

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Jesus: The Light of the World John 8:13-19 Part 2**

For all of us living in the world today, we have the privilege of witnessing some amazing things. I have been particularly impressed with the advent of the computer and the Internet.

I was born at the end of World War II while my father was still fighting in the South Pacific. If my mother would have wanted to communicate with him and share with him information concerning events surrounding my birth, it would have taken weeks perhaps months to get him that information.

This certainly is no longer true. Those serving in the armed forces today almost have immediate access to information from their families. My son-in-law is a helicopter pilot in the army and is stationed 40 miles north of Baghdad. This last week I took some pictures of his family, attached it to an email, and sent it. He was able to view those pictures on the very same day. This is amazing stuff! But this and other things like this cannot be compared to the work that God does when He brings people, such as us, to Christ for salvation.

This miracle of God's grace can only be fully appreciated if we understand the biblical doctrine of "total depravity." What is this doctrine? Let me read for you the definition that I found in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. This is what it says. "The term total depravity describes the extreme wretchedness of man's condition as the result of the fall. It emphasizes the belief that the result of the fall was not a mere loss or deprivation of a supernatural endowment possessed by unfallen man, but a radical corruption or deprivation of his whole nature, so that apart from Christ he can do nothing whatever pleasing to God. Even his reason has been radically vitiated (or corrupted), so that according to Calvinism, all natural knowledge of God is held to be impossible."

Has fallen man in his state of extreme wretchedness, as defined by the doctrine of total depravity, truly lost his ability to discern spiritual truth in matters pertaining to God? And the answer is absolutely, and this reality, I believe, will come alive for us today as we return to the Gospel of John and our study of **John 8:12-59**. John 8:12-59 is a continuing record of the events associated with the last day of the Feast of Booths.

How does this passage begin? The passage begins with a claim by Christ that He is the light of the world (John 8:12). Let me read this verse for you. "**Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.'**"

What an amazing claim. It is a claim that we considered at great lengths last week. It is a claim that can totally transform our lives both now and forever. But in order for this claim to make sense, based on the doctrine of total depravity, we need God's help.

This need that mankind has for God's help is clearly demonstrated by the initial response of the Pharisees to Christ's claim. And it is the Pharisee's initial response to the claim of Christ that we

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will consider this weekend.

The initial response of the Pharisees to the claim of Christ consists of *two* short but hard-hitting statements (John 8:13-20).

What is my hope for this message this morning? My hope is that we might truly be caught up in the wonder of our salvation, knowing that apart from God's intervention, our response to Christ's claim could not only have been but would have been very much like these Pharisees that we will consider this weekend. So, what was their initial statement?

The first statement of the Pharisees in response to Christ's claim was "Your witness is not *true*" (John 8:13-18). Let me read for you **John 8:13. "The Pharisees therefore said to Him, 'You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.'**" Should this response surprise us? Of course not! According to the doctrine of total depravity, the fall of man resulted in the whole of the human race being rendered totally incapable of pleasing God in any way, and very much a part of this phenomenon was the total corruption of their ability to spiritually reason, which we see here in the initial response of the Pharisees to Christ's claim.

Did the Pharisee's dismiss the claim of Christ? Absolutely! And what was their reason for doing this? What was their stated reason for not taking His claim seriously? The Pharisees, in declaring that His witness was not true because He was bearing witness of Himself, were challenging the *legal* competency of His testimony.

What was their point? Their point apparently was this: The Law of Moses required, in a legal proceeding, that there would be more than one witness testifying to the truthfulness of what was being alleged if the testimony was to be received as *true*.

We see this teaching in **Deuteronomy 17:6 and Deuteronomy 19:15**. It, obviously, was meant to protect innocent individuals. This particular provision, sanctioned under the Law, apparently became for the Jews a principle that could either be used or abused in respect to other matters outside the court. Unfortunately, in the case before us here this weekend, we see the Pharisees in **John 8:13** choosing to abuse this principle. Why?

The Pharisees, choosing to believe that Christ was bearing witness to Himself, *mishandled* Deuteronomy 17:6 and Deuteronomy 19:15 in order to reject Christ's claim. What did they say? **"You are bearing witness of yourself; Your witness is not true."**

In what sense did they mishandle these verses? They mishandled these verses by trying to make these verses say what these verses did not say. The verses taught that when you had multiple witnesses saying the same thing, the testimony of those witnesses should be considered true. This is clearly what it taught. But just because the testimony of multiple witnesses saying the same thing should be considered true does not mean that we should therefore conclude the testimony of a single witness is necessarily false.

Do you understand what I am saying? Hopefully you do, but it is quite clear that the Pharisees did not. Why?

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Their hearts were hard, and their reasoning had been corrupted by the fall. They were totally unable to discern spiritual truth. They were spiritually blind and didn't even know it. What a pathetic condition. Sure they, from the standpoint of the Jewish multitude, might have an attractive appearance but at the core of their being they were spiritually dead, unable to please God and certainly were not in any position to exercise spiritual discernment. Therefore, it should not be surprising to us at all that when Christ told them that He was the light of the world that they would respond, "**Your witness is not true.**"

In mishandling these verses and declaring that the witness of Christ was not true, the Pharisees, in essence, attacked Christ's *credibility* as a witness. They were in effect saying, "Jesus, you are a liar. You are bearing false witness." How will Christ respond to this attack on His credibility?

Let us begin by looking at the very first part of **John 8:14**. What does it say? "**Jesus answered and said to them, 'Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true.'**" Jesus, as the light of the world, could have appealed to His divinity or to His personal holiness as a guarantee of His credibility, but He doesn't. He simply declares His testimony to be true for the simple reason that His testimony states the true facts regarding Himself.

Let us continue to **John 8:14**. "**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.'**" What is Christ's point? He is telling the Pharisees that He declaring Himself to be the light of the world is not something that He only thinks or imagines.

Christ, in responding to the Pharisees attack on His credibility, informed them that He, like any other credible witness, knew the truthfulness of what He had declared firsthand (John 8:14). He knew these things firsthand because He knew where He was from and He knew where He was going. And where was He from and where was He going? We already know the answer to this question and so should the Pharisees based on **John 7:14-36**.

Hopefully you remember **John 7:14-36**, which recorded for us events associated with the middle of the Feast. In the record of these events we found Christ answering three different questions in the hearing of the Pharisees. I would think those Pharisees are the very same Pharisees that He is now talking with here in **John 8** on the last day of the feast.

Do you remember those three questions? The first question in **John 7:14-24** was "Where did Jesus go to school?" What was the answer to that question? Jesus went to school in heaven. The second question in **John 7:25-32** was "Where did Jesus come from?" What was the answer to that question? Jesus came from heaven. And the third question in **John 7:33-36** was "Where is Jesus going?" What was the answer to this question? Jesus is going to heaven.

Is Jesus a credible witness? Absolutely! He is a credible witness because He had come from heaven and was going to heaven. He is therefore in a perfect position to testify to the fact that He is the light of the world. Obviously, the same thing could not be said about the Pharisees. They were totally ignorant about what they had testified.

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Let us continue to read **John 8:14**. "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, or where I am going.'"

Christ's statement about the ignorance of the Pharisees was not designed to bolster His credibility but rather to undermine the credibility of the Pharisee's ability to render *informed* judgment. How do we know this? All we have to do is to begin to read the next verse. Let me read for you **John 8:15**. "You people judge according to the flesh." What does Christ mean by these words?

The Pharisees' knowledge of Christ is limited to "His flesh," His *human* appearance. Their ignorance, therefore, rendered them incapable of making sound judgments in respect to Christ.

The problem with these Pharisees was that they were making a judgment on profound spiritual realities, such as whether or not Jesus was the light of the world, on the basis of their five senses. They were, in effect, saying, "When we look at Jesus, we see a man who is about 5' 11" tall, weighs about 170 lbs, who is not particularly attractive and is poor." This was not only all that they saw; it was all that they could have seen without supernatural intervention. Therefore, they did not understand Jesus' heavenly origin and destination and were therefore unable to judge Him.

Fortunately, this ignorance does not characterize Christ. Let us continue to read the verse. "**You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone.**" What does He mean by this? Does He mean that He is only concerned about preaching a message of salvation rather than passing judgment on people like the Pharisees are doing? This is highly unlikely in light of the fact that Jesus, throughout His life, continually passed judgment on the Pharisees. If He did not mean that He did not, in an absolute sense, practice judgment, what did He in fact mean?

When Jesus says that I am not judging anyone, He meant that He did not judge anyone the way His opponents did. In other words, He would not make the mistakes that His opponents did when it came to the matter of judging.

Let us go on and begin to read the first part of **John 8:16**. "**But even if I do judge, My judgment is true.**" When Jesus exercises judgment, He does not judge superficially according to the flesh. He knows everything that there is to be known, and therefore, all of His judgments are true. But how can Jesus be so sure that He knows everything that there is to be known about something or someone when He is passing judgment?

Let us continue to read **John 8:16**. "**But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me.**" In John 8:16, Jesus went from defending Himself as a credible witness to promoting Himself as a credible *judge* by virtue of the fact that He was not alone in His judgments. When Jesus passes judgment, whether in the course of His earthly life or in respect to the judgments that are yet to come, those judgments are a perfect reflection of the very judgments of God since Christ does nothing that He does not see His Father doing first, according to **John 5:30**.

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This comment by Jesus, concerning His credibility as a judge, was only incidental to the flow of this passage and was only elicited because the Pharisees, in mishandling the teaching of **Deuteronomy 17:6 and Deuteronomy 19:15**, had judged Jesus unfairly and incorrectly. Therefore, after briefly contrasting His genuine judging with the spurious judging of the Pharisees, Jesus *reverted* to the main issue in John 8:17-18. And what was that main issue?

The main issue, raised by the Pharisees in John 8:13 that He now reverts to in John 8:17-18, was the legal competency of His testimony regarding Himself. The law required in a legal proceeding, as I shared with you earlier, more than one witness saying the same thing in order for the testimony to be considered true.

Let me read for you **John 8:17. "Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true."** Jesus, in this statement, refers to the very same legal requirement that the Pharisees had earlier unfairly used to condemn His testimony as untrue. But in contrast to the Pharisees, He applied the truth contained in the Law correctly and, in doing so, confirmed His testimony about Himself as true. So who is this second witness that Christ adds to His own credible testimony?

Let us now read for you **John 8:18. "I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."** How had the Father bore witness to the claims of Christ?

The Father bore witness to Christ through the miracles He had given His Son to perform according to **John 5:36** and also through the Scriptures which testified of Jesus according to **John 5:39**.

Based on the credible testimony of two witnesses, the Father and the Son's (Christ's) testimony, that He was the light of the world, was true. So what is the problem? Why weren't the Pharisees able to see this spiritual truth?

The problem is not evidence. The problem is that man, being so totally corrupted by the fall, lacks the capacity to exercise spiritual discernment in things pertaining to God unless God supernaturally intervenes. And in the case of these Pharisees, this has not happened. We once again see the reality of this as the Pharisees once again choose to respond by delivering another very hard-hitting statement. What is this second statement? Let us read the first part of **John 8:19. "And so they were saying to Him, 'Where is Your Father?'"**

The second statement of the Pharisees, in response to Christ's claim, was "*Where is your Father?*" (John 8:19)

Things have gone from bad to worse. Earlier, when they had rejected Christ's claim that He was the light of the world, they at least tried to appear reasonable by appealing to the biblical principle of multiple witnesses. But here they are not even close to being reasonable.

They want Jesus to produce His Father, the one who is bearing witness of Him, so that they might interrogate Him. And who had Christ been declaring His Father to be? Christ had been declaring that His Father was God. They were therefore in effect asking Jesus to produce God so that they might interrogate Him. Are they being reasonable? They are being absurd and are treating Christ with total disdain.

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These Pharisees are blind to the truth concerning Christ, because they were spiritually dead and were totally incapable of seeing spiritual truth.

How will Jesus respond to this request? Let us continue to read. **"And so they were saying to Him, 'Where is Your Father?' Jesus answered, 'You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.'"**

### CONCLUSION

When we are born into this world, we are born into this world spiritually dead and totally unable to discern spiritual truth. Hopefully, this has come alive for us this morning, as we have considered the response of the Pharisees to Christ's declaration that He was the light of the world.

So, how should we respond to our study this morning? First of all, we should stand amazed any time someone comes to faith in Christ knowing that this can only be done through the intervention of God Himself. And secondly, we should feel compassion for those who do not come to faith in Christ knowing "there but by the *grace* of God, go I."