

LESSON #13 CHAPTER 8:1-30
I Am the Light of the World

Divine Attribute: Light

Theological concept: Light and darkness

Geographical location: Jerusalem Temple

Chapter Structure

8: 1-11 Grace and Law

8: 12-20 Light and Darkness

8: 21-30 Life and Death

Spiritual Principles:

P1 Obedience to God guarantees God's delight and presence

Today's lesson...

In the last lesson, we read about the great promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit at the Feast of the Tabernacle, *"Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them"* (7:38)

In chapter eight, the feast has ended. The Lord Jesus remained in Jerusalem to teach, and he found himself again in conflict with the religious leaders. Today we shall read about Jesus' second self-declaration: "I am the light of the world." We shall see that the Pharisees continue to challenge Jesus. The greatest attack was the authentication of Jesus' testimony to his identity. The Lord Jesus gave four contrasts to rebuke them and help the people understand the truth about life so that they may not die in their sins: light and darkness (12-20), life and death (21-30), freedom and bondage (31-47) and honour and dishonour (48-59). We will cover the first two contrasts in this lesson.

A. 8: 1-11 Grace and Law

1But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

Jesus began his teaching early in the morning in the temple courts. But his teaching was interrupted by the scribes and the Pharisees who pushed a woman into the midst of the crowd. This was a trap they set, hoping to get enough evidence to arrest Jesus and get Him out of the way. What could they accuse him for?

Moses' Law clearly stipulated that, *"If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, 24you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death"* (Deut 22:23-24)

This is certainly an unusual situation. Most bible scholars believed that the immorality of Rome had spread through the provinces of the empire. Just as in our society today, pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex or affair, homosexuality were common sins at that time. This particular law of Moses against chastity had practically been reduced to a dead letter. The Sanhedrin had not enforced it. If Jesus said, "Yes, the woman must be stoned", he would have pronounced a severe law against common forms of sin, and this would undermine the popular support He had gained. In addition, they would accuse him before the Roman authorities; for, according to the Roman criminal law, adultery was not punishable by death. But if He said, "No, this woman should not be stoned", he would have gone against Moses. They could prosecute him before the Sanhedrin as an opposer of the law.

The Lord Jesus was fully aware of their insidious intent. His response was:

"But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger." (8:6)

We are not to speculate what Jesus wrote. Obviously, his answer was not on the words on the ground but on his action. It signified intentional disregard.

But they would not let him go, *"they kept on questioning him."* (8:7) So he said to them, *"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."*

Under Moses' law, the first to throw a stone carries the responsibility of convicting the accuse. He is to be the eye-witness of the crime (Deut 17:7 *the hands of the witnesses must be the first to putting that person to death, and then the hands of all the people*).

Our Lord was not saying that only a sinless person can be the judge of a crime. If this were so, there would be no court or disciplinary office in school, for everyone is a sinner. It was their brutal act of exposing the woman's transgression in public for the sake of trapping Jesus that was abhorrent. Sinners are not to lift up the sword of judgment unless entrusted with the authority. Lynching is not an act of justice. It is a sin.

8 *Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.* Jesus did not look at them with indignance. He let their conscience do the work.

Life application

Our righteous Father understands the weakness of His children and He was gracious and forbearance towards our transgressions. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and blot out our transgressions with the blood of His Son. Therefore, we ought to treat transgressors with empathy and mercy, not with anger nor hatred, and always give the repentant a second chance, as we have treated by our heavenly Father.

Jesus' words woke the conscience of the spectators: I am also a sinner. In the end, *"those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there"*. Even the Pharisees who came to trap Jesus walked away, perhaps they feared Jesus might expose their own transgressions.

10 *Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"* 11 *"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

The woman did not take the opportunity to leave because her conscience was also rebuking her. Jesus did not condemn her because he came not to judge but to save sinners in his first advent. He came to be our friend, our teacher and our Saviour. Jesus gave her a piece of advice, whatever they might deal with her transgressions, *"leave your life of sin"*

This is an ugly sight of fallen humanity. The religious people encircled Jesus and the woman as jackals encircle their prey to fill their own hunger for power. They are even more detestable than the coarse sin they proposed to punish. No wonder our Lord was silent.

This reveals two things for us. First, each man carries an amount of guilt that he is not distinctly conscious of, but a little shake awakens. Dear brothers and sisters, the preachers may rebuke loudly or remind gently; if the Lord uses the sermon, the Holy Spirit will pierce our hearts and convict us with our sins. Do not attempt to bury the piercing or silence the Spirit. Face it with honesty and humility as the woman did, and you will hear the Lord say to you, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more".

Secondly, the best way to reform society is to reform ourselves. By men learning to see their own share of guilt in all misery and vice, society will gradually be leavened.

Life application

O Lord, speak to me every time I sit in the pew of the sanctuary. Pierce my heart and help me recall my iniquities. I long to reform myself so that I may become a better and happier person each day.

B. 8:12-20 Light and Darkness

12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus was teaching in the Court of the Women where thirteen trumpet-shaped treasury boxes were placed. (8:20) (ref to the picture attached). It was here that Jesus watched the poor widow offer her only two very small copper coins into the box. (Mark 12:41-44) Here Jesus made his second self-declaration, I am the light of the world. People could relate to this proclamation because during the Feast of Tabernacles the temple precincts were brightly illuminated.

Ever since the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years under the pillar of the cloud and fire, they have been seeing Yahweh as their light. For example, in Ps 27:1, *"The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"* In the light of his presence, they enjoy grace and peace (Num 6:24-26); The law of God is also described as a light to guide the path of the obedient (Ps 119:105). The Servant of the LORD is appointed as a light to the nations, that God's salvation may extend to the end of the earth (Isa 49:6):

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned." (Isa 9:2)

Light and darkness cannot co-exist. Darkness is a symbol of sin, evil, despair, ignorance...etc. Light is a symbol of holiness, purity, hope and wisdom. God's children are children of light; they follow Jesus and, hence, walk in the light instead of darkness. Those who refuse to walk in the light have chosen darkness as their lifestyle.

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

To the Jews, that is a proclamation of the Messiah! To follow Jesus means to believe and put our trust in him, and then we will obtain life and light! This is an important calling because mankind is dead in transgressions and living in darkness! Yet it was interrupted by the Pharisees once again! From vv. 13 to 19, we see that the Pharisees were not interested in the saving power of Jesus' claim. All they cared about was to deny Jesus' right to make the claim.

Jesus reminded us that his claim is valid because His Father bears witness to His claim. Is that not true? The Angels' proclamation at Jesus' birth, the pronouncement at the Jordan river after Jesus' baptism and the miracles that Jesus performed were all testimonies of the Father for him.

When they repeated the question, "*where is your Father*" (8:19), Jesus did not answer them directly, "*You do not know me or my Father,*" Jesus replied. "*If you knew me, you would know my Father also.*" (8:20) Because he knew that even if he told them the truth, they would not believe. For they judge people by the way of fallen humanity and would never be able to see that He is God's anointed One. Moreover, Jesus knew that they would arrest him with the charge of blasphemy, but it is not time for his arrest. Our Lord speaks and acts according to his Father's plan, disregarding his own needs and feelings. This is denying oneself.

Life application

Truth needs to be spoken at the right time. But this does not mean that we can lie or follow the mass. May God grant us wisdom to discern and to speak the right words at the right time in an environment that is hostile to Christ.

C. 8: 21-30 Life and Death

21 Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come." 22 This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come'?" 23 But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins."

In this passage of teaching, the Lord warned them repeatedly that **following Him is a matter of life and death**. He revealed that,

1. He is to be on earth in a visible form for a limited period only, for he does not belong to this lower realm. He belongs to the realm above and is going back there once he is glorified.
2. Everyone who does not believe in Him will die in their sins. This death is not the death of the body but the death of body and soul forever.

This is the second time Jesus mentioned that he was going to a place where they could not go (7:33-34). The first time they thought he was going on a missionary trip to the lands of the Dispersion. Now they mocked him by saying that he was going to commit suicide!

In verses 24 and 28, "*I am he*" is the name of Yahweh, "*I am who I am*" when he revealed himself to Moses for the first time in the burning bushes.

25 “Who are you?” they asked. “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied. 26 “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

Jesus’s teachings and miraculous work have proven He is the Son of God. Yet they repeatedly denied him. The Lord said in verse 26, “I know your heart. I have much evidence when I judge you. But not now. My job now is to tell the world what my Father sent me to tell.”

Yet they did not understand what Jesus was saying about his Father. The ears of their heart have been blocked by their prejudice against Jesus, and as a result, they do not hear the clear words, *“I am from above”, “my Father sent me”, and “I am he”*.

Life application

If I am among the people on that day, would I be like the Pharisee, not able to understand Jesus’ proclamation? In fact, our pride, obstinance, and prejudice often block the ears of our soul, and we are not able to hear the facts and the truth. Lord, help us!

Then, Jesus made three proclamations.

Firstly, he foretold his death, *“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he”* (8:28). Here, Jesus was referring to his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. The cross is a humiliation in the eyes of the world, but it is an exaltation and glorification of the Son of God, for the power of death and sin was completely crushed on the cross! The cross is the victory of God! Jesus’ resurrection and ascension are God’s vindication for His Son.

Secondly, his death is the will of the Father, *“then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.”* The salvation of the cross is not the work of Christ alone but the will, the plan and the work of the Father, Son and Spirit. Here we see the oneness of the Triune God.

Thirdly, the Father is always with Jesus, *“29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”* Jesus is confident of the Father’s ever-presence, that is, he always does what pleases the Father. Jesus is saying that obedience to the Father and the presence of the Father are like twin brothers; they are always together.

P1 Obedience to God guarantees God’s delight and presence

Dear brothers and sisters, you may face greater problems when you act according to the Father’s will; but you need not worry because you can be sure that God will be there for you. When God is with us, no problem is too big for us as the writer of Hebrews said,

“So we say with confidence, the Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” (Heb 13:6)

Following Jesus is not about becoming a good and bad person, or living in poverty or wealth, or having an easy life or hard life. Following Jesus is about life and death eternally! If we live in sin we will die in sin. There is only one way to get rid of death: trust Jesus. So, we either receive God’s salvation

through Jesus and walk in the light towards eternity, or we are condemned by God's law and walk in darkness towards eternal death! Every man has to make a choice some time in life.

D. Closing

“³⁰ Even as he spoke, many believed in him.”

Praise be to God that even the religious men were blind and deaf spiritually, many have believed in Jesus after hearing His teaching because the Spirit convicts men. Today this is still happening. Many self-righteous men or religious men rejected Christ. But those poor in spirit receive salvation. Dear brothers and sisters, let us not be disheartened when we evangelise. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will work alongside us and call the lost souls back home one by one according to His predestined time. As for us, let us work diligently as a testimony of the Gospel, and hopefully, we will have a share in the salvation of those around us!



