

## **John (Part Fourteen)**

**God's Approach to Judgment/ Jesus as the Light of the World**

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**Given 06-Jan-87; Sermon #BS-JO14**

We will be getting into John the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter, and I think it is one of the more significant chapters in the book of John. There is a great deal of information available to us, and hopefully, we will be able to see how this applies to you and me.

There is some speculation regarding the first eleven verses of John 8, as to whether or not they even belong in the Bible. Most of us would never question that, and I am not saying that we should question it at all. But there are some people who do question it, because they see certain things in their study of this that makes them feel as though it is not part of what was originally the book of John.

They say that the Greek language that is used there is different from the kind that John ordinarily uses, and it does not seem to fit his style. They also feel that if it does belong in the Bible, it has been moved out of place. There are those who feel that it fits better at the end of Luke 21. Apparently, Luke 21 is chronologically similar to John 7. At the end of the chapter, Jesus leaves what He is doing and is going into the temple. They also feel that it might be closer to the language that Luke uses.

One of the things that make them question this is that they cannot find adequate information in earlier manuscripts. The earliest manuscript that they have that includes what is now John 8 comes from the second century. It does not appear in Greek manuscripts until about the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

I do not feel as though we need to be overly concerned about that. The overwhelming weight of opinion is that it is indeed authentic. Not only authentic, but the lessons that are contained within it are priceless. So it is something that we need to take advantage of, in understanding it.

**John 7:53** And everyone went to his own house.

**John 8:1-11** But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

I first want to look at the Pharisees’ motivation for what they did. It appears in verse 6: “This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.” They wanted to get a charge on Jesus. We have already begun to see, by John 3, when Nicodemus came by night, the people who were of power and authority among the Jews were already beginning to argue with the things that Jesus said, and were seeking to find some kind of a charge against Him. In John 8, they are making their efforts to find something against Him more visible. When we get to John 12 or 13, there is no doubt about it: they have the mind and attitude of a lynch mob.

By John 8, they are openly and publicly testing Him. Their idea was to try to impale Christ on the horns of a dilemma. We would call it today a “Catch 22” situation, where it would seem to them that no matter which way that He turned, they would have Him. They had Him between a rock and a hard place.

The idea was this. Adultery was and is a very serious crime. How serious is made very clear in the Old Testament.

**Leviticus 20:10** The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.

Both of them. That is a pretty serious crime. Today, our ideas have "progressed" to the place where adultery is not all that serious a crime. In most states, maybe every state, it is no longer even a crime for which a person can get a divorce. You do not even need a publicly stated cause anymore.

The method of death that was proscribed in Leviticus 20 was not given. It just said that they were to die. The Mishnah states that they were to die in a certain way.

**Deuteronomy 22:20-24** But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you. If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die—the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel. If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

It goes on in verse 25 to a little bit different situation.

Stoning with stones was not a very pretty sight. The other way, which the Mishnah states that a person was to be put to death (that is, the adulterer was to be put to death), was that he was marched into a public place, usually the

city square or the gate of the city, and had dung (horse or cow manure) piled about him up to his knees. While he was standing in the pile of dung, they wrapped a smooth towel around his neck, then with a rough towel wrapped around the smooth towel, and a man on each end of the towel, they pulled until the person was strangled. You are probably wondering why the smooth towel was inside the rough towel: it was so that it would leave no marks. Their reasoning was that they had broken the law of God, and to them, God could kill without leaving a mark.

This is part of the dilemma that they hoped to put Jesus in. In John 8, the dilemma was this: if He condemned the woman to death, it brought Him into a collision course with the Romans. Although the Romans gave the Jews a great deal of liberty in governing their nation, they did not give them power over capital crimes. You will recall that when Jesus was condemned to death, He was condemned to death by the Romans, at the behest of the Jews, but they had to take Him before Pilate in order to get the sentence affected. If Pilate had not acted the way he did, then Jesus could not have been put to death. So they were hoping to catch Him condemning the young woman to death, and then just pushing aside the authority of the Romans.

The other side of the “Catch 22” situation was this. On the one hand, He was gaining a very large reputation with the populace for His mercy, kindness, and generosity. Look at how many people He had publicly healed: His fame was going all over the country. In addition to that, if He gave a liberal judgment, it brought Him into direct conflict with the law of Moses.

So they thought they had Him caught between the Scriptures and the Romans. The Scriptures that said He must condemn an adulterer to death, and the Romans who said “You don’t have the authority to condemn this person to death.” They thought they had Him. But their plan boomeranged.

Let us consider, why did Jesus act the way that He did? Why did He stoop down and write? It does not say what He wrote.

There are a couple of possibilities as to why He did what He did. One of the more obvious is that it gave Him time to think. He could stoop down, seemingly be intent on what He was doing in the dirt, but all the while, He could be praying and thinking. “Father, what am I going to do about this?”

This is a pretty tough situation! What's the answer?" It gave time for a little bit of prayer, a little bit of thinking.

A second reason, this is pretty obvious: it gave them, the accusers, time to think about what *they* were doing. He stooped down twice. The silence must have been deafening.

The third possibility is perhaps the most interesting. It says that He wrote something. Is it possible that He wrote a brief record of some of their sins, which might have even been adultery? It is possible.

It is also possible, since they were Pharisees, that they had never actually committed adultery. In fact, I think that it is highly possible that they had never done that. These were people who we would say would be pretty upright. They had dedicated their life to obedience to the law of God. So it is highly unlikely that they actually had been guilty of committing the act of adultery.

The word that is used, *to write*, is *katagraphine*. The prefix is interesting, *kata*. It means *down* or *against*. *Graphine* is *to write*. So he wrote down, against. It is also the word that is used *to record against*, or *to write a list down*. It is very likely that He was writing down a list of something. It is very likely that if this is true, He was writing a list of sins.

There are some commentators who will tell you that it is not the word *katagraphine*. The word that He used there indicates that it involved the spirit of the law, almost like He was reading their thoughts. When Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first," the phrase *without sin* includes not just the letter of the law breaking, but it includes the intent to break. Even if these people had not literally broken the letter of the law in committing adultery, what He said indicated, "Which one of you has never had the thought to do the same?"

[Note: in September, 2012, Mr. Ritenbaugh added the following comments:

The Interlinear Bible does not show the Greek term *katagraphine* as part of the narrative. (The Greek words I write here are transliterated and can be used in the transcription.) *Kata* (down)

does not modify the verb *grapho* (write, wrote) but the verb *kupto* (to stoop).

The *KJV* and the *NKJV* both have the verse translated correctly. *Kupto* simply means to lean forward. By adding *kata* John altered the picture somewhat by showing Jesus didn't just lean forward but He actually stooped down to ground level in order to visibly write something in the dust. Because *katagraphine* is not used some commentators felt at liberty to speculate the comment regarding the spirit of the law. That may be correct but it is just a speculation and I picked up on it.]

If they had been guilty or not guilty of the letter of the law, they would have come back very quickly and said, "I've never done that." But His phrase indicates that He bypassed the letter of the law completely, and went right to the heart of the matter, "Which one of you has never even thought to do this?" and they understood that they were guilty. That is what He explained in Matthew 5, 6, and 7—that if we *think* to do the thing, then if we carry that through, we are guilty.

What was His decision? It is very plain here. His decision was, "OK, go ahead and stone her. But let the sinless one throw the first stone."

Let us back away from that, and consider the Pharisees' attitude toward authority. There is no doubt that they had a lot of authority in the community. Their attitude is shown, not just here, but in many other places in the New Testament. They were the legal experts of their day, and I think that we can safely say that their use of authority was critical; it was censorious; it was condemnatory.

What we are seeing here is a tiny example of what Paul calls, in II Corinthians 3, the "ministration of death," or the "administration of death," to put it another way. They viewed their function in government as giving them the authority to watch over peoples' every act, to critically examine it, and then to descend, with savage, and unmerciful, and unyielding punishment.

It seems as though there was no thought in their mind of trying to reclaim the law-breaker or to reclaim the sinner, or to give them an opportunity to repent and change. Their idea was strictly one of punish the evildoer. There is quite a difference between Jesus' approach and their approach. It seemed to have never dawned on them that they should try to reclaim the person, or to use their authority as a basis for service, even to the person who was the law-breaker.

**Matthew 20:25-26** But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them [that is, lord it over the people over whom they have authority], and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant."

God's approach to authority is that authority is to be used to serve, not to exercise a critical, censorious, and condemnatory power.

**Matthew 20:27-28** "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Back to John 8. That was their attitude toward authority. Authority to them was power to censure.

A second indication of their attitude toward authority: it was cruel, almost to an extreme. You can pick that up in their attitude toward the woman. Who was this woman? They did not seem to care who she was; to them, all she was, was a thing to be used to entrap somebody else. A tool to catch somebody on the horns of a dilemma. Something to be used to test Christ.

That is the way Satan plays: he plays dirty. His idea is to trick people into sin, to deceive them into making a mistake. All she was, was a pawn in a game, or a political power play, that they could use to get the upper hand on Jesus.

I want to give you a contrast between that, and the way God is. If there is anybody who could catch us in sin, it is God. Let us look at the way God looks at us.

**Exodus 33:17** So the Lord said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.”

This woman was not a name to them, all she was, was a pawn in a game, a political power-play to support a theological argument. But to God, He knows you by name. He could accuse us of sin, but we are not pawns that He is using.

Let us look at Isaiah 45, another place where a name is used:

**Isaiah 45:2-3** I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel.

God is well aware of us. He knows us inside and out, and we are sinners, just like that woman. We may be worse than that woman. But to Him, we are not a pawn in a game. We are not a thing to be used, to be dangled to catch somebody on the horns of a dilemma.

Let us consider something else. Is it wrong to judge? Was it wrong for the Pharisees to judge this woman? Was it wrong for Jesus to judge? Is it wrong for us to judge?

**Matthew 7:1** Judge not, that you be not judged.

If you took that one scripture, you could safely say that it is wrong to judge. But is that correct? “Judge not, that you be not judged.”

On the other hand, Jesus says:



**John 7:24** Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

That is an altogether different approach. Is Jesus contradicting Himself? No, actually that is part of the answer. Is it wrong that we should judge? Not if you take John 7:24; He says “Do not judge according to appearance,” He qualifies what it says in Matthew 7:1, “But judge with righteous judgment.”

Paul received information regarding a person who had committed a very serious sexual offense in the congregation in Corinth.

**I Corinthians 5:3** For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged [Paul judged without even being there! God’s apostle did that.] (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.

Obviously, God expects us to be able to judge things, does He not?

**Galatians 6:1** Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

I think it is pretty obvious that a person has to judge someone who has sinned, in order to approach such a person in a spirit of gentleness. They have to have judged that the person has done something wrong, something that might keep them out of the Kingdom of God. They have judged that this person is guilty of that, so God’s instruction is that we go to the person, who indeed is guilty, and try to restore him. So judgment has to take place, in order for a person to do that.

Let us go to Romans 12, perhaps this is the key that will help you. This puts a light on judgment that is very important.

**Romans 12:3** For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

**Romans 12:16** Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

You ought to begin to be able to see that a certain aspect of judgment is absolutely necessary in life. First of all, one has to judge himself, does he not? You have to be able to evaluate where you stand in relation to Christ. Our judgment of ourselves has to be in relation to Christ. He is the standard; He is the benchmark. We evaluate ourselves against Him.

In judging what others do, it is not wrong if it is done in the proper attitude. I am warning you, though, that it is very difficult to do. I am not saying that it is easy to do. The reason it is not easy to do is that we have used the wrong basis of judgment, and most of the time, we make our mistake in thinking too highly of ourselves in the judgment of another person. Our attitude becomes condemnatory, rather than merely being a gentle evaluation that this person needs to be helped.

Again in Matthew 7, it says “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Notice what He is saying here about being careful in your evaluation in your judgment of others:

**Matthew 7:2** For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged.

That is a heavy statement! If you come across at a person in a condemnatory way, God is telling you, you are going to get the same judgment yourself! It is part of that, “Whatever you sow, you reap” principle.

I think that if we are spiritually wise, we will be very gentle in our judgments of other people. Do you know why? Because it is awfully difficult not to judge according to appearance. It is awfully difficult to judge righteous judgment.

**Matthew 7:3** And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

That is what is wrong with our judgment. Because we have such a high opinion of ourselves, we have a tendency to judge self-righteously, arrogantly, in a condemnatory way. We use a judgment to elevate ourselves, and put the other person down. And so we make light of our sin, and heavy of their sin, when we may have the same problem, only it has broken out in maybe a slightly different area.

**Matthew 7:4-5** Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

He does come to a conclusion—that we can judge—but He says, not until we are moving towards sinlessness. Get rid of the plank out of your own eye, first. What, then, is a vital quality in judging? He told you: achievement in righteousness. You get rid of the plank in your own eye; you achieve righteousness.

We are not to judge for the purpose of elevating ourselves or depressing others. What often turns out to be the problem is not the judgment, but rather, the offense that is taken by the person who is judged, either because of their attitude toward authority or because vanity gets the best of them, and they cannot take the correction. The judgment may have been correct, but it causes a furor because of the offense in the person that is corrected.

In the first 11 verses of John 8, judgment was involved.

Solomon is renowned for his judgments, which are given in the Old Testament. Sheba said that Solomon’s wisdom was far greater than all of the stories that had been told to her, which she thought were a bunch of bunk. But when she came and saw his judgments, and heard them in person, she had to admit that he was greater than what she had heard.

Most of us have the idea that when Solomon was approached by God, and asked for gifts, that Solomon asked for wisdom. He did not; he did not ask for wisdom. He asked for understanding.

**I Kings 3:5-6** At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask! What shall I give you?” And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

**I Kings 3:9** Therefore, give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”

He asked for understanding. It is interesting that is what Mr. Armstrong said *he* asked for, because if you understand something, then you can have wisdom. That is what is necessary in judgment: it is to understand. It is awfully hard to have wisdom unless you understand every aspect of the case that is before you. That is why Mr. Armstrong said that doctrine is revealed from the Bible when a person gets all the facts.

With that background, we can know that Jesus understood! He understood judgment. He understood mercy. He understood authority. He understood the woman. He understood her accusers. He understood a great deal about her background. He understood God’s purpose. There was a great deal of understanding that went into His decision. That is why He was able to out-wit these people.

What was Jesus’ judgment? Today, we would say at the end of a court case, that all He did was defer the sentence. He agreed with the Pharisees, that yes, indeed, she is guilty, she shall be put to death. But what else did He say? “I do not condemn you, go and sin no more.” There was wisdom there, too; again, because He understood.

Why did He make that decision? Why did He not say to the Jews, “Put her to death.”

**Luke 12:14** But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

This particular statement occurred when a man came to Him and said, “Make my brother divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus’ legal authority did not extend that far, even though He was God in the flesh. The penalties that He could execute did not extend to the civil law of the nation of Judah under the Romans.

So He went as far as He could. In effect, what He did was to say, “Pharisees, I agree with you, this woman is guilty of a crime that is punishable by death. However, our authority doesn’t extend that far, and therefore, sentence is deferred.” And to the woman He said, “Go and sin no more.”

The first responsibility of one in authority is not to condemn, but to produce a change, to reclaim the person. Jesus used authority for service, to try to reclaim her, rather than condemn her.

**John 18:36** Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now My kingdom is not from here.”

So Jesus was of the Kingdom of God, He was not of this world. We too are in the same position. We are strangers; we are pilgrims; we are foreigners; we are citizens of heaven, and our authority does not extend into civil areas. We can add to this John 3:16-17, where God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that through Him, the world might be saved.

**John 8:12-20** Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” The Pharisees therefore said to Him, “You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.” Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of

Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.” Then they said to Him, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.” These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.

The thing that precipitated this was His statement that He is the light of the world. To you and me, that may not mean anything, but what He was doing was claiming that He was the Messiah. “I am the light.” I will give you two verses so that you will know why the Jews reacted the way that they did.

**Psalm 27:1** The Lord is my light and my salvation.

They understood what He was saying, when He said “I am the light of the world,” He is saying, “I am the Lord. I am God; I am the Messiah.” That is a tremendous claim! It is no wonder that they shot back, saying “Prove it!” That is essentially what they said.

**Isaiah 60:19** The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory.

What is the light? Light is that which gives substance and shape to things that are around us. If we were in absolute darkness and there were other things in this room besides us, there is no doubt that we would run into those things if we tried to move about within the room. It is very likely that in moving about, we would get injured. If there were a number of people and we were all moving about, we would sooner or later cross one another’s paths, and we would be colliding, with people and with things.

So whenever a light is turned on, it gives shape, substance, and form to that which is around us, things that we could not normally see. When the light is turned on, we who were formerly running around in darkness, running into things and getting hurt, now have a clear path. We can guide ourselves through whatever the objects were that were in our way. So light symbolizes that which gives form, shape, and direction.

What Jesus is applying it to is not a physical circumstance, in the sense that one is in a darkened room, but rather, it gives form, shape, substance, and direction to life, so that in our relationships with one another, we are not constantly on a collision course with one another, so that we can cooperate with one another, and move around, rather than collide with and have all kinds of problems with one another.

Another way of looking at it is this: as light is to a flower. Flowers will not bloom without sunlight. They open up and become beautiful. It is the same with light in relation to our life. We cannot really blossom as a human being; we cannot have an abundant life unless the light shines in.

Light is nothing more than a symbol of God's truth. Jesus put it another way in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In the place of *truth*, He could have put *light*. "I am light." But He said there "truth." He is truth; He is light. It is the truth of God, in relation to life, that gives form, shape, and substance to our lives.

So what Jesus was in effect saying, "You look at Me, and you look at the way that I live, and you will be able to avoid running into many of the obstacles of life. You will have proper guidance." Another way of saying it is, "If you listen to what I say, you will be guided around life's difficulties or you will be able to handle life's difficulties."

Somebody must have understood, at least in a surface way, what He was getting at, when He said, "I am light." He was claiming to be the Messiah. He was claiming to be the embodiment of truth.

I have put into my own words the dialog that went on here, and hopefully it will make a little bit more sense to you. I am picking it up in John 8:13.

The Pharisees speak: "Jesus, you're giving yourself a testimonial. You once said, 'A man's evidence about himself is not accepted if unsupported.' [Jesus said that in John 5:31, where Jesus agreed with what is said in Deuteronomy, that "Out of the mouths of two or three witnesses let a man be condemned."] What you're saying is incredible! It's backed by insufficient witness."

Jesus came back and said: “Well, that’s true, in the courts! But what a man says about himself isn’t necessarily untrue. He could be telling the truth. That depends upon his character. Being what I am, it’s not possible that I should be untrue about Myself. [See, He was God, and it is impossible for God to lie.] This doesn’t appeal to you, because you don’t know Me. You judge by external appearance. I do not now come to a final decision about anybody. But if I did, My knowledge of men’s hearts qualifies Me to judge rightly. And further, My witness of Myself isn’t without support. [After saying “I can tell you the truth because I *am* truth, it is impossible for Me to lie,” He says, “I still have another witness, anyway.”] My Father who sent Me stands by Me.”

The Pharisees came back and said: “Where is your father?” Jesus came back and said: “If you knew the answer to that, you wouldn’t even ask Me that question. You can’t know Me in full without knowing God, because We are inseparable.”

I want to add one more thing about the light, because that is what precipitated this whole thing. In chapter 7, the context took place at the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. It appears that chapter 8 took place immediately after, because it says at the end of chapter 7, “And everyone went to his own house,” but Jesus went to the Temple. It indicates that the events of chapter 8 took place immediately after the Feast.

In the previous Bible study in the series, I mentioned that at the beginning of chapter 7, one of the ceremonies that the Jews went through during the Feast of Tabernacles involved the pitcher of water that they took up and poured on the altar. There was another ceremony that took place near the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles that involved light. They had four great candelabras, apparently very large candles. On one of the evenings near the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles, they held a ceremony at night, lighting all of the candelabras, so that the whole area of the Temple, at least where the candelabra was sitting, was lighted by the light of those candles. They burned them all night long, and they danced during the night. It was a very festive occasion.



Jesus was making a point, drawing on that ceremony. Eventually, what happened to the candles? They all burned out, and there was no more light. He was leading them as follows: “You just went through a ceremony that has very meaningful symbolism within it. But it was nothing more than a physical ceremony; a type, and the light of those candles went out. While the light was there, you were able to have your activities; you were able to enjoy the festivities of a dance from the light of that candle.”

In dances, you had to follow one another around; the man leads and the woman follows. In another type of dance, like a square dance, there is always a head couple and everybody else in the square follows the head couple.

Jesus purposely used the word *follow* (John 8:12), only He used it in relationship to the word *light*, rather than the *following* that was possible because of the light of the candelabra. It was actually a play on words that is very important. It is the word *follow* that I want to concentrate on.

This particular word for *follow* is used in five different ways in the Bible, in five different contexts. Every usage applies to our relationship to Christ, who is the light, who is truth. He is the Captain of our salvation, and we are to follow Him. As long as we follow the light, we are going to get through life. We will avoid many of the obstacles in life, and we are going to make it into the Kingdom of God, as long as we are in the light and we follow the light.

The point is that light is going to lead to life. It will lead to an abundant life here and now, and it will lead to eternal life—but, we have got to follow the light. We are to follow the light in these ways: first, as a soldier follows his captain. There is a theme that runs through every one of these, there is a commonality. A soldier is supposed to follow his captain. Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and we are to follow Him without question into battle. There are a lot of spiritual battles to fight.

It is also used as a slave attends to his master. A slave, in the biblical sense, is a person who has no will of his own. He is at “the beck and the call” of his

owner, his master. His master's will is the slave's will. That has to be our relationship to Christ. He is our Lord and Master, and we follow Him without question.

The third way it is used is of a person accepting a wise counselor's advice. In other words, we follow the counselor's advice "to a T." We do not turn to the right side nor to the left side. In this case, Christ is our Counselor; He is the light, He is truth, He is going to lead us through life so that we do not deviate. We do not turn left or right from the advice that He gives.

A fourth way is this: it is used as giving obedience to the laws of the city. In I Peter 2, Peter said "We are to be subject to every ordinance of man." We glorify God in doing that, and that is part of our witness. We are the best citizens any nation has, because we follow the laws. That is part of following the light of Christ.

The next way it is used is in understanding the gist of an argument: we follow it, we follow the reasoning. It has to do with understanding the gist, or the purpose, or the intent, of Christ's teaching.

I will make one more statement regarding Christ's being His own witness. It does not contradict chapter 5. In that chapter, the approach of the Jews was that Jesus was glorifying himself, and trying to gain a personal reputation. Jesus was refuting what they were saying, and He was calling upon the law in Deuteronomy in saying that He did have witnesses, that He was exactly who He said He was. He was not seeking to glorify Himself.

Here, the argument is different. The argument is really a matter of confidence in who He was. There is a difference. He was not trying to gain a personal reputation, but rather, in somewhat the same sense that Mr. Armstrong used to say that "I am God's apostle." He was confident of his position; he was confident of who he was. That was the approach that Jesus was using here: "I am who I say I am. I'm not trying to gain a reputation; I'm just confident that I indeed am the Son of God, and that God is my Father."

**John 8:21-25** Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He

says, ‘Where I go you cannot come’?” And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” Then they said to Him, “Who are You?” ...

That was constantly their question. They came back to it, over and over and over again. They kept asking Him for proof, and He kept giving them more and more proof. Not only verbally, but by His actions.

**John 8:25-30** ... And Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.” They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

In verse 21, He said, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.” What He was saying is this: there are opportunities which come, and do not return. “Here I am, folks. I am who I say I am, and the time is going to come when you’re going to seek Me, and you won’t be able to find Me. The opportunity passed you by.”

That is a warning to us. There are opportunities in life that sometimes we let slip by. All too frequently, it is the opportunity to do something good for someone. We are so frequently guilty of sins of omission.

Another aspect of that is that even if there are opportunities which come and do not return, we also have to consider that life and time are limited. You will die. Our life and our time are limited, and nobody knows what his limit is. Nobody knows the day nor hour of his death. So the approach in the Bible is always to be urgent, to be about God’s business; to be urgent about this way of life.

Even though we may be able to calculate to some degree when Christ may return, we cannot be sure about it. Not only that, we may die before that time comes. We may be thinking, “Well, I can calculate at least it’s going to be 3 ½ years from today, because there’s the tribulation, and there’s the Day of the Lord, that’s 1,260 days, that’s 42 months, that’s 3 ½ years. . . I’ve got it made for 3 ½ years!” The day after tomorrow, you step off the curb, and somebody runs into you, and you are dead.

So we do not know. The approach in the Bible is always we have a sense of urgency because we do not know the limit.

There is another thing that is rather sobering. We have had opportunity given to us; our time of salvation is now. Judgment is now upon the house of God. Because there is opportunity, there is also judgment. The greater the privilege, the greater the judgment, or the sterner the judgment. The greatest rewards are going to go to the church, but the sternest judgment is also going to go to the church.

So there are three very important and sobering things contained in those verses. “You will seek Me, and will die in your sins.” Opportunities will come and go; life and time are limited; because there is opportunity, there is also judgment.

He also said that you will die in your sins. We certainly do not want to do that. What they would be doing is missing the target of life. That is what sin is; it is missing the target, *hamartia*. When we do not hit the bull’s eye, we are missing the target. The target in life is to be fitted for the Kingdom of God. So He was saying that these people were going to miss the target.

He then goes on in verse 23 and says “You are of this world, and I am not of this world.” He was obviously *in* the world, but He was not *of* the world.

What is the world? It is the Greek world *cosmos*. It means “the order or the system of things.” In the biblical sense, it means this changing, transient system of disorder, of confusion. God calls it “Babylon the great.”

Another way of putting it is, it is all that is human, as opposed to that which is divine. This whole transient, changing system of disorder grew out of sin:

the sin of Adam and Eve, and all of their progeny. So God says, in I John 2: 15-17, all that is in the world is not of God, it is of the world.

Despite that, God says in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world.” God loves the world. The word “world” there is the same word, *cosmos*. He has good will toward it. He means well for it. He provides for it. He uses it to His end, which of course is good.

**John 1:10** He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

God loves the world, but the world is blind about God.

**John 14:17** the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. . .

The world cannot receive the Spirit of God.

**John 17:25** O righteous Father! The world has not known You.

Not only does it not have the Spirit of God, but the world does not know God.

**John 15:18-19** If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

The world hates Christ and His followers.

Now God loves this mess. I think that we can say that the world is not what God intended it be, and man is not what God intended man to be. So something is radically wrong. What is wrong with the world?

It is sin; deception and sin are what is wrong with the world. Because men have been deceived, and because they have sinned, all of this changing, transient system of disorder has been produced.

Christ gives the cure, in these verses in John 8.

**John 8:24** Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.

There is the cure! It is to believe in Christ. We understand, do we not, that the word *believe* means a great deal more than just to be confident that He is God. What we believe determines what we do; it determines a person's conduct. If a person really believes that Jesus is the Christ, he is going to obey Him, he is going to submit to Him, he is going to follow the doctrines of His way of life. He is going to strive for the Kingdom of God. He is going to do everything in his power to glorify God, and he is going to produce the right things in his life.

Jesus very succinctly and poignantly gave the cure to sin: it is to believe in Christ. Please understand this, brethren, because it is so important as a factor in your well-being, right here and now, and whether or not we are going to be in the Kingdom of God. That is the cure for everything! In a nutshell, it is to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is God. If you do, you are going to do what He says. You are going to submit to His rule in your life, in everything, and you are going to be striving in every aspect of life to submit to Him. You are going to be pounding the pages of the Bible, looking for instruction so that you will know what to do in every circumstance of life, because this is the manual on how to live in every circumstance.

If you do not believe that Jesus is the Christ, then you will not pay any attention to it, or you will pay very little attention.

Do you understand what is happening in these dialogs that are taking place between Jesus and the Jews? He is showing those people how the world got the way it is. Because Adam and Eve refused to listen to God, to believe what God said at the very beginning, all of the world was produced. As Paul says in Romans 5, everybody has done the same thing that Adam and Eve did. Nobody has believed God.

So in that sense, we stand condemned. It is only God in His mercy who has called us, and given us this opportunity to show Him that we really do believe that He indeed is God. That is what has made the difference.

He says to the Jews: “You do not believe Me now, but there are going to be some things that occur that make you believe that I am He.” He gave three things. Number one was the crucifixion, verse 28:

**John 8:28** When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He.

He did not mean that they would know immediately, but He meant that His crucifixion would be crucial to understanding that He indeed is the Son of God, and that all that believe would at least be partly led to their senses by the crucifixion. That of course includes the resurrection as well, because that was part and parcel of the crucifixion.

Number two were the judgments that He made. Those judgments are not just listed here, but they are things that come to a person’s apprehension or understanding as he grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ—the judgments that are made in the church, in regard to everything from the ordination of ministers, to the way the work is conducted, and so on. It is something that a person has to experience over a long period of time, coming to understand that indeed Jesus of Nazareth is head of His church, and that He indeed does work through the government that is in the church.

As Mr. Contardi was giving his sermon last Sabbath, my wife reminded me of something. When I was ordained as a preaching elder, it was just a few weeks later that Dr. Hoeh gave the sermon in Norwalk. He stood up before the congregation and out of the clear blue sky, without anything preceding it, said, “Some of you people think we made a mistake in ordaining John Ritenbaugh, don’t you?” But he said, “You will see.” Well, I hope people have seen.

The judgments that He makes extend all the way to the Great White Throne, and people are going to be able to understand and appreciate those judgments. There is wisdom in those judgments.

The third thing is His obedience. “I always do those things that please Him.” And that even includes His judgments, as well. “The Father has not left Me

alone.” There is infinite wisdom in everything that He says and does, every judgment that He makes. He had that wisdom because He always did obey God.

**John 8:30-32** As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. [Abide means *to live*. If you live in it, if you use it in your life, if it is a part of your lifestyle, if it is a part of your way of life, if you conduct your life according to My Word, then you will be My disciples.] And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

So the accumulation of truth is progressive, it is cumulative. Truth here does not mean something that we have all at once, but rather, it is something that we are led into, progressively. Like conversion is a progression: it has a beginning, and it ends at the resurrection into the Kingdom of God.

Our spiritual life begins with believing simple things, like Paul said in Romans 1, “From faith to faith.” We grow from human faith to the faith of Jesus Christ. We have to progress from the one to the other. We come into contact through human faith. It is not impossible for men with human faith to understand, to believe that there is a Creator God, but that is not the faith that saves. That does not mean that they are submissive to Christ, it does not mean that they have accepted His government over them. It does not mean that they are headed toward the Kingdom of God. They only believe that there is a creator. That human faith will take them so far along the way, but it is not sufficient to save.

Paul says:

**Galatians 2:20** And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.

Not human faith, but Christ’s faith in Him. Our faith in Christ begins with a very elementary human faith, but through the Spirit of God, we can be given the faith of Jesus Christ. Our part is to apply ourselves so that God can feed us, energize us, and produce growth by His Spirit.



What will that produce? Truth produces liberty. That is what He says, it produces liberty. Truth makes free. What does it make you free from?

One of the first things that God says that it should produce, but one of the more difficult ones to overcome, is freedom from fear. The fear of what? Fear of death? In Hebrews 2:14, He tells us that Satan, through fear of death, has held us in bondage. A person is not really free until he is free of being afraid to die.

How about the fear, or insecurity, of not having enough to eat? Of not having a place to stay? Those things that are fundamental to life. In Matthew 5, 6, and 7, God says that if we seek first the Kingdom of God, He will add all of those things to us. Are we free from that fear yet? Freedom from fear; there is a lot to be explored.

How about freedom from our self? Selfishness is at the base of all of our problems. This is probably our greatest handicap. Human nature's first and foremost drive is to provide for the self. We need to be liberated from that, because God is love. His concern for self is no greater than His concern for others. That is what truth will eventually produce; it will produce freedom from self.

How about freedom from bondage to others? I am not thinking of us being a slave, in the sense of the kind of slavery that we formerly had in the United States. I am thinking of our lives being dominated by what other people think of us. We fear the opinions of other people. Certainly, we should respect other people. I do not mean that we should ignore their opinions. But we should not be so bound to them that we disobey God in order to appease other people. That makes us their slave, we are not free. If we are not free in our mind to obey God because of what other people think of us, we are not free yet.

How about freedom from sin? We may never be rid of that, as long as we are in the flesh. But truth will lead to liberating us from that. The apostle Paul said in Romans 7 the sin that dwelled in him was still making him sin. We will get to this in the next Bible study, because it is what Jesus gets to next.

It is something that needs to be considered, because truth will produce liberty, but it is a progressive thing, because we are held in bondage by the very humanity that we are trying to escape and come out of. Unless we are making an effort to grow in the grace and knowledge, and do our part in following Christ, and making an effort to produce something from our belief; yielding to God, studying His Word—I mean really trying to penetrate into God's Word, and to understand it—it will produce the knowledge that will produce the liberty, if we follow it.

That is our part: to yield to Him, so that the liberty of the children of God can be produced.