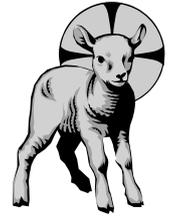




Enjoying God: Life in All its Fullness

(passages from John's Gospel)

Summer 2017



John 8:12-30 Light

(sermons: June 18)

Introduction

Why is John 7:53-8:11 in brackets or in the margin? These verses are not in any of the earliest manuscripts of John's Gospel and the earliest commentaries by Greek theologians go **straight from 7:52 to 8:12** (the chapter and verse numbering came later). Some later manuscripts of the New Testament put these verses in different places, including Luke's Gospel, perhaps because the style of Greek is more like Luke. They are probably an account of an incident that was passed down by word of mouth, not included by any of the 4 Gospels, written down later, and then 'found a home' in the 3rd or 4th century.

John's Gospel flows naturally from 7:52 into 8:12, still in the **Temple** area, at the end, or immediately after, the **Feast of Tabernacles**, which celebrated the completion of the harvest, and remembered the nation's wanderings through the Sinai desert after the Exodus, God's provision for their needs, and the way he guided them by the pillar of cloud and fire. The four huge candelabra in the Temple area would have just been extinguished, no longer shining out from the Court of the Women (where only Jews were allowed), where there were 13 trumpet-shaped collection boxes (see 8:20).

Light is a theme in John's Gospel right from **John 1:4-5,9** onwards. In John 6/7/8 there are echoes of Moses and the Exodus: Bread from heaven (like **manna**) in chapter 6, Living water (like **water** from the rock) in chapter 7, and now light in the darkness (like the **cloud of fire**, symbolizing God's Presence with the Israelites and leading his people in **Exodus 40:34-38**). The psalms speak of God and his Word as a light (**Psalm 27:1; 119:105**). The Lord's Servant was to be a light to the Gentiles (**Isaiah 49:6**). Light and flowing water appear together in the last days in **Zechariah 14:5-9**.

Jesus' discussions with the Pharisees are quite complicated, as he follows their style of argument; some of John's Jewish readers would relate to this approach: don't worry if you don't!

John 8:12-20 The Light of the World

v.12 *I am the light of the world* – the word 'I' is emphasized so the 'I am' echoes the special Name for God in Exodus 3:14. This is like Jesus' other 'I am' sayings in John's Gospel (eg John 6:35).

v.12 *of the world* – not just for Jews, like the Court of the Women where Jesus was speaking

v.12 *walk in darkness* – walk or wander around in darkness, unable to see where we are, or where to go

v.13 *your testimony is not valid* – the Law (e.g. Deuteronomy 19:15) required 2 or 3 witnesses for conviction; the Pharisees are quibbling about the status of Jesus' claim rather than its content.

v.15 *I pass judgment on no-one* – i.e. Jesus is not judging by human standards like the Pharisees; **or** he is not judging now (as opposed to later – John 5:27); **or** this is not his main purpose (John 3:16-21).

1. How do the Old Testament references to light and the use of light in the Feast of Tabernacles (see Introduction) help to explain what Jesus meant when he said, 'I am the light of the world' ?
2. What does it mean for us today that Jesus is 'the light of the world'? What do we have to be doing to benefit from his light? How in turn should we be 'light for the world' (Matthew 5:14)?

3. Jesus sees God the Father as validating their relationship, rather than any human witnesses. Is there a danger in trying to ‘prove’ the truth of the Christian faith (as opposed to showing that belief is not unreasonable)? Do we become more convinced as we become more committed? (see John 7:16-17)

John 8:21-30 The Reliability of Jesus’ Teaching and His Claims

v.21-22 *compare John 7:35-36. Here the Pharisees may be referring to a belief that suicides would have a lower place in the underworld. They realize that Jesus is speaking about his own death.*

v.21, 24 *die in your sin(s) – die with your sins unforgiven*

v.24, 28 *if you do not believe that I am – NIV adds the words ‘the one I claim to be’ in brackets.*

As in v.12, Jesus is echoing the special ‘I AM’ name for God, building up to his claim in v.58.

v.28 *when you have lifted up the Son of Man – literally ‘lifted up’ on the Cross (like the snake on the pole referred to in John 3:14), but also exalted/glorified. See John 12:32-33 and Philippians 2:8-11.*

4. As Jesus makes greater claims about himself (vv 12, 18, 19, 24, 58) he also issues sterner warnings about the danger of rejecting him (vv 21, 24). When is it the right time to tell the ‘bad news’ as well as the ‘good news’ about what Jesus offers us and the need for us to respond?
5. Jesus says that if people want to know God, they must know him (v.19, cf John 1:18) and that we see him most clearly in the light of the Cross (v.28). Are there times when we lose this perspective? Are we, or people we know, attracted by philosophical systems or forms of spirituality that have a different focus? Can such alternatives ever be called ‘Christian’, or can they be a way-in sometimes?
6. Jesus makes even bigger claims in v.51 and v.58. What do these claims mean? How do we accept these claims and still believe that Jesus became a real human being (*John 1:14*)?

Jesus Offers Light

7. The rather complicated *verses 13-30* teach us more about who Jesus really is. How does that help us to understand what Jesus is claiming when he says, in *verse 12: ‘I am the light of the world’* ?
How do we want the light of Jesus to help us to understand our situation, to guide us and transform us?
Where is the light of Jesus particularly needed in today’s world?
In what ways are people we know looking for ‘light’? Where are they looking for ‘light’?
How can we show them and tell them about Jesus being *‘the light of the world’*?

Exodus 3:13-14 Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’ ‘

Philippians 2:8-11 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.