

“A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN” SERIES

#14: “Jesus Teaches About Light and Truth”

SCRIPTURE: John 8:12-38

INTRO:

I’m sure some of you are saying, “Larry, you left out the part about the woman caught in adultery. You left out the first eleven verses of this chapter 8.” If that’s the case, then I will say, “You’re right. I did leave out verses 1 through 11 of chapter 8, and I’ll tell you why.

For the accuracy of the Scripture text, we must rely on the oldest copies of Scripture that we have. The fact is the earliest and best Greek manuscripts don’t contain verses 7:53 through 8:11. Other evidence comes from the fact that none of the early church fathers who wrote in Greek commented on this passage. In other words, they wrote as if it didn’t exist. Other recent manuscript discoveries do not contain verses 7:53 through 8:11. What’s more, in many of the late Greek manuscripts which include the story of the adulterous woman the account varies so much in wording that there are at least sixty different readings. In addition, the account occurs in various locations, such as after John 7:36, after 21:24, and after Luke 21:38. The conclusion is that these verses were added by some well-meaning scribe sometime after the 9th century.

So, while it’s an interesting story, it can’t be taken as descriptive of something that actually happened. So, our study today will begin with John 8:12.

Jesus is still in Jerusalem during the Feast of Booths. He has been teaching that He has “living water” to give. Now He begins to teach that He is the “light of the world.”

HIS TEACHING IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE CANDLEBRAS LIT DURING THE FEAST OF BOOTHES.

According to Butler’s commentary on John, great candelabras (or menorahs or candlesticks) with four receptacles of oil were placed in the inner court of the temple (the court of the women) and lit by priests who climbed ladders to light the oil. When the oil was lit, the priests and the people “danced before the Lord” with joy in commemoration of the blessings of the pillar of fire which led their forefathers in the wilderness of Egypt.

What the pillar of fire was to the Israelites in the wilderness Jesus was to the whole world that was in the wilderness of sin and condemnation.

The prophets, such as Isaiah and Malachi, had depicted the Messiah as “the light of the world.”

THE PHARISEES RECOGNIZED THAT JESUS WAS CLAIMING TO BE DEITY.

They knew the prophecies. They understood that in claiming to be the light of the world, Jesus was claiming to be deity, the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and they immediately reject His claim on the basis of insufficient evidence. ***“You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.”*** In other words, “You’re lying through your teeth.”

But Jesus challenges their reasoning. First, He says, ***“Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and I know where I am going, but you do not know where I came from or where I am going.”***

Then He points out that they judge according to the flesh, but He and the Father judge differently. He points out that, according to the Law of Moses, the testimony of two people is considered affirmation, so when both He and the Father agree, then His testimony is true.

The Pharisees then asked, ***“Where is your Father?”*** Jesus explained that they didn’t know him or his Father. If they did, they wouldn’t be asking such a question.

John wrote in verse 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.”*** In other words, God was in control. He would be arrested when it was time.

In verse 21 He makes a startling statement to the Pharisees: ***“I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin.”*** They didn’t really hear the part about dying in their sins. All they heard was ***“Where I am going, you cannot come,”*** so they said to one another, ***“Is he going to kill himself?”***

At this, Jesus explained, ***“You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”*** So, what did He mean by that? Simply that they did not believe in Him and therefore didn’t have the Spirit to open their eyes to the truth.

He says further, ***“I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.”*** This turns out to be prophetic, because in 70 A.D. the legions of the Roman Titus besieged the city at Passover time and caught millions of Jews within the walls. Thousands died in their sins. The Jewish general and historian, Josephus, recorded the history of this terrible conflict in which the Jews made a last stand at Masada.

The response of the Pharisees was, ***“Who are you?”*** And Jesus said, ***“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you***

and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.” They had no idea who He was talking about. “So, Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me” (v. 28).

AS HE WAS SAYING THESE THINGS, MANY BELIEVED IN HIM.

To them, Jesus said, ***“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”***

Here is another teaching of Jesus that is very often misapplied. People quote Him time and time again as if He said simply that the truth sets people free, when He actually said that *the truth that He is the Son of God will set us free from sin and its consequences if we will believe it.*

His Jewish listeners didn’t get it, however. They said, ***“We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”***

Then Jesus explained, ***“...everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever”*** (vv.34-35). Slaves often were given their freedom, but they weren’t a part of the family, and they had no inheritance, whereas a son was always a part of the family and had an inheritance. Jesus makes us children and heirs of the Father, not just slaves who have been given freedom.

The Jews wanted to claim a reward for being descendants of Abraham, but Jesus points out here that they want to kill Him, so how can they really be his offspring if they want to kill the promised Messiah? They were *physically* offspring of Abraham, but not *spiritually*. They were seeing everything through physical eyes, not spiritual, so, they saw no need to be ***“born again,”*** as Jesus told Nicodemus. They saw no need to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah. They had the Law to go by, and they thought they had been obedient to the Law, but they had not. The Law only revealed sin; it didn’t free from sin. They were still ***“in their sins.”*** They were still enslaved by their sins. They were not free.

You see, when Christ sets us free, it’s on the basis of our faith in Him – our belief in Him as the Christ, the Son of God, not our degree of goodness. Hendriksen says in his commentary on John: ***“One is free, therefore, not when he can do what he wishes to do, but when he wishes to do and can do what he should do.”*** That’s what faith does.

Faith is not to be confused with mere willpower. The desires of the flesh are not defeated by willpower. That’s why the Law could not save. The desires of the flesh may be temporarily halted or changed, but until we are motivated by

the Holy Spirit, we may have willpower, but we won't have enough "wish" for the change we need to make.

Permit me to use a personal illustration. I have recently come to realize that my body can no longer tolerate the amount of salt I prefer. Now, my willpower is pretty strong, but, frankly, not strong enough to do what I need to do on a permanent basis. I have decided that I need to make it a "faith" matter. I believe God wants me to keep on preaching His word. In order to do that, I need to live longer. To live longer, I need to have a strong heart. To have a strong heart, I need to restrict my salt intake. So, the salt intake is a spiritual problem. The Holy Spirit can handle that.

IN CLOSING...

Next week, we'll continue with John chapter 8, as Jesus talks about father Abraham...