

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 8th November 2009
‘I am the Light of the World – Part 2’
John ch.8:12-30

Introduction

Tonight we are continuing to look at the second ‘I am’ saying of Jesus in John’s Gospel. We begin tonight with the verse we finished with last week - John 8:12 - where Jesus says:

‘I am the Light of the World,’
‘Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.’

We saw last week that when Jesus said these words he was claiming to be:

1. The **‘I am’** – He was claiming to be God, by taking upon his own lips and referring to himself, the unutterable, holy name of God from the O.T. That name which had been revealed to Moses at the burning bush.
2. As God the Son, He was claiming to be – **‘The Light of the World.’**
3. And because of this, there is great benefit for us, as Jesus said:
‘Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.’

We saw last Sunday night that:

1. As the Light of the World, **Jesus Exposes our Sin. (John 8:1-12)**
2. From the story of the man who was born blind, we will discover also that as the Light of the World, **Jesus Restores our Sight. (John 9:5)**
3. But we also saw that if we follow Him as the Light of the World, **Jesus will Guide our Steps (John 8:12).**

Then there follows a passage of Scripture where the Pharisees – the Jewish Religious Leaders - argue vehemently with Jesus about what he was claiming about himself. They challenge his testimony. We are going to look at vs.12-30 tonight. It breaks nicely into two parts – vs.12-20 and vs.21-30. In vs.12-20 the Jewish leaders challenge the truth of Jesus’ testimony about himself. This is an example of what the writer to the Hebrews talks about in Hebrews 12:3. He invites us to ‘Consider Him, who endured such *‘contradiction of sinners’* (AV) against himself.’ Those who should have accepted Jesus, and hailed his arrival as the long-awaited Messiah – did quite the opposite – they challenged

every word that came out of Jesus’ mouth - nowhere more so than here in John ch.8. So let’s take a look and see the contradiction that Jesus endured:

1. They Challenged the Truth of His Testimony (vs.12-20)

Jesus has just claimed to be God come in the flesh. The great ‘I am’ of the OT. He has just claimed to be ‘The Light of the World.’ And He has just claimed that ‘whoever follows Him, will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’

These were quite some claims for a mere human being to make about himself, if that was in fact all he was. If Jesus was only a mere man, then there was no way he could substantiate those claims or back them up.

And that’s why the Pharisees challenged him in v.13. The Pharisees were among those who thought that Jesus of Nazareth was just a lunatic - or maybe even just a liar. So they challenged him (v.13):

‘Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.’

To put it another way, we would have said,

‘What evidence do you have to back your claims up?’

As far as Jewish Law was concerned, everything had to be established on the testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses, otherwise it just wasn’t regarded as being true.

But Jesus begins by saying in v.14,

‘Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid...’
Why? ‘For I know where I came from and where I am going.’

What did he mean by that?

Well quite simply he was claiming yet again to be God. Only God knows where He has come from, and only God really knows where He is going in the future. He knows the past and he knows the future. He knows his origin and he knows his destiny. God alone knows the end from the beginning. That’s what Jesus was claiming.

But in complete contrast to this, he says about the Pharisees:

‘But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going.’ (v.14b)

Do you remember back in ch.7 they were debating among themselves? Some thought that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee (7:27), but others thought that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem in Judea (7:42)! Others still, thought that when the Messiah would appear, that nobody would know where he had come from (27) so they were divided among themselves.

If they had wanted to, of course, they could have looked into it and found out that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem; that his parents had to flee to Egypt with him as a baby; but that he had then gone to live with his family in Nazareth in Galilee, where he grew up as the son of a carpenter. But because of ignorance, as to his earthly origins, they were refusing to believe that Jesus could be the Messiah.

But what Jesus is referring to here, goes beyond even that. His true origin was not from anywhere in this world. His true origin was in heaven with his Father. He was God, God the Son, so He had always existed from eternity past. He knew where he had come from, but he also knew where he was going. After his death and burial, he would rise again - and shortly afterwards he would go back to his Father in heaven to spend eternity with Him, never to be separated from Him ever again. He knew absolutely where he had come from and where he was going, because he was God come in the flesh! These earthly religious leaders knew nothing at all about all of that, and they refused to even consider it.

In vs.15-18 Jesus refers to the fact that in order for anything to be considered as 'Truth' it had to be established on the testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses.

They were judging him by human standards; He was passing judgment on no-one. They had just judged the woman caught in adultery in vs.1-11. But when they asked Jesus to pass judgment on her, He simply bent down and wrote on the ground. He challenged them, that if any of them was without sin, that they should throw the first stone. But when none of them was able to do it, He simply turned to the woman and said, *'Has no-one condemned you, then neither do I condemn you, go and leave your life of sin.'*

Jesus was the one, the only one, who could actually have judged her. He would have had the right to condemn her, but he didn't. Instead he let her go free - cleansed and forgiven.

So the Pharisees were judging by human standards. Yet Jesus, even though he was God, was passing judgment on no-one. But when he did judge (as he says in v.16) *'my decisions are right...'* Why? *'...because I am not alone. I stand with the Father who sent me.'* Then he goes on to say in v.17:

'In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid.' That was the principle – everything had to be established on the testimony of at least 2 witnesses. Well here we have 2 witnesses (v.18):

*'I am one who testifies for myself;
my other witness is the Father, who sent me.'*

So Jesus was not speaking on his own behalf, without anyone to back him up. He was in fact speaking with the full backing of his Father in heaven. Therefore his testimony would stand up in the highest court imaginable!

It's at this point that the Pharisees ask him: ***'Where is your father?' (v.19)*** It's a good question. They all thought that Jesus was a carpenter from Nazareth. They all thought that Joseph, the carpenter, was his father. But there has been no mention of Joseph now for quite some time. The last we heard of Joseph in the Gospel records was when Jesus was 12 yrs old. But now he was a grown man in his early 30s! So 'where is your father that you're talking about?' was a very valid question, because they were still 'earth bound'. They were still thinking in terms of a human father.

So here Jesus tries to take them a little deeper:

*'You do not know me or my Father,' Jesus replied.
'If you knew me, you would know my Father also.'*

Here Jesus is trying to get them to understand that the Father that he is talking about is not a normal human father. They know nothing about Him, because He was talking about His heavenly Father. But if they would take the time to get to know Jesus while he was here on earth, they would begin to get to know His Father also, because he had come to reveal the Father to them. As he would say later in John's Gospel, *'I and the Father are one.'*

So Jesus has countered their challenge to the truth of his testimony, by turning their attention to the truth about his relationship to his heavenly Father. They just weren't getting it, that God could have a Son, and that the Son of God could be standing in front of them teaching in the Temple Courts in Jerusalem – all of that was so new to them. They couldn't take it in.

John tells us in v.20 that Jesus said all of this about his Father, while he was teaching in the Temple area – he specifically says that it was *'...near the place where the offerings were put.'*

So it was probably the most public place he could find – certainly the place where most people would be milling about. So what Jesus was doing, he wasn't doing in a corner – he was declaring 'from the roof-tops' very publicly, that he was the Son of God come in the flesh.

But John goes on to say, *'Yet no-one seized him, because his time had not yet come.'* (v.20) – He was still working to his Father's timetable, and the time for his death had not yet come.

So they had challenged Jesus over the Truth of his Testimony, but now...

2. Jesus Challenges their False Sense of Security (vs.21-30)

Three times in this section Jesus tells the Pharisees that:

'they will die in their sin!' (once in v.21, and twice in v.24).

That's quite something to tell religious people (especially religious leaders) that they will die in their sins, isn't it?

But it was because they were rejecting Him.

It was because they were refusing to believe in Him.

That's why they would die in their sins. That's the only reason why any of us will ever die in our sins, outside of Christ, facing a lost eternity – because we have rejected Christ, because we have refused to believe or trust in Christ.

Three times also in this passage Jesus reminds them that he is the great 'I am' of the Old Testament – that he is God come in the flesh.

The first time was the 'I am' saying itself in John 8:12

(v.12) 'I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

The other two times, the words 'I am' stand alone in the original language: The translators of our Bibles add in 6 words so as to make sense in English:

*(v.24) 'If you do not believe that **I am** [the one I claim to be] you will indeed die in your sins.'*

*(v.28) '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.'*

So if we refuse to believe that Jesus is the Great 'I am' then we will die in our sins – without hope and without God, facing an awful eternity in Hell.

Q. How are we to believe that Jesus is the Great I am?

- The Answer is at the cross:

When these Jews would hand over the Son of Man, to be lifted up and nailed to a Roman Cross, it would be then that they would realize that He truly was the Great I am – that He truly was God.

Isn't that what the Centurion standing at the foot of the cross said, after he saw Jesus breathe his last? He said, 'Surely this was the Son of God!'

And when Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day, then it was clear for all to see, if they wanted to see it, that Jesus really was the Son of God.

He really was the great I am – he was God come in the flesh to die in our place, to die with our sins on his own body on that tree.

He died for our sins, so we would not have to die in our sins.

So that we could be freed from the grip that sin had on us, and be forgiven and cleansed instead.

Just listen as I read these verses to you again, because I want you to feel their impact: vs.21-29.

And now look at the very next verse: v.30

'Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.'

Conclusion

Wouldn't it be great if that was to happen here tonight?

That you would realize that if you are outside of Christ, that if you have never believed in Jesus personally for yourself, that you are heading for a lost eternity in hell, that you are going to 'die in your sins' as you are.

If only you would come to realize that all you have to do is to believe in Jesus, to put your trust in Jesus, to put your faith in Jesus?

If only you would take that simple step of faith to Jesus, then you would know that you would never have to die in your sins, outside of Christ, and heading for a lost eternity?

The Jews tried to challenge Jesus about the truth of his testimony. They failed miserably, because Jesus had been sent by God, and was God.

In return Jesus challenged the Jews about their false sense of security. They thought they were alright the way they were. They thought they were so pious and so righteous, but they were anything but! They were still in their sin, they were lost in their sin, and they were going to die in their sin.

All they had to do was to believe in 'the Great I am' – the Lord Jesus Christ, and in that moment they would be forgiven for all their sin, they would be saved, and they would be on their way to heaven with nothing more to worry about. They wouldn't have to die 'in their sins', they could die 'in Christ!'

Which will it be for you when the time comes?

Will you die in your sins? Or will you die in Christ? With nothing to fear.

'Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.' (v.30) – Amen.

