

The Light of Life

HN/SS 17/4/05 am

Reading: Isaiah 60, John 8:12 -47

Study Text: John 8 :12-20

Psalms: 27:1-4, 119:105-110, 36:5-9, 36:10-11

One of the first things we learn in science is that all living things are either autotrophic or heterotrophic. Like all science it is quite obvious really! Some things make their own food – they do not eat other things. But other living things, like us, have to eat to live. Plants are autotrophic. How do they make their own food? You give them water and away they grow. Is that all? No. They need air; they need CO₂, which combine with water to make sugars – the process called photosynthesis. Is that all? No. They also need the sun, they need light to grow. Without light plants cannot live, and without plants we cannot live. Light from the sun is the basis of all life on this planet.

Jesus said *I am the light of world*. Jesus is the light of life. *In him was life and that life was the light of men* (1:4). Just as surely as we need the sun to make plants grow and give us food that we might live, we need the Son of God to shine into our hearts that we might have life everlasting.

Jesus is the true light, the light that reveals sin in our hearts and light that has the power to cleanse us from that sin. He is the light that shows us the path we must walk if we are to get to our eternal home in heaven. How wonderful, how powerful, how saving is that light – the light of life! We were born in darkness, the darkness of death. Our evil deeds mean death. Following the devil is death.

Then Jesus spoke to them again. He was teaching in the temple, in the treasury section of the temple. This was probably the part of the Court of Women where the trumpet-shaped collection boxes were kept. The time was probably not long after the feast of Tabernacles.

As we have seen water was an important theme of this feast which recalled the wilderness days of their fathers. Jesus cried out on the last day of the feast – *if anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink*. The wilderness wanderings were also marked with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to guide them on their way. At this feast large lamps or candelabra were burned to give light during the night. When the feast was over, darkness returned to the city. This was the background and may well be the basis for Jesus making this great pronouncement – the second of seven I am's in this gospel.

These statements have a distinctive structure in the original language– indeed a connotation of the divine (8:58). The Pharisees sensed this meaning in Jesus' words and so they challenged him as to the validity of his claim. Where were his witnesses? A man's own witness to himself is not valid.

They had a point. Jesus acknowledged that according to their law the testimony of at least two witnesses was required (8:17, Deuteronomy 17:6). Anybody could get up and start making great claims about themselves. Okay said Jesus, you need witnesses – and he provided two witnesses.

Who were those witnesses? Who would witness that Jesus is the light of the world? Did the Pharisees accept his witnesses? Let us read on.

Jesus Himself

Even if I bear witness of myself my witness is true (8:14). Jesus had early said *if I bear witness of myself my witness is not true* (5:31). Is this a contradiction? No. If Jesus was making independent claims about himself then they might well question his authority. If he spoke outside of his divine commission, if he spoke only as a man, then they might reject his witness. But Jesus always spoke the words the Father gave him. Hence he always spoke the truth.

Jesus qualified his authority with the words *for I know where I came from and where I am going* He was not boasting or speaking out of self interest. He knew his unique origin and his destiny. He had no need of praise from men. His witness is true for he had no need to speak otherwise.

Who am I? Where am I from? Where am I going? Are these questions that you ask yourself? They are questions that plague mankind. We see people looking into holes in the ground asking where am I from. These fossils might be the clue. We see people looking to the stars and to other planets – maybe there are other beings who know the destiny of mankind. We see people looking inside themselves – into their minds or into their genes – hoping to find the answer there. Who can answer the questions? Where am I from? Where am I going?

Jesus knew – and so can you. The Bible clearly teaches you are made in the image of God. You are made by God. You are not just an accident, a freak of nature with 80% of your DNA the same as a rat. That is a great comfort in itself.

But there is more. *As many as received him to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name.* When by grace through faith you believe in Jesus Christ you become a child of God. You who were cut off and living a meaningless life, you who were destined for destruction, now by the grace of God are given an inheritance, a home in the kingdom of God. That is where you are going. Jesus has in fact gone ahead to prepare a place for you. Your destiny is vitally linked with his. Do you believe that?

If you know where you came from and where you are going, why then do you worry so much about your life here in this world. Why do you fight and quarrel and lie and steal to improve your lot in life here. This world is not your home, your just passing through as the old ballad goes.

The Pharisees had no idea where Jesus came from or where he was going. They would not even consider his divine origin. They were still arguing among themselves about what town he was from! You judge by appearances – *You judge according to the flesh* Jesus said. All they could see standing before them was a man making bold claims. The light was shining upon them but in their darkness they did not comprehend it.

They were always ready to judge – to judge according to the flesh. Jesus on the other hand said *I judge no one*. He who could see into the depths of the human heart, he who sees the wickedness that pervades every heart refused to judge. With patience and persistence he graciously strove with these self righteous men, seeking to enlighten them as to his divine origin and his heavenly home.

If Jesus did judge, if he was like man and delighted to judge others, his judgment would be just. He would not make mistakes. He would not falsely condemn anyone as these Pharisees were intent on doing with regard to Jesus. Jesus will of course come again to judge the world. The day will come when our hearts will be laid open before the judge. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (II Corinthians 5:10). But now is the day of salvation. Jesus came the first time to save not to condemn.

One again Jesus tells them he was sent by the Father. So many times he told them but they refused to listen and refused to believe. Jesus knew where he was from – the Father sent him. He will go on to tell them again of where he is going. He is going to *him who sent me* (7:33).

I know where I came from and where I am going. These amazing words are like the theme of this whole gospel. They speak of the beginning and end of his divine mission. The work he came to do will eventually be revealed – although not even his disciples understood this until after he had returned to the Father. He simply called upon people to believe he was sent from God, to believe in him. To those who believed he gave eternal life.

The Father

Jesus then, because of his divine origin and destiny claimed his witness was true. *I am one who bears witness of myself* he said. The ‘I’ is emphatic here – it is not really needed in the Greek. In fact the ‘I am’ is usually a reference to the divine name (8:58).

And the Father who sent me bears witness. Here is the second witness required by the law. God the Father and God the Son bear witness together. Jesus is one with the Father. The Father is in me Jesus said (17:21). Yet he calls upon the Father as another witness – here as he did previously (5:37).

What is the witness of the Father? He spoke in the past by the prophets. His witness is there in the Scriptures. We read in Isaiah the prophet of the light to the Gentiles (Isaiah

49:6), and again *the Lord will be to you an everlasting light* (Isaiah 60:19). Even the law bears the witness of the Father to Jesus (Luke 24:27).

But this was all too much for the dark and foolish hearts of the Pharisees. They probably were glancing about as they sarcastically said where is your Father? Not a single ray of light shone into their hearts. They were spiritually blind, blinded by their focus on the flesh, on outward things. Claiming to be lights to men because they expounded the law, they were in fact shown by Jesus to be paragons of darkness.

I am the light of the world. Jesus spoke the truth. That light shines in this world – it shone in the darkness and it has overcome the darkness. But not everyone walks in that light. Many choose darkness rather than light. They close their eyes to the truth. They stumble along in the dark, heading towards the precipice, towards the ocean of eternal darkness. But those who follow Jesus will not walk in darkness. They will have the light of life. With eyes wide open they will follow Jesus towards the mountain of the Lord.

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