

John 8:12-20

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[0 : 00] If I decide it's true, then it must be true. Now, I want to say, there is some strength found here, and that is that postmoderns don't wholeheartedly accept everything that's thrown their direction.

Postmodern thinkers, even if they see the experts say or the data shows, are still going to tend to go, yeah, but is that accurate? Like, show me the methodology at which we arrived at this given truth.

So there is a strength to be found there, and whether or not you want to accept it, most of you, myself included, are postmodern thinkers.

It's the way we tend to gather information and arrive at conclusions. Now, just as a little side note, there also is, people are talking now about the post-postmodern era, I told you everything revolves around modernism.

Post-postmodern, I can't think of a possible strength to it, but time will tell. Post-postmoderns tend to think that no truth can possibly be arrived at.

[1 : 13] The internet and the way the internet functions feeds this type of thinking. Now, here is the case that I am seeking to make to you.

Why? Spend any time thinking about this at all. If we are to know the things that matter most, all of these methods fail us.

They all have a weakness. But what must we ultimately know? Now, if you were to compress, compress all classical apologetics, take all of the questions that classical apologetics ask, and compress them down, you could ask four questions.

First, origin. Where do we come from? How did we get here? Second, meaning. Why are we here? What is the purpose for our existence? Third, morality. How are we to know right and wrong, right from wrong?

[2 : 19] And fourth, destiny. Where are we going? What happens after this life? Origin, meaning, morality, destiny.

Four questions that need answers. In order to rightly answer any of these questions, here's what I'm saying, any of these ways of thinking, any of these epistemologies are going to fail us.

What we need is revelation. What we need is revelation. Now, don't hear me arguing against classical apologetics. I'm a big fan.

But, at the end of the day, we need spirit-discerned understanding of the Bible. We need the spirit to work in us to confirm that it is, in fact, God's Word, and that everything that it says is true.

It's inerrant in that it doesn't err, and it's infallible in that it can't err, because it is God's Word. If you know the answers to any of my aforementioned questions, I hope that you did.

[3 : 33] I hope that your mind started accessing information to those questions. Praise God that you do. We have no reason to boast.

God has taught us any meaningful, right answers to those questions. If you do not, pray that God would open the eyes of your heart to discern your origin, your worth, God's good commands, and your final destiny.

I said that we live in a day of post-modernism. It's the water that we swim in, and too sadly we've seen lots of what's called deconstruction in the church.

To be clear, the people who deconstruct their faith never really believed in Jesus to begin with. But this problem is partly a problem of their mind.

They see something that they don't like about Christianity. Whether fair or not, there are some fair objections to the Christianity that we can observe, and they begin to walk it back and to unravel it, peace by peace by peace.

[4 : 52] Pray for spiritual discernment. Pray for spiritual discernment this morning, that we might rightly behold the Jesus of the Bible. So let's pray together to that end.

Father God, we humbly recognize, that as I have laid out the way in which people have thought, that the curse of this world has also affected our thinking faculty.

None of us think as clearly as we think we do, or ought to. But we also recognize that we need the revelation of your Spirit to help us understand the words of the Scripture, to believe that they're true, and to respond accordingly to them.

We want this morning to rightly understand your Word. We humbly recognize it was written, ultimately, for your glory, and also for our good.

And so pray that you would help us to this end. Amen. John 8, beginning in verse 12. Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world.

[6 : 04] Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. So the Pharisee said to him, You are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true.

Jesus answered, Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.

In your law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.

They said to him, Therefore, Where is your Father? Jesus answered, You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.

[7 : 06] These words he spoke in the treasury as he taught in the temple, but no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come. Now let's first take a look at the setting of this passage.

I made the case some weeks ago that I do not believe, and I am in good company in believing so, that chapter 7, verse 53, through chapter 8, verse 11, belong in the text as these verses are not in the early and most reliable manuscripts.

I think they should be footnoted. I said when we talked about it, you are welcome to disagree with me, but I told you why we would not preach that text. I only preach the Bible.

So, that purpose, but also because the literary structure of John's gospel trends me off in this direction. So, note with me just for a moment what is happening.

Early in chapter 7, Jesus has traveled to Jerusalem and taught in the temple, causing a stir amongst the people. So, notice in John 7, and verse 30, So, they, this is the Jews, John refers to, were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.

[8 : 31] We see this repeated as the fervency of this conflict over who Jesus is rises. There's these attempts to arrest him, but his hour had not yet come.

If you doubt at any moment that God governs over the affairs of man, doubt it no more. Read through John and see how often there's a divine timeline taking place in the text.

And you can read a little bit further down in verse 32, The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

And it's in this setting, they're seeking him, we read in verse 37, On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

And so a division arises amongst the people over him, verse 43. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

[9 : 42] And we know contextually why, because his hour had not yet come. But in verse 45, those officers that were sent back in verse 32 come to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, Why did you not bring him?

And their response is, Because no one speaks like this man. They're not sure what to do with him. Now remember, I'm making the case that the internal evidence, the context of what's going on, I think places Jesus still in this setting.

This report has gone to the chief priests and to the Pharisees. And then we pick up verse 20, These words, He spoke in the treasury as he taught in the temple.

But no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come. Verse 12, Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, Now we do not get any indication of how much time has passed from this last day of the feast Jesus cries out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

And then verse 12 where he makes this other statement. But I think that we are meant to read it tightly connected to all that has happened previously.

[11:07] And so, I want to spend a little bit of time reminding you how culturally charged this week was. I don't think that we need to hear Jesus saying, I am the light of the world far removed from this week, the week of the Feast of Booths.

So briefly, this is what I shared with you previously about the feast. The Feast of Booths was one of three great pilgrimage feasts of Israel. Every Jewish male was expected to go up to Jerusalem. It occurred in the fall after the harvest and it lasted seven days followed by a solemn eighth day. During his feast, the people of Israel lived in temporary shelters or booths, some of your Bibles may say tabernacles, made of branches.

They did this to remember how their fathers had lived in tents during the wilderness wanderings after the Exodus. But this feast was more than just a history lesson. It was a celebration of God's provision, God's presence, and God's promises.

It looked backward to the wilderness where God provided food from heaven and water from the rock. It looked upward in thanksgiving for the harvest God had just given, this present provision.

[12:26] And it looked forward in hope to the day when God would again dwell with his people in glory. It was a week just packed full of meaning.

The Old Testament gives few instructions for what this feast must look like, but they had developed some tradition that had rich ceremonial meaning.

Two rituals in particular dominated the celebration. First, there was the water ceremony. Each of the first six days, a priest would draw water from the pool of Siloam and lead a procession back to the temple.

As they approached the water gate on the south side of the inner court, a shofar would be blown three times as a pronouncement of joy, and the people would recite Isaiah 12, verse 3.

With joy, you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Significant text. While the people watched, the priest would march around the altar while the singing of the Hallel was led by the temple choir.

[13:30] And this is Psalm 113 through 118. And back when we were in that text, I read the entirety of that to you. It was quite an ordeal that they went through.

At the conclusion of the singing, the people would all cry out three times, give thanks to the Lord, and the water was poured onto the altar. This ceremony commemorated the water God provided in the wilderness and expressed hope for the coming messianic age when God would pour out his spirit.

Second, there was an illumination ceremony. Massive lamps were lit in the temple courts, casting light over the city, and people would dance in the temple.

This recalled the pillar of fire that guided Israel through the wilderness and symbolized the hope that God's glory would again shine upon his people. So the Feast of Booths was a celebration of light, life, provision, and divine presence.

And it's into this setting, charged with expectation, saturated with symbolism, overflowing with religious meaning, that Jesus steps.

[14:49] Jesus. What makes all of this so striking is that Jesus does not merely attend the feast, as his brothers requested of him at the beginning of the chapter, but he interprets the feast.

He says, this is what all of this really means. He takes the central symbols of Israel's hope and claims to be their fulfillment.

He says, I, I am actually the hope that this is all about. So, with all of that, for our text, I've got a three-point outline for you.

Number one, Jesus is the light. We see this in verse 12, and we will spend most of our time here, so if you're a clock watcher, don't fret.

First point will take up the majority of our time. Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world.

[15:55] Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Can you just imagine him saying that with everything that would have happened in the preceding week?

Once again, I don't think we're very far away from that. So, these people have been thinking about light in a very particular way, thinking about God's presence, the hope that will come, and then Jesus says this.

This is the first time that Jesus has used the light metaphor to speak of himself in John's gospel. This is the second of Jesus' seven I am statements in John.

He has declared, I am the bread of life in chapter six, and here he says, I am the light of the world. Now, I want to read to you something brief from D.A.

Carson's commentary on this. If you like to study things deeply, I would really recommend this particular commentary to you. He says this, the light metaphor is steeped in Old Testament allusions.

[17:11] I'm reading this to you because their minds would have been very alive as he says this. The glory of the very presence of God in the cloud led the people in the promised land, Exodus 13, and protected them from those who would destroy them, Exodus 14.

The Israelites were trained to sing, The Lord is my light and my salvation, Psalm 27, verse 1. The word of God, the law of God, is a light to guide the path of those who cherish instruction, Psalm 119, Proverbs 6, 23.

God's light is shed abroad in Revelation, Ezekiel 1, verse 4, verse 13, and verse 26 through 28, and salvation, Habakkuk 3, verse 3 through 4.

Light is Yahweh in action, Psalm 44, verse 3. Isaiah tells us that the servant of the Lord was appointed as a light to the Gentiles, that he might bring God's salvation to the ends of all the earth, Isaiah 49, verse 6.

The coming eschatological age would be a time when the Lord himself would be the light for his people. Isaiah chapter 60, Revelation chapter 21. Perhaps Zechariah 14 is especially significant with its promise of continual light on the last day, followed by the promise of living waters flowing from Jerusalem.

[18:45] This passage probably forming part of the liturgical readings of this feast. Christ. The great burning lights of the feast of tabernacles resonate with such strains.

It's into that that Jesus says this. But this is not the first time that we have heard this metaphor in John's writings.

Turn back to John chapter 1. John begins this work. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. light. Our minds ought to be full as we hear Jesus say that he is the light of the world.

[19:57] The word light appears 24 times in John's gospel. Light by its nature causes darkness to scatter. Darkness cannot be quantifiably measured.

It is merely the absence of light. Now, we tend to take light for granted, but if you lived in a time when the only source of light was from a flame, and it was dangerous to not have light at night, this is when children were snatched out of tents by wild animals.

This is when the marauders came at night. We have a property north of Dahlonga, and it is really, really dark out there at night.

And these days, I've got a flashlight in my back pocket all of the time. But I can remember earlier days when my parents owned the property, being out there and having to get from the driveway to the top of our driveway where I typically park, and I had to do it by shuffling my feet on the gravel, and if my feet stopped making gravel sounds, I knew I was off into the woods, and I had to go back to the gravel and shuffle my feet and just stumble toward my vehicle until I ran into it.

It would be that dark. And I must admit, there were times that things snapped in the woods, and I got a little scared and moved a little quicker up that dark, dark driveway.

[21:25] It would have likely been more felt than it maybe is felt for us. Where there is light, there is not darkness.

The two are opposites, and one has expulsive power over the other. Now, if we back up in a bit from our text, but go forward from John 1 to chapter 3, we can see this idea at work in the negative. John 3 in verse 20. For everyone who does wicked things, hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

Wickedness is associated with darkness in this text. A darkness that does not want the exposure of light. Wickedness produces shame, and it produces death.

It is the opposite, the antithesis of the light of life. Let's push the metaphor just a bit further and a bit clearer.

[22 : 37] Note especially who the light is. It's in our text that Jesus says he is the light of the world.

Then go forward to John chapter 11, verse 9 and following. Jesus said, are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him. I suggest to you that the stumbling that Jesus here refers to is not a slight trip, but a stumble that causes one to fall headlong and not rise again.

Back to John chapter 1, verse 9 and following. John there writes, the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

[24 : 00] John at the outset sets forth the problem of humanity. Jesus Christ came into the world, he is the light, and yet he will be rejected by some and received by others.

I'm positive to you that we see this pattern exist all throughout John. Those who receive and those who reject. One to eternal damnation, one to eternal glory.

He sets it out as a dichotomous problem, as one or the other. No shade in between. We have light and we have darkness.

So Jesus asks people to come to him, and he gives us the ability to come to him. He births in us, born not of blood, or will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God.

He makes these things spiritually discernible to us that we would receive Jesus as he presents himself here in John's gospel. He says in verse 12, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

[25 : 21] And this is what Jesus' words are pressing us to, as original hearers hear, and us today, that we would follow him, that we would walk in his ways, that we might not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

Spurgeon once said this, this is in your bulletin if you care to follow along, as a preacher, Jesus was luminous. He expounded the spirituality of the law, light penetrated the precept through and through as he made the very essence of purity apparent.

His light cleared the law of the mist and fogs that the rabbinical writers had gathered around it. He shed light, too, upon the covenant of grace. He promulgated the gospel of peace among the sons of men.

He told of God the Father willing to receive his prodigal children back into his bosom. His parables threw wondrous light upon the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven.

His counsels and his cautions brought the final destinies of the righteous and the wicked into full view. Jesus says, I am the light of the world.

[26 : 47] Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Secondly, we see, and briefly, Jesus is the trustworthy witness.

We see this in verses 13 and 14 as well as verses 18 and 19. If you are new to our study of John, the reason we're seeing this point split apart like this is because the text is a chiasm.

It sure is. We won't spend a lot of time on that today. But you know, verse 13 and 14, so the Pharisees said to him, you are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true.

This is their response to him saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. The place that he's doing this would have been one of the outer parts of the country and they could likely overhear him.

The council that's meeting and gathering can overhear him make this claim. And their response has nothing to do with what he's saying except that he has said, I am claiming equality with God.

[28 : 05] They say, you are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true. And Jesus answers them, even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

The first reason that Jesus is the trustworthy witness, this may be unsatisfying to some of you who may not yet believe in Christ, but yet it's here.

The reason is he is God. He's a trustworthy witness because he is God. He originated in heaven and he was going to heaven.

Fully aware of who he is. He can bear witness to himself. He says this, I am the one, verse 18, who bears witness about myself and the father who sent me bears witness about me.

This is in response to what they were asking of him, right? You can't just say this about yourself.

You need at least two people to say this about yourself. Jesus affirms this in verse 17.

[29 : 21] So I do bear witness about myself, but also the father who sent me bears witness about me. This is the second reason. God the father is the second witness.

God the to God the man to God the man to make a convincing argument.

I want to twist somebody's arm up behind their back and say accept Jesus as the Christ. But here is Jesus' answer and it's where my mind goes epistemological.

How do we arrive at the truths that we know we must spiritually discern them. The evidence is all here but we need help to see it and faith to grab hold of it in a saving way.

His father is the second witness. Last week Zachary preached from Matthew chapter 3 concerning Jesus' baptism.

[30 : 28] If you missed it I really encourage you to give it a listen. I think you'll really appreciate it. You did a great job with that text. He spoke well of God the father's confirmation that Jesus is the Christ.

We see in that text the spirit of God descends like a dove rests on Jesus and then from heaven the father says this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

We find that similarly in John although not the details of it. There we see John the Baptist in verse 32 of chapter 1 bearing witness I saw the spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained on him.

So Jesus makes this claim the father who sent me bears witness about me and you may find some sympathy here with the Pharisees he! can say anything he wants to about himself but this had happened the spirit had descended God had spoken from heaven about Jesus and this was known this was traveling around in the day they were aware of this event that had happened Jesus is trustworthy witness to who he is and he should be trusted notice lastly that Jesus is the righteous judge verses 15 through 17 he says you judge according to the flesh I judge no one yet even if I do judge my judgment is true for it is not I alone who judge but I and the father who sent me now you may find some trouble with this on first glance in fact

I hope you do I hope you're thinking I hope you're engaged enough to go wait a second he just said he judges nowhere but yet even if he does judge he has a true judgment here's what's happening he says to them you judge according to the flesh you're looking at the outward appearance you're not spiritually discerning who I am and I have no part in that kind of judgment it's what's being communicated in verse 15 it's that sort of judgment the judgment that is according to the flesh that he does not do but if he does show you why yet even if I do judge my judgment is true because he is God for it is not I alone who judge but I and the father who sent me so his judgment is a spiritual judgment spiritually discerning judgment he and the father who sent him we know that

[33 : 29] Jesus was sent to judge John chapter 5 verse 27 and he has given him authority to execute judgment because he is the son of man God the father given to the son authority to execute judgment and then John 9 in verse 39 Jesus says for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind on the basis of faith that he is the Christ Jesus is the light of the world would you follow him that you may have the light of life he is a trustworthy witness to who he says he is and he is the righteous judge he will return one day and he will judge rightly based on faith in him if you have yet to spiritually discerned this pray that you would ask for

God's favor on you that he would help you come alive and see the Jesus of the scripture to know him to come to him for the salvation of your soul if you have already praise God this was not our own doing it's not our wills that got us there but we were born of him let's pray together