
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 8.12. Jesus was speaking in the Temple courts at the end of the Festival of Tabernacles about how he would give the Holy Spirit to those who came to him in faith [see John 7.37-39]. The dialogue in John 8 follows closely after that of John 7, but we are uncertain whether it was immediately after or a little later. In any case, Jesus addressed the crowd in Jerusalem again in the Temple courts, near one of the offering boxes [8.20]. These offering boxes were in the “Court of Women,” a part of the Temple complex where only Jews could go. Within this court, religious leaders would light four huge lamps and then the people would celebrate under this light. They would dance all night, holding burning torches in their hands while singing songs and praises to God. The Levites would play instruments, and the light from the Temple could be seen all over the city. In this context, Jesus announced that he was the light of the world, the light of life! We learned at the beginning of this gospel that Jesus is the source of life, who not only gave life to all creation, but also enlightens people to see God clearly in faith and thus obtain salvation. The Jews would know that the Hebrew scriptures say Yahweh [God] is the light that leads to salvation and righteous living [Psalms 27.1; 119.105]. So they would interpret Jesus’ statement as one of divinity, of identity with God the Father.

Reflect: Jesus’ opponents refused to believe or follow him, so they were still walking in spiritual darkness. But Jesus promises that anyone willing to follow him “*certainly* will not” walk in darkness [the Greek is *emphatic!*], but rather will have the light of life. Notice Jesus here said “follow,” instead of “believe.” Those who truly believe indeed will follow. How closely are you following the teachings and example of Jesus? What does that say about the strength of your faith? What adjustments should you make to follow Jesus more closely? In what ways would you like to experience Jesus’ spiritual light more fully?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 8.12-26. The Pharisees were trying to use Jesus’ own words against him, from when he last was in Jerusalem [see 5.31]. Back then, Jesus made the point that if he alone were testifying to his divine identity as the Son of God, then it would be easy to see his claim would be ludicrous, because such a claim would have to have supporting testimony from God the Father. Now the Pharisees were taking his words out of context. The Mosaic Law required multiple witnesses for criminal proceedings [Deuteronomy 17.6; 19.15], but that was not what Jesus was discussing. The Pharisees tried to use his words and the Law to interpret that Jesus testifying for himself made his testimony false. Of course, light cannot help but attest to its own presence! It bears witness to itself and its source is supportive of that witness! Jesus used their statement about Law to move into a statement about judging. He said they were judging him according to human standards, by the fallen flesh without Spirit enlightenment. At this point, Jesus was not judging anyone. He was offering grace and truth and then observing who responded. The Pharisees judged people’s merits and thus categorized people, but Jesus was not doing this, all were welcome to come to him. Jesus then reiterated something else he had said last time he was there [see 5.30]: that if he were to judge, his judgment would be trustworthy because he and God the Father are in such unity. In fact, he had many convicting things from God the Father to say to them, but for the moment he was occupied with teaching the crowd about his identity [8.26].

Reflect: Do you find yourself judging and categorizing people in the way the Pharisees were? How can you avoid judging by the flesh and instead see through the “eyes” of God, as guided by the Spirit? Jesus said he was the light of life which the Old Testament attests was God the Father, and then he said he heard from God the Father and judged in unity with him. Can you see how, despite the twists and turns of the dialogue, Jesus was building a statement about his identity in this passage?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 8.21-24. In v.21 Jesus talked about dying in sin, while in v.24 he talked about dying in sins. Some think the singular sin is the sin of unbelief about Jesus, which is what left the Pharisees under the punishment for all their sins. Others see the singular sin here as a state of being: without Jesus as your savior, you are in a state of sin and guilt, instead of receiving his righteousness accounted to you. The meaning is the same, really. Because the Pharisees did not believe in Jesus, they would have to face the wrath of God the Father for their sins. Because of this, they will not be able to go where Jesus would go. Jesus talked about them looking for him earlier in the festival [7.33-

34], but now his words were more dire: they might wonder where Jesus went when his tomb proved empty and they might continue seeking for a different Messiah-savior, but they would face condemnation for their sins and lack of faith.

Reflect: Compare John 8.24 and Romans 8.1. Can you explain why Romans 8.1 is true, based on previous notes in these reflections on the Gospel of John? If not, consider the concepts of “imputed righteousness” and “justification,” can you explain them? If not, ask a spiritual leader in the church to go over these with you [there is no shame in that either!]

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 8.12-30. In his argument with the Pharisees, Jesus contrasted his source from theirs. They were of this world, but he was from Heaven: he is the divine Son of God who came to be born as the human Jesus. They were from the realm of fallen creation in open rebellion, while he was from the realm of God. They were born in spiritual darkness, and by refusing to believe and follow him, they remained in spiritual darkness, and that is why they hated him [7.7]. They needed to be taught by God [6.45] and given new birth [3.3-5] to see clearly. In 8.24 and 8.28, Jesus literally identified himself as “I AM,” referring to the way God named himself in the Old Testament. English translators have been torn about how to handle this. The NLT illustrates their struggle: it says in 8.24, “for unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be...” Using all capitals for “I AM” shows they recognize Jesus was identifying himself with Yahweh of the Old Testament, but they still desired to make a sensible sentence out of it by adding “who I claim to be”! Most other translations say “I am He” [with a capital H], trying to do the same thing as the NLT, to show Jesus was referring to himself as God [He] while making a typical English sentence out of it. The NET uses a lower case h, and says in a note that they consider Jesus was saying “I am who I claimed to be,” meaning the Messiah-savior. But look ahead at verses 8.58-59: there all the major translations agree and show Jesus saying he is the “I AM”! Since Jesus was driving toward that statement even back this early in the conversation [which we know from the other ways he has identified himself with God already, through discussion of light, unity in judging, and his source in Heaven], we can realize that what he was saying in 8.24 was that if the Pharisees [or anyone else] did not believe in Jesus’ identity as the Son of God, then they would die in their sins; and in 8.28, that lifting up Jesus on the cross would bring him to full glory of his victorious work, but also lead to revelation of his glory as the Son who would conquer sin and death.

Reflect: As we have mentioned before, sometimes non-believers will say they respect Jesus as a man, but not as a savior; that they see him as a good prophet, but not as the Son of God. But the Bible makes clear that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, he claimed oneness with Yahweh, the one God of the Jews. So he either was who he said he was or he was a liar or a lunatic. There can be no tepidness in our thoughts about Jesus: we either believe or we doubt. Though it is impossible to fully comprehend, can you accept in faith that the one God has revealed himself to be triune, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit [see the reflections on John 1.1-2 for more thought on that issue]? Can you believe that the fully divine Son of God came to earth and took on flesh to be born as the fully human Jesus? Can you believe that this God-man lived a perfectly pure life so he could be a worthy sacrifice for your benefit? Take some time to prayerfully express your faith and thanks.

Day 5

Learn: Maybe you have wondered why we skipped John 7.53-8.11. If you look in your Bible, you probably will see some notation that suggests this passage might not be part of the original New Testament. It is not contained in any of the earliest manuscripts, nor in most of the best manuscripts [those thought to be most accurate]. When it does appear in New Testament manuscripts, it appears in six different places in the text, some of which are in Luke! The style, vocabulary, and grammar seem more like Luke’s than John’s. And all the early church fathers omit this narrative when commenting on John. Many times, despite knowing all this, churches will teach this passage anyway, for two reasons. First, it is a favorite for many people! Second, there is nothing that says this is not a true story, even if it was not originally in the New Testament text. Though it does not sound like John, it does ring true for Jesus.

Reflect: Some people might feel disheartened to find that this scene is in their Bibles but likely not originally a scriptural part of God’s revelation. Instead, you should feel encouraged to know that we have such extensive manuscript evidence that we can see these things, and that none of the differences in manuscripts affect any major doctrine of the church. Using the thousands of known ancient Greek manuscripts, scholars have put together a Greek text used for translation today that is considered over 99% accurate to the original. See www.groben.com/revelation.php for more materials on the accuracy of the New Testament. And don’t forget, you can enjoy this story about Jesus in any case!