

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Series: Jesus Is...
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John 8:12-20 (NLT) Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." ¹³ The Pharisees replied, "You are making those claims about yourself! Such testimony is not valid."

¹⁴ Jesus told them, "These claims are valid even though I make them about myself. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you don't know this about me. ¹⁵ You judge me by human standards, but I do not judge anyone. ¹⁶ And if I did, my judgment would be correct in every respect because I am not alone. The Father who sent me is with me. ¹⁷ Your own law says that if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact. ¹⁸ I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other."

¹⁹ "Where is your father?" they asked. Jesus answered, "Since you don't know who I am, you don't know who my Father is. If you knew me, you would also know my Father." ²⁰ Jesus made these statements while he was teaching in the section of the Temple known as the Treasury. But he was not arrested, because his time had not yet come.

Introduction: Physical light is necessary for physical life. Imagine what the earth would be like if there was no sunlight. If you go into a dense forest, you will find that there is very little plant life on the ground. Light attracts plants because it is essential for life. Spiritual light is also necessary for spiritual life. Jesus is the light of the world. He is both the life giver and the source of spiritual life.

This passage unfolds following the incident of the woman caught in the very act of adultery. The Pharisees who caught her didn't really care about her; she was simply a pawn in a game being used to bring Jesus down. Up until now, they had seen Jesus do miracles, heal the sick, forgive people of sins, and treat people they despised (*sinners*) with kindness.

The people had fallen in love with Jesus and His message about God's kingdom, so what better way to invalidate him than to have him approve the stoning of a sinful woman? After all, it was what Moses' law demanded. But they weren't there because of their love for the law, but because of their hatred for Jesus.

Jesus knew people's hearts, especially religious leaders, who constantly sought ways to trap him into saying something they could use against him. They were shining their self-righteous light on the sinful woman while trying to hide their own sin.

But Jesus would shine a light on them and their demand for judgement.

Jesus responded, *"All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"* When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. (John 8:7 and 9)

Jesus didn't justify the woman's sin, but he set her free from self-righteous judges. He granted her forgiveness despite her guilt, instructing her to leave her sinful ways behind and embrace a new life.

After this entire drama plays out, as Jesus would often do, he drives home a message.

John 8:12 (NLT) Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

This is the second of seven "I AM" declarations of Jesus recorded in the gospel of John that point to His divine identity and purpose.

In declaring Himself to be "the light of the world," he is claiming to be the only true source of spiritual light and life.

Two different responses to light (rejection or acceptance)

The jealousy and suspicion of the religious leader and Pharisees had blinded them from seeing the truth of who Jesus was. They saw the miracles and heard the messages, and instead of turning from their sins, they went deeper into darkness.

They were supposed to carry the truth but chose to dwell in darkness instead.

When Jesus, by his very words, shined the light on their sin, like cockroaches, rats, and bedbugs, they fled into the shadows. Jesus made it clear that they were just as guilty as the woman, but they chose to run from the light of truth.

The woman could have fled into the crowd, but overwhelmed by her sin and the shame of being exposed, she now felt the warmth of the light of the world and allowed His radiant grace to grant her forgiveness and mercy.

Jesus didn't come to shame and condemn; He came to seek and save those who were lost. The Pharisees and religious leaders weren't excluded from salvation; they simply chose to reject the light.

John 1:9-10 (NLT) The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.

When Jesus declared that He was the light, the Pharisees pushed back on His claim.

John 8:13 (NLT) The Pharisees replied, "You are making those claims about yourself! Such testimony is not valid."

Basically, they were saying to Jesus, "Who do you think you are?". You can't make such a claim about yourself. Who else could corroborate or validate that you are who you claim to be? You would never stand in a court of law without a witness, so your testimony is not valid.

John 8:14-17 (NLT) Jesus told them, “These claims are valid even though I make them about myself. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you don’t know this about me. ¹⁵ You judge me by human standards, but I do not judge anyone. ¹⁶ And if I did, my judgment would be correct in every respect because I am not alone. The Father who sent me is with me. ¹⁷ Your own law says that if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact. ¹⁸ I am one witness, and my Father who sent me is the other.”

Jesus didn’t hesitate. He is revealing himself to the people around him. God is His father. He doesn’t care that they are judging him falsely. They aren’t there because they are interested in acknowledging the light; they are there to try and extinguish the light.

They so wanted to find a reason to arrest him. There was no better reason than for him to claim to be God’s son. So, they need him to make it clear.

John 8:19-20 (NLT) “Where is your father?” they asked. Jesus answered, “Since you don’t know who I am, you don’t know who my Father is. If you knew me, you would also know my Father.” ²⁰ Jesus made these statements while he was teaching in the section of the Temple known as the Treasury. But he was not arrested, because his time had not yet come.

The Pharisees once again reject Jesus and His claim to be the Son of God and the Light of the World, fleeing to the shadows of their sinful and religious pride.

The conversation continues.

John 8:21 (NLT) Later Jesus said to them again, “I am going away. You will search for me but will die in your sin. You cannot come where I am going.” ²² The people asked, “Is he planning to commit suicide? What does he mean, ‘You cannot come where I am going’?”

²³ Jesus continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You belong to this world; I do not. ²⁴ That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.” ²⁵ Who are you?” they demanded.

Jesus replied, “The one I have always claimed to be. ²⁶ I have much to say about you and much to condemn, but I won’t. For I say only what I have heard from the one who sent me, and he is completely truthful.” ²⁷ But they still didn’t understand that he was talking about his Father.

Jesus makes it clear that the light will truly shine; that is, they will understand who He is when He fulfills His mission.

John 8:27-28 (NLT) So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will understand that I AM he. I do nothing on my own but say only what the Father taught me. ²⁹ And the one who sent me is with me he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him.”

Two responses: There are only two responses to the gospel message about Jesus Christ. Rejection and acceptance.

The Pharisees rejected Jesus and His claim to be the Son of God and the Light of the World, fleeing to the shadows of their sinful and religious pride.

John 1:10-13 (NLT) He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

In the midst of people refusing to believe, resisting the truth, and running from the light into the shadow of their sins, there are those who feel the warmth and beauty of the light of Christ and allow His radiant grace to grant them forgiveness and mercy.

John 8:30 (NLT) Then many who heard him say these things believed in him.

John 8:12 (NLT) "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

Conclusion: The question today for those who are listening is: What will be your response to the message about The Light of the World? Will you turn to Him as the source of life and forgiveness, or will you reject Him and flee back into the shadows of your sin? Two responses: rejection or acceptance, which will be yours?