

**John 8:12-30**  
**August 10, 2025**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: What do you think it looks like for someone to “walk in darkness?” [Let people engage]

**Transition:** In today’s text, Jesus makes a bold claim by saying, “I am the light of the world.” This amazing statement should have elicited a positive response, but the Pharisees completely ignore it. Instead, they attack Jesus’ credibility. Rather than interact with Jesus on what he said, they object that he’s testifying regarding himself and that such a self-witness is invalid.

Then they take it a step further. They even go to the question of his paternity. He claims to have God as his father, but they hint that He’s an illegitimate child. Things go downhill from here! As we study today’s text, let’s ponder what it means for us that Jesus is the “light of the world.” Let’s read the Scripture passage.

**BOOK:**

***The Validity of Jesus’ Testimony***

<sup>12</sup> 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.”**

<sup>13</sup> The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.” <sup>14</sup> Jesus answered, **“Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. <sup>15</sup> You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. <sup>16</sup> But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. <sup>17</sup> In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. <sup>18</sup> I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”**

<sup>19</sup> Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

**“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”** <sup>20</sup> He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.

<sup>21</sup> 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.”**

<sup>22</sup> This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come?’”

<sup>23</sup> But he continued, **“You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. <sup>24</sup> I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”**

<sup>25</sup> “Who are you?” they asked. <sup>26</sup> **“I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”**

<sup>27</sup> They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. <sup>28</sup> So Jesus said, **“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and**

**that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”<sup>30</sup> Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.**

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

**LOOK:**

Jesus’s purpose, the reason why He came, was to show us how much God loves us and to save us by an act of supreme self-sacrifice. But in order to be saved, we must put our trust in Jesus. As Jesus says, “Unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. If you haven’t placed your full faith and trust in Jesus, the time is **now**. You don’t know that you have tomorrow, so put your trust in Jesus **today** and follow Him.

**Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today’s Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 320-322). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.***

**Light and Darkness (John 8:12–20)**

This second great I AM statement certainly fits into the context of the first eleven verses of John 8. Perhaps the sun was then appearing (John 8:2) so that Jesus was comparing Himself to the rising sun. But this would mean He was once again claiming to be God, for to the Jew, the sun

was a symbol of Jehovah God (Ps. 84:11; Mal. 4:2). There is, for our universe, only one sun; and it is the center and the source of life. So there is but one God who is the center of all and the source of all life (John 1:4). “God is light” (1 John 1:5); and wherever the light shines, it reveals man’s wickedness (Eph. 5:8–14).

Our Lord’s I AM statement was also related to the Feast of Tabernacles, during which the huge candelabra were lighted in the temple at night to remind the people of the pillar of fire that had guided Israel in their wilderness journey. In fact, John has combined three “wilderness images”: the manna (John 6), the water from the rock (John 7), and the pillar of fire (John 8).

To “follow” the Lord Jesus means to believe on Him, to trust Him; and the results are *life* and *light* for the believer. The unsaved are walking in darkness because they love darkness (John 3:17ff). One of the major messages in this Gospel is that the spiritual light is now shining, but people cannot comprehend it—and they try to put it out (John 1:4–5).

Not all of the Jewish leaders had left the group, and others had no doubt come along after the woman left. As usual, they debated with Jesus. This time, they accused Him of bearing witness to Himself by claiming to be the Light of the world; and Jewish courts would not permit a person to bear witness to himself.

But light *has to* bear witness to itself! The only people who cannot see the light are *blind* people! I recall the first time I flew at night. I was fascinated by the changing textures of colored lights in the cities below me. When our plane left the New York area and headed out into the night, I was amazed that I could see pinpoints of light miles away. Then I understood why it was necessary to have blackouts during the war; for the enemy pilots could see the smallest evidence of light and thus find the target. Light bears witness to itself; it tells you it is there.

Perhaps the Pharisees were quoting our Lord’s own words (see John 5:31ff); but He quickly refuted *their* argument. One of the key words in this section is *witness*; it is used seven times. Jesus made it clear that their witness was not dependable because their judgment was faulty. They judged on the basis of externals, mere human judgment, but He judged on the basis of spiritual knowledge. The way they judged the woman taken in adultery proved that they neither understood the Law nor their own sinful hearts.

Since they wanted to use the Law to condemn the woman and trap the Savior, Jesus also used the Law to answer them. He quoted a principle found in Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15, as well as Numbers 35:30, that the testimony of two men was required to validate a judgment. Jesus had those two testimonies: *He* gave witness and so did *His Father*. We have seen from John 5:37–47 that the witness of the Father is found in the Word of God.

How tragic that these experts in the Law did not even know their own Messiah as He stood before them! They claimed to know the Law of God, but they did not know the God of the Law. They did not have His Word abiding in their hearts (John 5:38), nor did they experience His love (John 5:42). They did not know the Father, and therefore did not know the Son.

Jesus never really answered their question, “Where is Thy Father?” The word *father* is used twenty-one times in this chapter, so Jesus did not avoid the issue but faced it honestly. He knew

that their “father” was not God—but the devil! These men were religious, and yet they were the children of the devil!

Their further attempts to arrest Jesus were again thwarted by the Father, for it was not yet our Lord’s hour when He should give His life. When the servant of God is in the will of God, he can have courage and peace as he does his duty.

### **Life and Death (John 8:21–30)**

Jesus had already mentioned His leaving them (John 7:34), but the Jews had misunderstood what He said. Once again, He warned them: He would leave them, they would not be able to follow Him, and they would die in their sins! They were wasting their God-given opportunities by arguing with Him instead of trusting Him; and one day soon, their opportunities would end. Once again, the people misunderstood His teaching. They thought He was planning to kill Himself! Suicide was an abhorrent thing to a Jew, for the Jews were taught to honor all life. If Jesus committed suicide, then He would go to a place of judgment; and this, they reasoned, was why they could not follow Him.

Actually, just the opposite was true: it was *they* who were going to the place of judgment! Jesus was returning to His Father in heaven, and nobody can go there who has not trusted the Savior. The reason Jesus and the Jewish leaders were going to different destinations was because they had different *origins*: Jesus came from heaven, but they belonged to the earth. Jesus was *in* the world, but He did not belong to the world (see John 17:14–16).

The true believer has his citizenship in heaven (Luke 10:20; Phil. 3:20–21). His affection and attention are fixed heavenward. But the unsaved belong to this world; in fact, Jesus called them “the children of this world” (Luke 16:8). Since they have not trusted Christ and had their sins forgiven, their destiny is to die in their sins. The Christian dies “in the Lord” because he lives “in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13); but the unbeliever dies in his sins because he lives in his sins.

It seems incredible that these religious “experts” should ask, “Who are You?” He had given them every evidence that He is the Son of God, yet they had deliberately rejected the evidence. Our Lord’s reply may be expressed, “I am exactly what I said!” In other words, “Why should I teach you *new* things, or give you *new* proof, when you have not honestly considered the witness I have already given?”

Jesus boldly made several claims to deity (John 8:26). He said He would judge, and judgment (to the Jews) belonged only to God. He claimed to be sent by God, and He claimed to have heard from God the things that He taught. How did the religious leaders respond to these clear affirmations of deity? They did not understand! God reveals His truth to the “babes” and not to the “wise and prudent” (Luke 10:21).

Now Jesus spoke about His own death, when He would be “lifted up” on the cross (John 3:14; 12:32). The word translated “lifted up” has a dual meaning: “lifted up in crucifixion,” and “lifted up in exaltation and glorification.” Jesus often combined the two, for He saw His crucifixion in terms of glory and not just suffering (John 12:23; 13:30–31; 17:1). This same combination of “suffering and glory” is repeated in Peter’s first letter.

It would be in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension that Jesus would be revealed to the Jewish nation. This was the message Peter preached at Pentecost (Acts 2), not only the death of Jesus but also His resurrection and exaltation to glory. Even a Roman soldier, beholding the events at Golgotha would confess, “Truly this Man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). The early church, following the example of their Lord (Luke 24:25–27), would show from the Old Testament prophecies both the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah.

Jesus made two more stupendous claims: not only was He sent by the Father, but the Father was with Him because He always did what pleased the Father (John 8:29). No doubt, His enemies reacted violently to these words: but some of the listeners put their faith in Him. Whether this was true saving faith or not (see John 2:23–25), we cannot tell; but our Lord’s words to them would indicate that they knew what they were doing.

Salvation is a matter of life or death. People who live in their sins and reject the Savior must die in their sins. There is no alternative. We either receive salvation by grace or experience condemnation under God’s Law. We either walk in the light and have eternal life, or walk in the darkness and experience eternal death. There is a fourth contrast.

**Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 302-304) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

*d. The Light of the world discourse (8:12–30).*

A major feature of the Feast of Tabernacles was the lighting of giant lamps in the women’s court in the temple. The wicks were made from the priests’ worn-out garments. The light illuminated the temple area, and the people gathered to sing praises and dance. The light reminded the Jewish people of how God was with them in their wanderings in the wilderness in a pillar of cloud which turned to fire at night (Num. 9:15–23).

8:12. This discourse continues Jesus’ public teaching in the city of Jerusalem in the temple area. How fitting that during the Feast of Tabernacles, when the large lamps were burning, **Jesus ... said, I am the Light of the world** (cf. 1:4, 9; 12:35, 46). The world is in darkness, a symbol of evil, sin, and ignorance (Isa. 9:2; Matt. 4:16; 27:45; John 3:19). “Light” in the Bible is a symbol of God and His holiness (Acts 9:3; 1 John 1:5). Jesus is “*the* Light,” not merely a light or another light among many lights. **He is the only Light, “the true Light” (John 1:9), for the whole world.** When Jesus said, **Whoever follows Me**, He meant whoever believes and obeys Him (cf. 10:4–5, 27; 12:26; 21:19–20, 22). Jesus was speaking of salvation. Coming to Christ for salvation results in a different kind of life. A believer **will never walk in darkness**, that is, he will not live in it (cf. 12:46; 1 John 1:6–7). He does not remain in the realm of evil and ignorance (John 12:46) for he has Christ as his **Light** and salvation (cf. Ps. 36:9).

8:13. Again **the Pharisees challenged** His claim. Since He appeared as His **own witness**, they said His **testimony was not valid**. Self-authentication is sometimes unacceptable. The Law required two witnesses to establish a fact in capital offenses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; John 8:17). Rabbinic tradition rejected self-testimony.

8:14. Sometimes, however, self-authentication is the only way to truth. Sometimes an individual is the only one who knows the facts about himself. And only God can give **testimony** to Himself. Jesus was competent to give a true witness of Himself because as God He has a comprehensive knowledge of His origin and destiny (7:29). In spite of what the Pharisees thought they knew about Jesus, they were ignorant of His heavenly origin and destiny (cf. 7:33–34), and thus were invalid judges of Him.

8:15. The Pharisees, Jesus said, judged **by human standards**, that is, they were limited by superficial appearances. They saw only His flesh, not His deity, so they misjudged Him. By contrast, Jesus did not come to **judge** people but to save them (3:17). When He does judge in the future, He will simply execute the Father's will according to truth and the Law (cf. 5:27, 45). He Himself will pass judgment on no one.

8:16. Jesus' judging was totally unlike theirs. Theirs was biased and limited. His was not His own because of His unique union **with the Father**. Nor was His witness **alone**; He spoke with divine authority.

8:17–18. **In your own Law** may refer to Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15 (or to Rabbinic laws), which speak of the necessity of **two** witnesses. In Jesus' case only God could authenticate Him. God the Son and God the Father are the required two Witnesses. The Father sent Jesus and authenticated Him by the signs (miracles) He performed.

8:19. Jesus' teaching on God as His **Father** was unique (cf. 5:18), and the Jews were puzzled by His familiar way of talking about Him. The Pharisees **asked Him, Where is Your Father?** Was He talking about God, or (as they supposed) His human father? Their ignorance of Jesus showed their ignorance of God, for Jesus is the Revelation of the **Father** (cf. 1:14, 18; 14:7, 9).

8:20. Jesus **spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put**. This was probably in the women's court (see the diagram at 8:12; cf. Mark 12:41–42). Jesus went there and instructed the people. **No one seized** (*piazō*, "arrested") **Him** (cf. John 7:30, 32, 44, 10:39) **because**, as John repeatedly pointed out, Jesus was working on God's **time** schedule to accomplish the Father's will (cf. 2:4; 7:6, 30; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1).

8:21. Just as His time was short, so their opportunity for trusting in Him was limited. Soon He would go back to His Father, and they could not follow Him there (cf. 7:33–34). **You will die in your sin**. The singular "sin" is that of rejecting the One who offers salvation (cf. 16:9). They would "die" because they continued living in the realm of sin, remaining under its power. Physical death would be their prelude to eternal separation from God.

8:22. Their question, **Will He kill Himself?** was both a misunderstanding and an ironic prophecy. They wondered if He would commit suicide and thus be unreachable. (Earlier they thought He meant He would go teach non-Jews in other lands [7:35].) Though Jesus did not kill Himself, He did lay down His own life (10:11, 18).

8:23. Jesus pointed out His heavenly origin and His real home (**from above ... not of this world**). They belong here (**from below ... of this world**), but He does not.

8:24. Jesus said twice they **would die in** their **sins**. If they would reject the Sin-Bearer (1:29), they would continue in the realm of sin. If they would reject Jesus as the revelation of God, they would miss their only hope for salvation. **I am the One I claim to be** in Greek is the enigmatic “I Am,” which is a self-designation for God in certain contexts (cf. Isa. 43:10–11).

8:25. This revelation of Jesus as “I Am” only confused the Jews. And His words about their sins probably angered them. **“Who are You?” they asked**. He replied, **“Just what I have been claiming all along.”** This is the NIV’s translation of a problematic Greek sentence. (Other translations make it a question or an exclamation.)

8:26–27. Jesus could have said much more and even condemned His hearers, but His purpose in coming was to give them and **the world** the message from the One **who sent** Him. This message is certainly true because the Sender **is reliable** (cf. 7:18, 28). John added that the people **did not understand that** Jesus **was** referring to the **Father**. God was unknown to them, so they missed Jesus (cf. 1:18).

8:28. **Jesus** was now unknown to them. Only the Crucifixion (when **the Son of Man** would be **lifted up**; cf. 3:14; 12:32) would enable them to see Him for **who** He really is. He did not mean that all will be saved, but that the Cross would reveal that Jesus is God’s Word (the *Logos*) to man, and that what He taught was **just what the Father ... taught** Him.

8:29. Jesus’ union with the Father is one of love and continual obedience (cf. 4:34; 5:30). Though people reject Jesus, the Father will never abandon Him. Jesus is never **alone**, and even on the cross the Father glorified Him (cf. 16:32; 17:5).

8:30. In spite of widespread unbelief and official rejection, the ministry of Jesus did bring many to faith (cf. 7:31). Yet this faith would need to be tested and refined. The words **many put their faith in Him** contrast with the next verse. Though large numbers of people responded to Jesus, many people fell away.

**White, J. E. (1998). *John*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 476). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

### **Light of the World (8:12–30)**

The second of Jesus’ seven “I am” statements occurs here: “I am the light of the world.” The relationship between Jesus and His Father is of such a nature that Jesus could say that if “you knew me, you would know my father also.”

Teaching about His identity and nature, Jesus revealed that He is from above and not of this world. Further, “If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” Such a statement could only elicit a shocked, “Who are you?” Jesus answered that He was who He had always claimed to be, the One sent from the Father, the Son of man.

Many have wondered how a loving God can condemn persons to hell. Our response should be that He does nothing of the sort. Individual persons condemn themselves by choosing to reject Jesus Christ and the truth He came to share with the world.

**Allen, J. P. (1972). *John*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (pp. 674-675). Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

### **The Light of the World (John 8:1–59)**

*The passage*—John dwells on the disputes between Jesus and the Jews far more than any other writer. He does it because it is testimony about himself from the mouth of Jesus. In dialogue many facts about a man emerge. It is good for Jesus' friends to hear him talk about himself. The scene is in the Temple area (v. 20). It is the same or following day from chapter 7.

*Special points*—The real theme of the chapter appears in verse 12. Recall how John gives fuller treatment to each of the main topics of his prologue. The subject in chapter 6 was “life.” Now “light” comes up for discussion (1:4, 5, 9).

Light is the means of seeing, and by seeing we know. In the feast just passed, candles had burned in the Temple courts in memory of the pillar of fire by night. Jesus now claimed to be the one medium of divine knowledge. The issue of light is not merely intellectual truth. Whoever has it “will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (v. 12, RSV). The result of the light is conduct in life. The emphasis is on *walk*.

In verse 19 Jesus makes another telling point against those who should be teaching the Jews. He actually accused them of not even knowing God. This was their proudest boast that they knew all truth about God. What strong judgment this was against those who were willfully blind. See the charge repeated in verse 55 and in 5:37–38; 7:28; 16:3.

There appears more frequently now the suggestion of Jesus' death. In verse 21, He spoke of going away. In verse 28 the prophetic phrase “lifted up” is the first hint of crucifixion. “Many believed” (v. 30), but the word probably implies only a kind of consent, not a true acceptance. This is obvious because immediately he began to test them. The proof of discipleship is simple, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples” (v. 31, RSV).

*Truth for today*—The word “continue” is a vital point in being a Christian. Jesus summoned no temporary followers. That is his word, “follow.” The direction in the Scriptures is faithfulness “to the end.” In the New Testament there is no room for any “inactive” membership in the body of Christ!

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 8:12-30. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**