



# The Battle between Light and Darkness

## John 8:12-30

### The Pharisees attack ...

1. His Credibility (verses 13-18)
2. His Identity (verses 19-20)
3. His Eternity (verses 21-24)
4. His Testimony (verse 25-30)

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you have had an opportunity to share something about the gospel with someone. Perhaps with your family members, as they have noticed a change in you, and you have been able to tell them that you have come to faith in Jesus and that's why you have changed. Perhaps with your friends, who have asked you to be involved in activities that you used to do with them, but are now no longer comfortable doing, and you have told them that Jesus has changed your desires, and you no longer want to do those things. Perhaps with those at work, who have asked you on a Monday morning how your weekend was, and you have told them how you really enjoyed your time at church on Sunday morning, especially your pastor's sermon! Perhaps with a stranger, who made some sort of inappropriate comments to you that you have responded to, saying, "Please don't use the name of my Savior in vain."

If you have never had any sort of such a conversation with anyone, I would encourage you to think deeply about your own life. Perhaps you are not a believer in Jesus. It is out of the heart that the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). If you have never spoken to anyone about something about the gospel, perhaps you haven't experienced such a change in your heart to speak about. Seek the Lord! Believe in him!

If it's because of the fear of others that you have never spoken to anyone about Jesus, I would encourage you to consider strongly the words of Jesus, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:25).

Now, if you have been a Christian for any longer period of time, you have probably had some pushback from others when you have talked with them about Jesus. Some of the pushback may have been small, like silence or disinterest, or maybe a comment like, "That's good for you" or "I'm happy for you." or maybe like changing the topic of conversation.

But some of the pushback may have been strong and attacking. Some of the attacks may be philosophical, like claiming that evil is inconsistent with a good God, or like science and the Bible are incompatible, or like the claim of contradictions in the Bible. Some of the attacks may come from a lack of faith, like expressing doubts about miracles, or the virgin birth, or the resurrection. Some of the attacks may come from rejecting the Bible's teaching, like the mere concept of hell, or like calling homosexuality a sin, or like the teaching of the Bible on slavery. Some of the attacks may come upon the person of Jesus, like rejecting his divinity, or even his existence! Some of the attacks may come upon you! Like, "Who are you to say these things? Do you remember what you have done?"

If you have had any sorts of conversations like this, you know how random these sorts of objections can be. It seems as if one objection comes, and as soon as you answer that one, another one comes out of nowhere! "Where did Cain get his wife?" "What about the Nephilim?" "Are women supposed to keep silent in the churches?" "What about slavery in the Bible?" Perhaps you have heard objection upon objection upon objection, making excuses for not believing in what you are saying. Do you know what I'm talking about?

The more aggressive you are in sharing the gospel with others, the objections will come stronger and stronger. Well, this is the sort of discussion (or argument) that we will see in our text today, as we come to John, chapter 8. In this chapter, we will see the Pharisees arguing with Jesus. They were not happy with Jesus, nor with what he was saying, and they were resisting him at every turn.

This is what John 8 is all about. It's about the Jews arguing with Jesus. We have a picture of this in which the two circles of the "8" are like the heads of two people who are arguing with each other.

This is the posture of those who were arguing with Jesus. Their objections to what he was saying come from every angle, it seems. They attack his credibility. They attack his identity. They attack his eternity. They attack his testimony. How these men argue with Jesus is similar to how unbelieving people today argue with those who speak about Jesus. So let's read our text:

### John 8:12-30

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the

temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

My message this morning is entitled, "The Battle between Light and Darkness," because, this is what we see in these verses. We see Jesus in verse 12 make the stunning claim, "I am the light of the world." Then, we see the light resisted at every turn by the darkness of the Pharisees. The arguments come fast and furious from all sorts of directions, just like I was talking about in my introduction, when you share the gospel with someone who is hostile to the gospel. The Jews are trying to do all that they can to discredit Jesus. The reason for their hostility can be traced back to verse 12.

Last week, I made a feeble attempt to imitate Spurgeon (which is foolish) by preaching a sermon on light as he did. I took verse 12 and spoke about light, but I didn't take it in context. That wasn't my purpose last week. But this week, I want for us to consider this verse in its historical context.

Verse 20 tells us that Jesus spoke these words, "in the treasury, as he taught in the temple." Many would hold that this ties us back to chapter 7, which took place during the feast of Booths (John 7:2). During that feast, every evening, they would light four huge lamps in the temple court, right where Jesus was teaching. "It was said that the light from these lamps was so bright it penetrated every courtyard in Jerusalem."<sup>[1]</sup>

The Mishnah (an ancient document of Judaism), says that "men of piety and good works used to dance before the oil lamps with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises." Meanwhile, "countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals and trumpets and instruments of music."<sup>[2]</sup>

The light festivities continued all night until dawn, every day of the feast. The light of these lamps was a big deal during this feast.

The closest that I can come to understand this event is back in 2000, when our oldest two children were 4 and 5 years old. During one of our summer trips to see Yvonne's parents in California, we took a trip to Los Angeles to visit some friends. We took a day to visit Disneyland, the happiest place on earth.

It was a great day. We purchased hats for our children at the Mad Hatter. We rode on all sorts of rides. Our children met Mickey Mouse. Carissa met a real princess, Cinderella. To culminate the day, there were fireworks right over the castle, which they do every night of the summer at Disneyland. As a father, I could not have asked for a more enjoyable day for our children than we experienced at Disneyland.

This is so like the feast of Booths, where Jews would travel from all around to arrive at the seven-day feast in Jerusalem. and every night, there would be this "lighting of the lamps." and dancing and music and songs of praise.

It was in that context that Jesus said to all in the treasury, "I am the light of the world!" What audacity! That Jesus would say that he was like the big lamps that were lit every evening. That they were all lit in anticipation of him coming into the temple. Then Jesus added to the claim, the promise, "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." What audacity that Jesus would urge people to follow after him! And that he would give them life! Jesus was redirecting the focus of the the feast that they were enjoying at the moment to himself!

Picture yourself at Disneyland! The fireworks are going off every night. Everyone is in awe of the lights! Then, someone stands and gets the attention of everybody and says, "I am the light of the world. Follow me!" We can be so familiar with Jesus, knowing that he is God in the flesh, believing that he can make such claims, that we miss what was going on at that feast with those who don't have the same understanding of who Jesus is.

Jesus was changing history at that moment! He was saying that the feast was no longer about the lighting of the lamps at the feast of booths! He was saying that the feast was about him! It would be like at Thanksgiving time, someone arises and says, "Let's give thanks about me!"

Well, it's no wonder that the Pharisees were angry with Jesus. We see the Pharisees try to resist Jesus at every turn. This was because he was light. And they were darkness.

Please know this, that whenever you engage unbelievers in sharing with them about Jesus, the same thing takes place. It's a battle between light and darkness. Consider Colossians 1:13-14, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." When someone comes to Christ, they move from darkness to light. But when you talk with them, a battle is going on. It's a battle between light and darkness.

Let's look at this battle in our text. First off, we see the Pharisees attack Jesus by attacking

## 1. His Credibility (verses 13-18)

Look there in verse 13,

John 8:13

So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."

Flat out, they said, "You are wrong Jesus!" Note the reasoning: Jesus was wrong because he was testifying about himself.

The law of Moses was clear: two witnesses were needed to confirm a fact in a court of law. "A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15). This carries over to many things. You don't believe everyone who speaks. "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him" (Proverbs 18:17).

This is the importance of being peer reviewed in the academic circles, that those in the know may verify the truthfulness of papers, with a second set of eyes. In matters of church discipline, when two or three come and speak to you about your sin, you one needs to listen. Because, "by the evidence of two or three witnesses" is every charge established (Matthew 18:16). Regarding accusations against elders, it takes two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

In many ways, the argument of these Pharisees is sound. Anyone can stand up and say outlandish things. We aren't to believe everyone! Jesus begins by acknowledging the strength of their argument,

John 8:14

"Even if I do bear witness about myself,

Jesus understands that he is bearing witness about himself. But, he insists,

John 8:14

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.

As I read these verses, I thought about the ice cream that Doug has made, particularly, his strawberry ice cream. The first time that he gave me a quart of the ice cream he said something to the effect of, "This strawberry ice cream that I made is the best strawberry ice cream that you will ever have. And I'm not bragging, because it's true." Now, of course, Doug is said this tongue-in-cheek. But, having tasted the ice cream, I would agree with Doug, that it's true!

This is similar to what Jesus says in verse 14, "My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going." He's not saying it as a tongue-in-cheek matter. He is dead earnest. He says, "Yes, two witnesses are needed to confirm facts in a court of law. But I'm saying that my testimony is true. I am the light of the world."

But Jesus doesn't stop there. He does bring in another witness. He brings in his heavenly Father.

John 8:15-18

You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."

Again, he affirms the need for two witnesses. And he brings in two witnesses: (1) Jesus, himself and (2) the Father who sent him.

At this point, my question is about how exactly has the Father testified about Jesus. Is that through the Scriptures? the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus? Is Jesus talking about his baptism? when the Father declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Is Jesus talking about his miracles? how they testify to the power of his Father working through him?

Listen to Jesus' words in John 5:36-37, "For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen." If they haven't heard the voice of the Father, then how is he a credible witness?

These are the sorts of follow-up questions that I would have had for Jesus after he said that the Father is his second witness to back his own credibility. But not the Pharisees. They objected at a lower level.

John 8:19

They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?"

With these words, the Pharisees are attacking

## **2. His Identity (verses 19-20)**

They said, "Jesus, you are claiming to have a second witness, your Father." Well, Where is he?" But in the answer that Jesus gives, he doesn't answer the "where" question. Jesus answers the "who" question.

John 8:19

Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

These are fighting words. Remember the picture we have used for John, chapter 8 of the two men arguing with each other? Jesus isn't

pulling any punches here. He says, "You ask about where my Father is, but you don't even know him." In fact, he says, "You don't know me." "You don't know my Father." "You don't know anything!"

Do you feel the weight of the boldness of Jesus?

Think about who Jesus is saying this to! He is saying this to the Pharisees, to the experts in the religion of the day. They are the ones who knew all about God. And Jesus here insults them to their face, telling them that they did not know God! right in front of their followers in the temple on their turf! These were the religious authorities who could arrest him and take him away by force. Yet, we read in verse 20,

John 8:20

These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

That's a note to the reader. Jesus wasn't arrested because a divine timetable had been set. and now was not the time for his arrest. We have seen this before. "They were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, *because his hour had not yet come*" (John 7:30). We will see this again, when his hour will come, for him to be taken away to be crucified for our sins! In John 17:1, Jesus prayed, "Father, the hour has come."

Though Jesus insulted these Pharisees to their face, God was protecting him from harm at the moment. I think about our Bible reading. Psalm 16 is the reading for today. The Psalm begins with David's prayer, "Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge." This is what Jesus was doing. He was taking refuge in God. He was willing to be bold, even when these Pharisees attacked his credibility and his identity. because he knew that the loving hand of his Father would be his refuge.

By application the same comes to all of us as well. If you are bold at all in sharing your faith, people will turn on you. They may attack your credibility. "You can't trust the Bible." "That's your interpretation." "Many scholars say the opposite of what you are saying." They may attack your identity. "Who are you to say these things?" "Why are you telling me these things?"

I would encourage you this morning to do what Jesus did. Be bold in speaking with others about Jesus. Take refuge in God. Trust and rest in Christ, everything that he speaks of in this chapter is true. Jesus is the one who was sent by the Father. His testimony is true. He is the one to trust, not the religious traditions of the Pharisees.

Please know that you won't always face such attacks as Jesus did for sharing your faith. This past Monday as I was playing pool, I had a guy approach me at the beginning of the night. He's probably the roughest guy in the place, having spent time in prison. He said, to me, "Steve, I need to apologize to you." I said, "How so?" He says, "I keep forgetting that you are a pastor. I have foul language. My mouth speaks bad things. I'm sorry that you need to hear it." I said, "Listen, you have no reason to apologize to me. God is the one to whom you need to apologize to. He hears your every word. I'm not here to judge you or condemn you. You need to deal with the Lord." The conversation ended peacefully. We had some kind words by the end of the night.

Any sort of pushback usually comes from religious people, who think that they are in the know, and think that you are wrong.

Let's continue on with this debate that Jesus is having with these Pharisees. Jesus continues on with his boldness:

John 8:21-22

So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." 22 So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'"

In these verses, the Pharisees are attacking

### 3. His Eternity (verses 21-24)

Jesus brings up the death and damnation of the Pharisees. "You will die in your sin. We are going different places."

The Pharisees thought that Jesus was talking about killing himself. In Jewish tradition, suicide was a dark sin of insane people. It's a breaking of the sixth commandment, "You shall not kill." which includes yourself. The Mishnah stated that those who committed suicide were not allowed a proper burial.<sup>[3]</sup> Some held that those who committed suicide would not be a part of the resurrection, they would go to the grave, never to rise again.

Regarding Christianity, suicide is indeed a dark sin. suicide is committed by evil people, or by those who have sunk so far in their depression that they have lost all hope. But it's not the unforgivable sin. In other words, people can believe in Christ, and commit suicide in a moment of weakness. That one moment doesn't define their eternity. But these Pharisees thought that suicide would define the eternity of Jesus. Would he stoop so low as to kill himself? Because if he did, he would be in a different place than the Pharisees after death.

Jesus quickly corrected their error.

John 8:23

He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world."

The Pharisees would have put themselves above, and the would have put Jesus in the grave. Yet, Jesus reversed it. He said, "You are from below; I am from above."

Jesus often spoke of how he came from his Father above. "God gave his only son" (John 3:16). "The Father has sent me" (John 5:36). "The Father has sent me" (John 5:37). In John 17:5, Jesus will speak about returning to the Father to be in his presence.

Jesus was a heavenly man. Sent from heaven, returning to heaven. Unlike the Pharisees, who were earthly men, men of this world. Jesus draws the contrast here, that they will never be with him in heaven with his Father. "Where I am going, you cannot come." Because "you will die in your sin" (verse 21).

Most people are like the Pharisees. They think that they are good people, who will end up in heaven with the Lord. Again, I was talking with a guy this week when I was playing pool at the end of the evening. I suspect that he was talking with his fellow teammate who apologized to me earlier in the evening.

He honored me by saying, "I have the utmost respect for all of the work that you do as a priest." I tried to explain to him that I wasn't a priest. "I'm a pastor." It didn't make sense to him, but the point was the same. He expressed his appreciation for the work that I do, seeking to help people. Then he opined about his attitude on life. He said, "I'm just here to have a good time. You know that. I just want to drink, smoke weed, and play pool. I'm a good person. I want to have peace and a good time." He then proceeded to tell me of his divorce, and how he was hoping to spend some time this evening with a woman engaged in sin. Yet all the time talking about what a good guy he was. He thinks that all is well with him! But it's not! But this is how people think! Just like the Pharisees, who thought that they were from above, and Jesus was from below.

Now, there's hope for such people. Jesus give the hope in verse 24,

John 8:24

I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

He have a subtle sighting of another "I am." This whole passage has been governed by the "I am" of verse 12, "I am the light of the world." Yet, there are other times in the gospel of John, where he alludes to him being the "I am," the being God.

We see it here in verse 24, "Unless you believe that 'I am,' you will die in your sins! This is yet another call in the gospel of John to believe in Jesus. We return once again to John's purpose in writing. "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). This is the call to the Pharisees. This is the call for you all. This is the call that we should press upon those we speak with: "Believe in Jesus."

What an amazing thing here in John, chapter 8, that Jesus offers to forgive those who are so strong against him, and opposed. Lest you think that forgiveness of sins is offered only to the good people. Jesus offered forgiveness through faith in him! The hope comes directly to all of us this morning, that if we believe in Jesus, we will not die in our sins! because Jesus died for our sins. So believe in Jesus this morning.

OK, let's move on! In "The Battle between Light and Darkness," the Pharisees have attacked, (1) The Credibility of Jesus (verses 13-18); (2) The Identity of Jesus (verses 19-20); and (3) The Eternity of Jesus (verses 21-24). Then, beginning in verse 25, we see them attacking

#### **4. His Testimony (verse 25-30)**

John 8:25

So they said to him, "Who are you?"

I sense a bit of exasperation in these words. "Who do you think you are, that you would say such things about yourself?" In doubting Jesus, they are doubting the testimony that he has been giving to them. Jesus goes right back at it.

John 8:25-26

Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him."

Jesus said the same things to them. I am true. God is true. I'm just saying what the Father told me to say.

John 8:27

They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.

These Pharisees were dark in their understanding. They were without God and without hope in this world (see Ephesians 2:12). Jesus brings it back to the cross.

John 8:28-29

So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

What an amazing statement! When Jesus is lifted up, these hard hearted Pharisees will know that Jesus is the "I am." Do you remember the Centurion who witnessed the death of Jesus? This man was in charge of putting Jesus to death. But seeing how he died, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39).

In a similar way, Jesus says that these Jews will also come to know that Jesus is the "I am." He said that they would know that he has come to please the father in all ways. This was exactly opposite of what these Pharisees were doing, especially as they opposed Jesus at every step. At this moment in the life of Jesus, they were opposing him at every step. But once he died, Jesus said that they would know something different.

Now, it's not that they all would come to saving faith and trust in him. I suspect that their knowledge was much like Pharaoh's during the plagues. He saw the power of God. He knew it was the power of God. But he hardened his heart against submitting to his rule and reign.

There is a difference between knowing and believing. There's a difference between knowing that Jesus is divine. It's trusting in him. It's giving yourself to him, who died for you. Jesus said that these Pharisees would indeed know that Jesus was true. But these same Pharisees would go on to persecute the apostles. They never came to saving faith because of their knowledge. Yet, the death of Jesus was his vindication that he was the "I am."

What about you? Have you passed from knowing to believing? In order to believe, you have to know. Paul said this about preaching, "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Romans 10:14). People have to hear, so that they can know about Jesus. But knowing is only the first thing.

The real think is to believe and trust. Do you believe? Do you trust? Or do you just know the truth about Jesus?

John 8:30

As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

This is yet another astonishing statement! Surely, this is a reference beyond these Pharisees who were arguing with Jesus. Surely it is a reference to the crowds. But we know how fickle the crowds were. In chapter 6, there were 5,000 people who were fed and believing in him. Yet, when Jesus refused to feed them all again, almost all of them left him (John 6:66). Only the twelve continued faithfully to follow Jesus.

But here we see the statement of John that many were believing in Jesus as they heard this public debate between Jesus and the Pharisees.

In all of the argumentation, Jesus was clear in his message. When the light was shown at the feast, he said, "I am the light of the world." This ensued an argument, which many in the crowd witnessed proved the fact that the light has conquered the darkness (John 1:5). Jesus won the argument. Light conquered the darkness.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 23, 2025 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

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[1] See <https://israelmyglory.org/article/the-feast-of-tabernacles-in-the-days-of-jesus/>.

[2] Mishnah Sukkot 5:4.

[3] Mishnah, Sanhedrin 6:5.