Revealer of Truth (8:13- 20)

A. The Jewish Challenge Arose Again

The Pharisees once more called Jesus a deceiver and told Him He needed more witnesses than Himself to make His testimony valid. Jesus responded with three main points. First, His own witness was sufficient because of His unique position of authority (vs.14.) Second, their judging Him was mere human judgment based on their improper knowledge of His origin; they were blinded to the true spiritual knowledge that He brought them (vs. 15-16.) Third, He did, in fact, have a second witness – God Himself. His Father bore witness to Jesus in both the divine words He spoke and the divine works He carried out (vs. 17-18.) As Psalm 36:9 says, *"For with You is the fountain of life, and in You we see Light."*

B. Illumination of Man's Inner Being

Jesus' meaning behind these words was that life cannot prevail where there is no light. It can exist in darkness, but not prevail. Since Adam and Eve, every person's natural state has been in the dark world of his or her own self-centered flesh and the secular influence of Satan's ungodly world systems. Jesus came in the flesh so that He alone could illuminate the eyes of human spiritual understanding. He confronted these unbelieving Jerusalem Jews with the truth about themselves and about what God had done to satisfy their deepest need. Only by abiding and walking in His light could their lives flourish eternally.

When Jesus told them they did not know Him nor His Father, they got riled again. They wanted to arrest Jesus and execute Him immediately, but no one grabbed Him because His hour had not come. His escape was strong evidence of the Father's sovereign control over His Son's ministry.

IV. Jesus as the Judge of Sins (8:21-30)

A. Not of This World

Then Jesus told them that in addition to being the Light that revealed the truth, He was the Light that judged sins. He was going away, meaning that He was going to die, be resurrected and ascend into heaven. They would seek Him, but because of their unbelief, they would die and not go to heaven. His hearers wondered if He was going to commit suicide. They did not realize that He was speaking of spiritual reality rather than physical-visual things. He was from God above while they came from God's rebellious and fallen creation on earth.

B. The Declaration of Truth

Jesus said that He had much to say to them and about them by way of judgment. His judgment was based on the declaration of truth – His revelation of the light. Their incorrect beliefs, responses and practices were being judged by this light. He told them once again very clearly that He was from His Father who sent Him. He always did the things that were pleasing to Him. All that He said and did, including the cross, was the Father's will. Temporarily, His words reached many of them. Vs. 30, *says, "As He spoke these words, many believed in Him."*

V. Jesus as the Redeemer of Souls (8:31-47)

A. True or Superficial Disciples?

Jesus then told the Jews who believed in Him that if they abided in His words, they were His disciples. By definition, disciples were learners who continued in the instructions of their teacher. They were not necessarily believers in the born-again sense. They remained disciples as long as they abided in Him and adhered to His teaching. When His instruction no longer became the disciples' rule of faith and practice, they ceased being disciples. Dr. Tom Constable writes, "Disciples may or may not be genuine believers, and believers may or may not be genuine disciples."

B. Challenge to the Jews

There was an interesting transition here, from vs. 30-31 to vs. 37. Those, who believed Jesus at first,

became doubtful and even strongly opposed Him in vs. 37. Jesus had told them, *“And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”* His intellectual and moral light would liberate them and set them free from the darkness that held their minds in bondage. Sin was a slave-master for all humanity and complete trust in Him was the only release from that bondage. But these superficial believers resisted His teaching. Their pride and self-righteous flesh yielded to the power of darkness. Their “hearts of stone” would not let them believe that He was God.

C. Jesus’ Father Is Not the Jews’ Father

1. Jesus, the Seed of Abraham

The Jews told Jesus that Abraham was their father. He replied that Abraham was no father to those who rejected Him. He stated clearly that God was His Father and Abraham’s Father, and that the true sons of Abraham shared the same faith that Abraham had in God’s promise of the Seed – Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of their souls (Galatians 3:16,29).

2. Jesus’ Analysis of Satan

He further identified them as children of the devil, a murderer and the father of lies. Jesus said that His Father is love and I have given you His loving truth, but you have this overwhelming desire to kill Me, derived from the devil’s hate that is in you. Your emotions, passions and motives all derive from Satan and therefore it is impossible for you to understand the true meaning of My words. Children who are of God hear the words of God. You do not hear the words I told you because you are not His children.

This was strong, revolting language to the Jews. John MacArthur says, “This passage is one of the most profound statements of Jesus concerning the traits of Satan’s personality and his outward activity. Jesus invariably speaks of the devil as being a distinct personality. He was a murderer and the father of lies from the beginning and there was no truth in him.”

VI. Jesus, the Express Image of His Father (8:48-59)

A. Further Attempt to Discredit Jesus

By these words of Jesus, the Jews really became riled and bitterly angry. They did their unholy best to discredit Jesus and accuse Jesus by saying that He was a Samaritan and had a demon. In today’s language they were saying, “You are mad, Jesus.

You rave like a schizophrenic with delusions of grandeur.”

Jesus answered them plainly and gentlemanly saying that He was honoring His Father and not seeking His own glory. He wanted them to understand that if anyone kept His words they would never see death.

Then they brought Abraham back into the conversation. Jesus told them that Abraham rejoiced to see His day. He was referring to Abraham’s joy and faith when God promised him a seed in which all the families of the earth would be blessed.

B. The Radiance of God’s Glory

Again they argued with the Lord that He was less than 50 years old and that He could not have seen Abraham. Then came Jesus’ all-knowing, all-powerful reply, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”* Jesus used God’s language to the Israelites from the Old Testament when His Father said to Moses, *“I AM WHO I AM . . . you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you. Moreover God said to Moses, . . . This My name forever, and this is my memorial to all generations”* (Exodus 3:14-15.)

Being the express image of God’s person and the brightness of God’s glory (Hebrews 1:3.) Jesus told them clearly that before Abraham existed, He was present with His Father from everlasting to everlasting. He already existed consciously, continuously, and timelessly as a Spiritual Being. In addition to being self-existent and pre-existent, He was the agent of creation and all things, including Abraham, came into being through Him (Colossians 1:16.)

C. The Hard-Hearted Jews

The hard-heartedness of the Jews prevented them from surrendering to Jesus in humility and fear. His shining light could not penetrate their prideful self-orientation and souls. They considered Him a pre-fabricator and a blasphemer and they took up stones to throw at Him. But He hid Himself and then went out of the Temple.

Application:

When you are in a secular gathering of people, whether it be at work, in the neighborhood, or in your extended family, do you think of yourself as being an ambassador of God and a true reflection of Jesus Christ? Does this old hymn express your heartfelt desire?

*O God I give myself to Thee,
And all that I possess;
I lay aside my sinful pride,
And claim Thy righteousness;
My will lies shattered at Thy feet,
I pray Thy will be done,
My only plea, to live for Thee,
And magnify Thy Son.
May Christ be seen in me, O Lord,
Hear Thou my earnest plea;
Take me, fill me, use me, Lord,
Till Christ be seen in me.
(Unkown)*