

The Light Shines in the Darkness
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John 8:12-20
January 6th, 2013

Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 8, turning to a passage that we began to look at a few weeks back, a picture of Jesus' glory in John 8:12, where He stands up in the temple and declares that He is the Light of the world, that the one who follows Him will not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. It's a glorious invitation where we see Him declare His deity in the *I AM* statement. I AM that I AM was the name of God when he revealed Himself in Exodus 3:14 to Moses. Jesus is taking that title to Himself a number of times in the Gospel of John. In John 8:12, He is the Lord. He is Yahweh. Not only that, but we saw the sufficiency of Christ. He is the Light. Light is life. Light is everything that we need. He is everything that we need. We also saw the supremacy of Christ. He and He alone is the Light of the world. There is no other Light in this world apart from Jesus Christ.

So in the wake of that momentous declaration in Verse 12, we have in the beginning of Verse 13, and really all the way to the end of the chapter, to John 8:59, kind of a trial. Particularly in the first verses, the language is forensic. It's the language of the courtroom, and the sense is that Jesus is on trial here in this passage. After He's made this declaration, the Pharisees come in and they began to accuse Him, reject His testimony, and question Him not unlike the way a prosecuting attorney badgers a witness. They come against Him that way.

I mentioned the legal terminology. We're going to read it in just a moment, but I want you to listen to these words. You'll hear the word *testify* between Verse 12 and Verse 20. In these 9 Verses, you'll hear that 4 times. You'll hear *testimony* three times and judge four times. We'll see *Law* once. The word *truth* and *true* is repeated over and over, but testify, testimony, judge, law, that's the language of the courtroom, and Jesus' testimony and the validity of His testimony is the central question in this chapter. We see the nature of His testimony and the validity of His testimony. The Pharisees are basically saying to Him in this chapter, "Your testimony, all that You're saying, is inadmissible." They are making the audacious act of just rejecting His words out of hand. "You have no right to speak," is basically what they say to Him. "You have no right to tell us about God."

Now, just think about that for a moment and ponder how ridiculous, how utterly absurd it is that they could stand talking to God and say, “You’re not qualified to tell us about God.” That’s the astonishing audacity of the fallen mind. It continues to this day. Man continues to try God in the court of public opinion. We think we know better. We think we know how God ought to be. That’s a part of the nature of humanity, to do as C. S. Lewis said and put God in the dock. That’s an English term referring to the fact that we put him in the seat of accusation. We’re going to try Him. Man does that all the time. Even as Christians, we can still put God on trial and act as if we know better than Him. “I can’t believe that You allowed this to happen to that person.” We may not say it with the second person pronoun. That’s a little too personal. We just say things like, “I can’t believe that happened on top of everything else that’s happened.” What are you saying when you say that? “God, You’ve really blown it. This is just too much. You don’t know what You’re doing here.” How astonishing that we who are born again would say something like that about God. The unregenerate world is glad to accuse the Lord again, and again, and again. “Why does He allow so much evil?” Etcetera, and on, and on, and on it goes. We see this played out in the drama right before us. What is at work here is not really a desire for truth. It’s not really a desire to know God. It’s not really a desire to come to the Light, but there is the insidious undercurrent of just rejection. Darkness hates light, and that’s a part of what man is this side of Eden. We by nature hate the light until He shines the light of the Gospel in our hearts. And even then, we still have the old nature that rears its head. We’re going to see a legal debate. Let’s read Verses 12 to 20 of John 8:

John 8:12-20 ~ Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” 13 So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true.” 14 Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I testify 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. 15 You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. 17 Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.” 19 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.” 20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

Let's pray together...

Heavenly Father, as we come to this passage, we come always aware of our great need of grace, our need of Your Holy Spirit who inspired these words to be written to now illuminate them, to bring them to light in our hearts and minds, for apart from You, we are darkness. We need Your Light this morning. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

The title of the message is: *The Light Shines in the Darkness*. I borrowed that from John 1:5, and I think we have it being illustrated here throughout this chapter, that what we're going to see is Jesus is in a very intentional way unveiling more and more of His glory. He is shining His light more and more brightly. It's like an analogy maybe to think of is if you're in a dark place and somebody brings a light in. If the power's out, it's not totally dark. You can see because your eyes adjust. You can see because God's made us where our eyes adjust. If there's some light, even the faintest little glimmer of moonlight coming in the window, we can see a little bit. Well, you live in that kind of darkness and somebody brings a lamp in, let's say it's an oil lamp, which I like because you can turn it up and there's not just an on/off switch, so they bring an oil lamp in. But if you've lived for years in this dark place like a cave, and somebody brings a light in, it hurts your eyes.

So what's happening here is Jesus has brought the Lamp in (in Himself). He is the Lamp. He's shining and man is saying that rather than let his eyes adjust and worship, he's closing his eyes and telling Him, "Turn the light down," and what the Lord Jesus does is not listen to foolish men, because the great need of the people in the dark is the light. You may be comfortable in the darkness that you're in, and you may think that you're happy, but you're not. You're in misery. So He shines the light and He turns the light up in this passage in kind of a surprising way that we'll see as we go through the text.

I mentioned that the question before us is really: Is Jesus' testimony valid? They make the shocking assertion in Verse 13, "Your testimony is not true. It's not valid. It's not admissible." Basically they're saying, "Stop talking. Stop teaching. If You're testifying about Yourself, then Your testimony cannot be true." They're alluding to the Old Testament to Deuteronomy 19:15, which says that for someone to be condemned in a court of law, you had to have testimony from at least two witnesses. You could not sentence someone to death on the testimony of one witness. There had to be corroborating human testimony. More than one man had to testify. That was a part of God's gracious provision to protect innocent people from being improperly tried, convicted and executed.

They bring this Old Testament reference up. In their minds, “You’re just testifying alone. Your testimony cannot therefore be true. It cannot be valid.” That’s the basis of their legal argument with Jesus. I mentioned the word *testify* occurs seven times: four times as *testify* in the verb form, and three times as *testimony*. Your translation may say *bearing witness*, but the idea is the same Greek word. It’s the Greek verb μαρτυρέω (*martyreō*) and the Greek word μαρτυρία (*martyria*). We get our word *martyr* from that. A person who dies for their faith is a witness. They have testified to the reality of the truth of the Gospel with their own blood. That’s the idea behind the word *martyr*, but *martyreō* and *martyria* just basically means someone who knows something to be true and who offers that testimony before the judge, before the court. They have seen. They have knowledge of. They have heard. They know. They’re eyewitnesses. So if you have a couple of eyewitnesses, then you can act. So they’re saying, “You’re only one witness, and therefore, you cannot be telling the truth. We cannot accept your testimony. We need another human witness. So go gather some witnesses about who You think You are. You said You’re the Light of the world. Go gather some witnesses. Bring them to us and we might then hear You.”

In reading the text, it’s always important to step back and take it in context, and think about how this would have been received by the original audience, this idea of the testimony. Remember we mentioned in previous messages that the Gospel of John, when you look at it carefully, and study the whole book, and look at it in its context, it seems to have been written by the apostle John to mainly Jewish people or Jewish proselytes in the Mediterranean area who speak Greek. The tone and tenor of the book tells you that. He assumes knowledge of the Old Testament Torah. He assumes knowledge of many of the Old Testament practices. He doesn’t explain and expand upon for instance what the Feast of Tabernacles is. He just says it was at the Feast of Tabernacles. So he expects that there’s a knowledge of these events. So originally, God in His providence inspired this book to be written to those people who were Jews who were doubting the validity of Jesus’ testimony, and who had all of that Old Testament background in their minds, so that this legal debate resonated with a lot of things that they understood.

With that in mind, let’s look at it in the context of the book of John. I mentioned that this passage is very legal and forensic, the language of the courtroom. I mean, seven times in six verses, we see the word *testify* or *testimony*. But we’ve noted before, if you recall in previous messages, that the whole book of John is really colored by this sense of legal language. In fact, the word *testify* or *testimony*, the *martyreō* and *martyria* word occurs 46 times in the Gospel of John. The next closest is Acts with 31, and after that it’s 1 John with nine occurrences.

The word *witness*, *bear witness*, *testify*, and *testimony* is something that was very important to John in his explanation of who Jesus is. And what we've seen throughout the book as we looked at it in the past, too, as we've gone through the first now seven chapters and a few verses here in chapter 8, is that John uses this word over and over again to show us he's making a case. The whole Gospel is making a case. He's making a case to us, to the original audience and to everyone else who reads it, that Jesus is in fact the Son of the Living God. That's his purpose. He wants to prove it beyond any reasonable doubt, and beyond that, beyond not only any reasonable doubt, but any shadow of a doubt that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. He tells us that's his purpose in John 20:31. ***These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His Name.***

What he does is he brings about before us a parade of witnesses. The word *testify/testimony* is all sprinkled throughout the book, and what you have is like for instance in John 4:40 and following, you have the testimony, the testifying of the woman at the well, and that language is used. The people of Samaria say, "Hey, we no longer believe that He's the Messiah just based on your testimony. We now testify ourselves that He is the Savior of the world." Do you see the language he's using again, and again, and again? "Look at these guys testifying." We have eyewitness testimony, after eyewitness testimony, after eyewitness testimony building throughout the book. So it's like he's calling witnesses to the stand. It's like the attorney making his case. Here's witness number one and witness number two. You have Peter's testimony and Andrew's testimony. They meet Him. You have Nathaniel's testimony. You have witness, after witness, after witness, with the main witness, the primary witness being, other than Jesus Himself, John the Baptist.

We read the passage just a few minutes ago. He came to bear witness to the Light. He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. And what does John do the first time he sees Jesus? "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes One who's greater than me.'" He even testified, Luke tells us, in the womb, remember? "That's Him!" So we have all of these witnesses that John's laid out for us, and what's interesting I think as you read the passage, as you think back on what has gone on before, and the original audience would have been doing the same thing, saying, "You're testifying about Yourself. Your testimony is not true (Verse 13)" I think they'd be saying, "Well, why not bring up these other witnesses?" Why did Jesus not say, "You have John the Baptist. Did you not listen to him? His whole life and ministry was to say, 'Look at the One coming behind me. After me comes One who, though

He existed before me, His rank is higher than me. I'm not worthy to untie His sandal.' Did you not listen to John?" Jesus could have called him to their remembrance. At this point in time, John is dead. This is probably about six months before Jesus is to be crucified. This is at the Feast of Tabernacles September/October. He will be crucified in March/April at Passover. But He didn't call John. He doesn't bring back any of the human witnesses. The disciples are right there. Why don't they step forward? "We'll testify." No, God doesn't want to hear any human testimony at this point."

In fact, what happens is basically there are times earlier in John 5 where you have John marshalling witnesses and Jesus Himself even talking about how Moses testified about Him. But here, that's not the point. Jesus says, "Listen, you say My testimony is not valid." He basically says, "Your whole court system and rule of law does not apply to Me." In fact, I think that's one of the reasons that Verse 20 is there. Though He said these things in the most public place in the temple, the treasury, which is the court of the women where people were continually coming and going, and there were scores of people there at any given moment, now He's teaching there close to where the Sanhedrin meets, and they don't arrest Him. They should have wanted to, and they did of course want to. The point of that verse is He's saying things that are incredibly offensive to them, but they don't touch Him, because they can't touch Him, because His hour's not yet come. They want to touch Him. They want to kill Him, but they cannot lay a hand on Him. That's told in Verse 20 because what He does in their resistance as they try to suppress the light is He turns the light up brighter, and brighter, and brighter. It's as if the Shekinah glory is shining out from Him out of His words. He's saying, "Your law does not apply to Me." That's what He says in Verse 14:

John 8:14 ~ Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true,..."

He's saying, "I do not need any human validation. In Myself, My testimony is of a different order." He's saying at this moment He's testifying as the Son of the Living God. It's actually interesting that in John 5, He said much the same thing. There He condescends to give us in that moment, to give the Jews who were rejecting Him at a previous feast, some of the testimony. He says in Verse 33 of John 5:

John 5:33 ~ You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.

Basically in John 5, He does exactly what I said you would have expected Him to redo in Chapter 8. Look what He says in Verse 34:

John 5:34 ~ But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

“I’m telling you about what John said so you can be saved, but listen, I don’t need human testimony.”

John 5:36 ~ But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.

“I don’t need human testimony.” That’s what He’s saying in John 8, and this was shocking to them when He makes the statement so boldly.

John 8:14 ~ Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true,...

“I am the one Person in all eternity, the one human Person that can stand and testify, and My testimony must be accepted without any corroborating evidence.” That’s the kind of statement He’s making. I love how people say – have you ever had this comment? I’ve had a number of people say this to me through the years: “Jesus never claimed to be God.” Have you read your Bible? Well, they do read it and they miss it. This is one of the places where He’s claiming to be God. In fact, it’s going to build throughout the chapter. He’s on trial, but what happens is throughout these verses from Verse 13 all the way to Verse 59, He is throwing open, as it were, the veil to show His glory. The end of the chapter culminates when He says, “Before Abraham was, I AM,” and they pick up stones to stone Him. He is declaring His deity. It is on full display in this chapter. How good of Him to do that.

There were people who wanted Him to turn down the light. “Stop talking about Yourself. We don’t want to hear anymore,” but He turns it up because there are people out in that crowd that are His chosen ones. Those Pharisees are rejecting Him, but there are people out there who need the light, and as He shines out, we’re going to see many believed in Him because of His word in this chapter. That tells us a lot about how we should respond to the cries to quiet the truth in our lives. There are times where the world is telling us to suppress, saying, “Don’t tell me about Jesus.” Well, we have to be wise and gracious, but the most important thing

in the world is for you to hear about Jesus Christ. He is everything. If you don't have Him, you have nothing.

So this first idea of testimony, it's surprising how Jesus approaches it, but there's another thing going on here I think we need to think about. I mentioned the background and the audience being Jewish audience and Jewish proselytes, that is, Jewish proselytes are Gentiles who are now worshiping in the synagogues, have converted to Judaism, and there are these synagogues in all the cities throughout the Mediterranean world. John is sending His Gospel out to these groups, first to them, and they have the background of this legal idea, but they also have the background of what the word *testimony* itself means, and what the testimony precisely is in its passage.

The word *testify/testimony* I mentioned, is mentioned 46 times in John's Gospel. It's a word that's very important in the Old Testament particularly in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. In about 150 BC, Hebrew and Greek scholars, Jews who could speak Greek, translated the entire Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, and that's called the Septuagint. It became the standard Old Testament that most Jews carried. Other than in Palestine, most of them their first language was Greek, and most of them didn't speak Hebrew or Aramaic. They spoke Greek, and so their Old Testament was the Septuagint, and when you read the Septuagint, 300 times in the Septuagint the word μαρτυρία (martyria) and μαρτυρέω (martyreō) occur (testimony/testify), and almost every one of those is in the first five books of the Old Testament, the Law, and it's in the word martyria (testimony), and it's used in this way. It's used to refer to the testimony of God in the giving of the Law.

You may remember these phrases. The tablets of the testimony were the two tablets that Moses received, remember, that God wrote the Ten Commandments on - the tablets of the testimony, the Ten Commandments, the covenant. And remember then he's told to put them in the Ark of the Covenant, and you know what the Ark of the Covenant then is called. It's called the Ark of the Testimony, because it's now defined by the testimony that's within it. Now, why is it that the Law is called the testimony? It's not a testimony in the sense that we think of in a sense of a legal testimony. It's because the idea of testimony is testifying to who God is. The Ten Commandments themselves are the testimony, the revelation, of who God is. It's powerful when you look at the Ten Commandments that way. You don't see them as rules but as the revelation, the unveiling, of God's character.

I mean, think about the important questions of life. Who is God? What is God like? What does He require of me? That's the Ten Commandments. Who is He? He's Holy. What is He like? What does He want from me? Think about the first few commandments. The first four commandments are on the vertical. They deal with our relationship with God. Remember the first commandment? *Have no other Gods before me.* What is God like? God is Holy and glorious. He's so great that He wants to have first place. He will have no competitors. He must have the supreme place in your life.

The second commandment is: *Do not make for yourself an idol, a graven image.* What's that about? Nobody makes idols anymore. Well, I think probably nowadays people are. It's getting so whacky around here that people make all kinds of bizarre things. They carry stones and crystals, all that nonsense. Well, they used to make idols. In the time that these things were written down, they made images and they bowed down to these images made out of wood and stone and precious metals, but the idea is idolatry is when you make God to be what you want Him to be. You try to define God according to your understanding, your terms. What God says is, "Well, who am I? What am I like? I will have first place or you will not have any part of Me." The second commandment is, "I will define who I am. You will not tell Me who I am." What is His Name? Remember I mentioned earlier the *I AM* statements of Jesus? Remember Moses gets that revelation in Exodus 3:14. He says, "What is Your Name?" and the Lord says, "I am who I am." The Hebrew tense could be read also, "I will be who I will be." In other words, "I will not have anybody dictate to Me who I am or what I'm like, so stop thinking about trying to do that."

When we understand that, we understand that what John Calvin said is true, that the heart of man is an idol factory. We all want to define God according to our own preferences. Who among us has not said at some time in my life, "I wish God weren't like that. I want God to be like this. I wish God were this way"? That's idolatry. You don't come into His presence that way. That's what He's saying. "Who am I and what am I like? I will have first place and I will not take orders in any way. I am in charge." That's who the Lord is.

The third commandment is: *Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.* That is, treat Him and His nature, His Name, His character, with reverence and awe. This is the One to whom I will look. The Lord says in Isaiah, "...he who is humble and who trembles at My word." To approach the Lord, you have to come in humility. "Who am I and what am I like?" He is great. He is exalted. He defines who He is. He doesn't take orders. He gives orders and He blesses the one who

trembles before Him, who understands how great He is and acknowledges that. *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.* That is, “Enter into My rest. Come to Me and be united in the joy that I have in things, but put Me first in every way, including in your life, in your time. I am to be supreme.”

The fifth to the tenth commandments, *honor your mother and father*, all the way through to the end, *don't covet*, “Your relationships on the horizontal must be defined by your relationship with Me.” That’s what He’s saying. So the testimony is this is who God is. This is what He is like, and at that point in history, that was the most glorious revelation. That’s why they kept referring back to it. The clearest revelation of who God is and what He is like is in the testimony. It’s inside that Ark. It’s written down in the book of Exodus and Deuteronomy. All of that testimony, Ark of the Testimony, tablets of the testimony, that’s the idea behind the word, and so now the question is: *Is Jesus’ testimony valid?* That word is laden with the imagery of telling us. The testimony tells us about who God is and what He is like. So there’s this irony that’s written all over the chapter. The Pharisees are questioning if Jesus is able to give a valid testimony. Is He able to tell us what God is like and who God is? And the Jews are saying, “No.” Is He qualified to tell us what God is like? “Your statements are inadmissible and out of order. We will not hear Your testimony unless You provide additional human witnesses.” In the face of God Himself, they say, “You can’t tell me what You’re like.”

It’s kind of like somebody saying – I think I’ve seen something like this in some movie or TV show at some point where someone’s saying, “This is what I think,” and the other person’s trying to tell them, “No, this is what you think.” “I think I know what I think.” “No, you think this.” That seemed like it made more sense to me when I started into that, but essentially the idea is who can tell us what God is like other than God? He Himself is in their presence, and they say, “You’re not qualified to testify to us what God is like.” In that moment in history, it’s as if what is happened is the covenant, the testimony that was in the Ark in the Ten Commandments was a bright light shining in a dark place, but what has happened now is the light of the Son has reached its zenith. It’s noonday. The glory is shining out from Christ, and they say, “You can’t give us any light.” It’s breathtaking, and in that situation, what Jesus does is He basically says, “No, you’re totally missing who I am, and I’m going to make it clear to you, and at this point, I’m not subject to your Law.”

What He does is He sets up a contrast between Himself and His Jewish opponents, the Pharisees. As we were reading, you may have noticed the emphasis with the pronouns I, Me, Myself, and you. In the Greek, these things are emphatic. There

are a number of emphatic pronouns. Normally the pronoun is contained within the verb itself. You don't have to add the pronoun. You can say, "He went," without the word he. In English, we can't do that. We have to always use the pronoun, right? "He went." In Greek, like many other languages, "went" contains the pronoun. Use a different form of it and say "he went" versus "she went" or "they went" or "I went". It's all there in the word. Well, in Greek, it's there in that word itself, "He went," or "You went" or "I went". It's already there, but what Jesus does in this passage is keeps adding the pronoun in: *Eggo* (I, If I testify), and He puts the *eggo* in there. *Eggo* is the Greek word for I. "I Myself testify. You yourself..." He puts the pronoun *you* in there emphatically saying, "You say this, I say that." So He's making this big contrast, and what He's doing is He's saying, "I am above your Law because I am the One who gave the Law."

I want us to gather our thoughts in the remaining time that we have, around three points that He's making here. He's arguing, "Listen, My testimony is valid because of My superiority," and He gives us three points.

- 1) The Superiority of His Knowledge
- 2) The Superiority of His Judgment
- 3) The Superiority of His Being

1) The Superiority of His Knowledge:

We see these things unfolded before us in these verses. They say, "Your testimony is not valid. It's not true." Jesus says in Verse 14, "No, My testimony is true because I have superior knowledge."

John 8:14 ~ Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify 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."

There are those emphatic pronouns. "I know. You do not know." He contrasts what He knows versus what they know. He says, "I know where I came from and where I'm going, and because of that, I stand unique among all men. I can testify in a way that no other man ever had been able to." Now, is that not true? Think about it. Do you know where you came from? Well, we think we sort of do. I mean, I heard Alistair Begg talking about this some time back. He was actually teaching on John 1:12-13, where he says, "We were not born of human will or the will of the flesh or the will of man. If you're born again, you're born of God. God does it," and he was saying how there you have this idea of contrasting our physical birth and our

Spiritual birth. You've had no part in your physical birth and you had no part in your Spiritual birth.

He goes on and he talks about, "I remember what it was like when I was born, like it was yesterday. Remember that day when I decided it was time to be born? It was kind of unpleasant there for a little while coming through the birth canal, but we got through it, it was great, and I even remember what a wonderful time it was in the womb, the comfort of the womb. I remember what it was like before I was ever conceived." It's absurd. We don't even remember what it was like when we were 3 or 4 years old. What is the earliest memory you have? I sort of think I remember something that happened when I was four, but you don't know if it's because I remembered or because I've been told about it. We have no idea where we came from.

Did you choose to be born in the place that you were born? Did you think, "I want to be born to this kind of family and this place"? No, you had nothing to do with it. You and I know nothing about where we came from, and the reality is we know nothing about where we're going. You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. I say I want to go to such and such a place. James tells us that it's evil for us to be too bold in boasting about, "I'm going to do this and I'm going to go there, and then I'm going to do that." We should say, "If the Lord wills, I'll do this and that and the other," because you don't know what tomorrow holds. You and I are completely different from the Man Christ Jesus. He knew where He came from, and He knew where He was going. He knew it all, because He remembered what it was like to be from everlasting to everlasting with God as we saw in John 1: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, before the face of God, face-to-face with the Father."

He remembered what it was like to be in glory and have the angels singing His praise day after day, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts." When they were singing that, they were singing to Him, God the Son. John 12:41 tells us that Isaiah in the temple, when he saw the glory of the Lord fill the temple and the seraphim covering their eyes, singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy," they were singing about Jesus. He has knowledge of where He came from and He knows where He's going. He knows that He's going to the cross. He knows nothing can happen to Him until the cross, and He knows that He's going from the cross, His body's going to the tomb, but He's going to glory, and He knows that on the third day on Sunday, His body's getting up to be raised forever, and He's going to live forever in glory with the Father.

In fact, John 13 makes this point. Remember when Jesus is getting ready to wash the disciples feet and it says Jesus, knowing that He came forth from God, knowing that He was about to go back to God, took up the towel, girded Himself, and washed His disciples' feet? What He's saying is that knowing His infinite greatness and majesty, that He came forth from God, that He's going back to God, that glorious God washed the disciples' feet. So He knows something that none of us has ever known. Jesus says, "Because of this, I alone can testify, and you don't need anybody else to say 'Amen' when I testify." It's a good thing to say, "Amen," but He's saying, "I don't need human validation." Jesus Himself does not need that. "I have perfect knowledge." He knows He's going to the cross. He knows why He has come. The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. His whole life from the manger to the cross has been one walk to Calvary. He came to die, and at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. He knows where He's going. He's going to bear the sins of everyone who would ever believe. The sinless Son of God has come to be the Passover Lamb.

He's come to bear our sins in His own body on the cross, to feel the agony and weight of the guilt and the pollution of our sins, to feel the weight of the wrath of His Holy Father as He turns away from Him, as it were, on the cross when He becomes sin, God in His holiness turning away not to be able to look at the Sin-Bearer, the One who is beaten beyond recognition, as Isaiah had prophesied 700 years before, marred as no man would be marred, Jesus hanging in agony. He knows that's where He's going, but He knows that's only going to be for a moment, because Hebrews 12 tells us that for the joy that lay before Him, He endured the cross. He's not just thinking about the cross. He's thinking about the joy that lays before Him. It's all there in His mind. He has all of that knowledge as He stands to testify, and says, "I am the Light of the world. My testimony is valid. You need to listen to Me." There's never been another man who could speak like this man. He had perfect knowledge.

Not only did He have superiority of knowledge, but secondly the superiority of His judgment.

2) The Superiority of His Judgment:

In John 8:15-16, He contrasts the way that the Pharisees and we judge versus the way that He judges:

John 8:15 ~ You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me.

Now, what He's getting at here is that they judge according to appearances. The reason that they are rejecting Him and His testimony is they are judging according to appearances, and that's, I think, what He means when He says, "I'm not judging anyone. I don't judge according to appearances, and right now, I'm not even judging. I'm here as offering salvation." The irony is that in offering salvation and shining His light which everyone needs, everyone is dying because they're in the dark, He shines His light to bless, and the irony is that man is judged by that, because people hate the light, but it's God's generous kindness to shine His light. So He's saying here, "You judge according to appearances. When I judge, I judge rightly."

God doesn't judge as we judge. He looks at the heart. He doesn't judge by external appearances. They look at this Man and they see an average, ordinary guy, a Nazarene at that, and they say, "He can't be a Prophet of God. He can't be the Messiah. There's no way." There's a danger in judging by appearances. There's a sense in which people today make the same mistake. They look and they think, "Are you kidding me? You believe that the Savior of the world was a Jew? I mean, the Jewish people have been beaten down through the centuries. Why would you possibly want to identify with one of theirs? I mean, are you serious? The Savior of the world was born in Bethlehem? The Savior of the world was not born in Rome or Babylon, or somewhere of significance? And you're kidding me? You think the Savior of the world died on a cross, was executed as a common criminal? Are you serious?" Absolutely. We know it and are certain of it. He is the Savior of the world. There is life in His Name and in no other.

I mean think about the contrast in appearances that we see throughout the life and ministry of Jesus. Look at the manger. In the manger, you see an apparent picture of weakness, supreme weakness. You have a Baby lying in a feeding trough. Now, really think about that. A feeding trough. Animals are eating out of it and I have to shoo the animals away so I can put my Baby down. The cold, the weakness, the poverty, that's the King of the world? Appearances don't seem to say that. Can you imagine how many people must have walked by that manger or heard about this poor family that had to put their baby in that stable, in that manger, last night? How pathetic.

Well, go from the manger to the meadow and see the difference between appearance and reality. Go out to the meadow on the hill outside of Bethlehem to where those shepherds are tending their flocks, and one angel comes on the scene, remember? The glory of the Lord shone around him, and like the King James says, “They were sore afraid.” They were badly frightened. They were terribly overwhelmed with angst and fear. They were afraid for their lives. One angel, and then a multitude of angels come. At that point, they’ve already got the good news, “Don’t be afraid,” but they still must have been trembling in the sight of that.

I mean, you know how they have these flyovers and stuff at ballgames? I was watching some of the ballgames and you see the flyover of the stealth bomber in one of the games. I forget which one it was. You know, whenever you’re around one of those planes that have the power, an F-16, or F-18, or a stealth bomber and the power of it makes you feel very small, doesn’t it? Wow... Multiply that by a million and you’ll know what it’s like to see an angel. Suddenly everything that I thought was important is not. There is a power that’s greater than me and it’s right there, the angel overwhelming the shepherd. There’s one angel overwhelming the shepherds, and now think about this: that angel could not look upon the Baby in the manger directly.

I mentioned earlier that Isaiah is quoted by John in John 12:41 when John says, “Isaiah wrote these things, for he saw His glory.” He’s talking about he saw Jesus’ glory when he saw the glory in the temple. Remember what the seraphim are doing? The seraphim are singing, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” continually. “Holy, Holy, Holy. The earth is full of His glory. Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.” They had six wings. With two they flew, with two they covered their feet, and with two they covered their eyes. They had to cover their feet and cover their eyes in the presence of Jesus Christ. That great angel that would make you or me tremble, trembles in the presence of the Baby. That’s the difference between appearance and reality. It’s always been that way.

Go with me to the cross. Look at the Man beaten beyond recognition. Look at the Man hanging there in weakness and agony. Look at the Man who appears to be conquered. Everything is lost, it appears, and yet in reality, if you could see what’s happening in the spiritual realm, it’s that the universe is splitting apart. Evil is being just completely destroyed at the moment He dies. At the moment of greatest human weakness, He dies. What happens? The earth quakes. The veil in the temple is torn from top to bottom at the moment He died. He breathes His last. The way is open.

Suddenly man has been liberated to come into the presence of God. We were trapped and held in darkness by Satan, kept from God. The way is broken open as the Man dies. And to testify to that, the earth quakes and the tombs open. Matthew 27 tells us this. The tomb's open, and on Friday when Jesus has died, people will get up and walk out of the grave. Isn't that amazing? It says they stayed out in the tombs until Sunday out of respect and honor. The Lord wasn't going to let them go in there first. "You're not going to be seen until after Jesus My Son is seen." Can you imagine? People that were dead are suddenly alive. They had to be people who were hoping in the Messiah when they died, and they're saved, and there they are raised from the dead.

At the moment He died, life has won. Sunday is just the post script. I mean, it's a glorious post script. Don't get me wrong. It's the declaration that Friday was everything that He said it was when He got up out of the grave, but the victory was won in the apparent defeat. Appearances can be so misleading. You see this all the way to the end of time. Remember John's vision, this same author who is taken by the Lord up into the glory of Heaven, and he sees visions that staggers the mind, the revelation? It's not Revelations, by the way. It's The Revelation of Jesus Christ. That's very important. It's not Revelations of future events. It's the Revelation of Jesus Christ. That's a good way to actually talk to people about it, too.

You know, it's all about Jesus is what that book's about. It's not so much about whether the Russians are this or the Chinese are that. It's about Jesus Christ and His glory. What does he see in Revelation 5? Remember he's weeping because there's no one there that can open the book? No one can break open this book that apparently is related to the fulfilling of all of God's purpose and plans, God's plan to save and redeem and restore everything. It's all hanging in the balance, because there's no one worthy to open the book or to break its seals, and John begins to weep uncontrollably. He senses this is the most momentous failure. There's no one that can do it. No angel in heaven, no man that has lived can open the book, and he begins to weep uncontrollably.

You would have thought that he would have understood, but the Lord doesn't let Him see it in that moment. He feels the weight of it, and an elder comes to him and says, "Stop crying, because the Lion of the tribe of Judah, He has overcome. He has won. The Lion of the tribe of Judah." John looks toward the throne and he sees One begin to walk out from the shadows, and he sees the Lion of the tribe of Judah that the elder had been talking about, but he describes the Lion of the tribe of Judah this way. "I saw a Lamb as if He had been slain, the marks of his death." He came

out. The Lamb comes out and He takes the book, and when He takes the book, everyone falls down and worships, “Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb.” In His death, in His weakness, He has overcome. Appearances can be so deceiving. Jesus has superior knowledge. He has superior judgment. He doesn’t judge according to appearances. He judges according to truth.

3) The Superiority of His Relationship:

“I can testify because I and My Father testify the same thing.” God is His Father.

John 8:18 ~ I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”

He speaks about God in a way that no man has ever spoken about God. “He is My Father.” There is a relationship with Him that is unique. He came from Him and He’s going back to Him, and so He can testify. In fact, it’s interesting in Verse 18 – in your translation, it may say it this way: *I am He who testifies*. You have there an *eggo eimi*, that is “I am.” One of the *I Am* statements. “I am One who testifies about Myself,” yet even there, there’s the sense of His deity wrapped up in that idea of relationship. “My Father and I have such a perfect Oneness of relationship that when you see Me, you see the Father. Am I worthy to testify? Am I worthy to give you testimony about who God is? There’s never been an opportunity for man to see God like there is now. If you see Me, you see the Father.” I mentioned earlier that you see also this relationship in the sense that as they ask Him in a mocking way, “Where is Your Father?” they want to see a human man, and Jesus answered:

John 8:19 ~ ...Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.” 20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

The idea that John is getting at there is that all along throughout the passage, they’ve been trying to kill Him. Remember they sent people to arrest Him? The temple guards came back and they said, “Where is he?” They said, “Well, no man’s ever taught like this man’s taught. What do you want us to do?” They wanted to seize Him. They don’t lay hands on Him again, and again, and again throughout this passage. In the previous chapters we’ve seen this, and you have here again the comfort that until the moment when God is determined, nothing is going to happen to Him. They hate Him. They want to destroy the truth, but God’s

truth will be vindicated, will be made known. John Calvin writes about this scene in the treasury. He says: *The treasury was part of the temple where the sacred offerings were laid up. It was a much-frequented place and hence we infer that this sermon was delivered by Christ amidst a large assembly of men so that the people had less excuse. The evangelist likewise holds out to us the astonishing power of God in this respect, that they were constrained to endure Christ openly teaching in the temple.*

The want to silence Him, but they can't, he's saying. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, are constrained to sit there and listen to Him:

But lately they have sought to seize Him and put Him to death. For since they held an undisputed sway in the temple so that they ruled there with the fierceness of tyrants, they might have banished Christ from it by a single word.

All they had to do is say the word.

And yet when He ventured to take upon Himself the office of a teacher, why do they not instantly lay violent hands upon Him? We see that God calls men to hear Him. God guarded Him by His protection so that the savage beasts did not touch Him, though they had their throats open to swallow Him.

The people who hated him wanted to tear Him apart, but God restrains Him in the same way the lions couldn't touch Daniel. God closed their mouths. Jesus is worthy to tell us about God because of the superiority of His relationship. The superiority of Christ is evident in this passage, and the irony is that they're putting Him on trial, and what we see as we go through the passage is that He is really putting them and us on trial, because the issue that will decide the eternal fate of every man and woman is what you do with Jesus Christ.

Will you worship Him from your heart? Will you give Him yourself? Will you repent of your sins, and believe in Him, and place your faith in Him, or will you stumble at Him? He comes today in the same way, and His light shines out, and He says, "Come to Me and live. Be saved. I've done everything necessary to save you. Though your sins be as scarlet, I'll make them as white as snow. Come to Me, you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." He offers and beckons, but what happens is some receive and some reject. The choice is ours, but in the offer, judgment happens, a separation happens. Which way are you walking? Don't walk away from Christ. Don't continue to harden yourself against Him like the foolish Pharisees, but give yourself to Him.

Give yourself to One so wonderful, One so glorious who came all the way down so that He might make clear to us what God is like. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus, One who stands in infinite glory so that He must have the supreme place, yet He comes down and He washes feet. He comes down, and He didn't come to be served but to serve. Why would you not give yourself to such a glorious Savior? May God help you to do that today. Let's pray together...

Our Father, we praise You for the glorious gift of Jesus Christ. We thank You that He has come, and light has shined in the darkness, and the darkness could not resist it, could not overcome it, but it continues to shine through the Gospel. We pray that today Your Light would shine in the hearts of some who are dwelling in darkness even here today, that they have closed their eyes to the truth or closed their ears to the invitation of Christ. Lord, today grant them eyes to see and ears to hear. Help them to stop and to repent from their stubbornness, their resistance. Give them eyes to see where they've been blind before. Help them see that Christianity is not coming to church in itself, but that it's a relationship with the Living God. Father, show Your power to save today. We thank You that You are infinite and compassionate and merciful, and as long as there's breath, there's hope. We pray that today will be the day of salvation.

Father, we also pray that You would help us who know Christ, to stop resisting the light of the truth, and to start filling ourselves more and more with Your Word and the glory of our Savior, that Your light would make us more and more joyful, more and more like Jesus, that we would walk as children of light in holiness. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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