

Exegetical Notes, John 8:12-29
“The Debate Continues”

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John 8:12-29

Verses 12-18

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

¹³ *The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”*

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

- Following the experience with the woman who was caught in the act of adultery (see John 7:53-8:11), Jesus continued to teach in the Temple courts.
- Jesus taught the people that he was “the light of the world.” He taught that “those who believed in him would not walk in darkness.” He meant that he would light their way and lead them in the direction they should go. He promised that he would be “the light of life,” the light that leads people to salvation.
- Jesus’ statement brought a challenge from the authorities. For them, the concept of light was closely associated with God (see Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 60:19, Job 29:3, Micah 7:8). They would have heard Jesus claiming to be God, the Messiah, in this remark about being the light of the world, and they heard exactly what Jesus meant for them to hear. In saying this, he was claiming to be Israel’s Messiah. The authorities challenged Jesus claiming that as he was the only one bearing witness to this claim, it was invalid. Jewish law required at least two witnesses to agree to any charge or claim before it was considered to be true. Since Jesus was the only witness to it, the claim could not be accepted as true.

- Jesus answered the challenge. First, he said that even if he was the only witness to the claim, his testimony was sufficient to prove it for he was the Messiah. Second, he said that the second witness to the truth of the claim was “the Father who had sent him.” So there were two witnesses to the validity of his claim to be the light of the world; he and the Father.
- Jesus returned the challenge to the Temple authorities by insisting that they did not know what they were talking about for two reasons: they denied his place of origin and they judged him by human standards.

Verses 19-20

Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

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

- The authorities then asked Jesus to tell them who his father was and where his father was. This was because they thought that they knew Jesus’ father to be Joseph, the carpenter in Nazareth.
- Jesus’ response was meant to point out that they did not know him or the Father, for to know one is to know them both.
- While his responses were undoubtedly direct and very offensive, no one rose up against Jesus because it was not yet time for him to go to the cross.

Verses 21-24

Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”

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

²³ *But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

- In John 7:34, Jesus had told them that after a little while they would look for him and not be able to find him. He repeats that claim in verse 21. Soon he will return to Heaven. The authorities will look for him but not be able to find him because their refusal to believe in him disqualifies them from going to Heaven.
- The authorities thought he was talking about killing himself.

- Jesus told them that they could not go to Heaven because they did not believe in him.

Verses 25-29

“Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied. ²⁶ “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

²⁷ They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, “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 but speak just what the Father has taught me.

²⁹ The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”

- Again they demanded to know who Jesus was claiming to be.
- Jesus told them that he was who he claimed to be from the beginning, the Messiah sent from God. He claimed that he had much to say in judgment of them because they rejected his claim to be the Messiah. However, he claimed that his claim to be the Messiah was true because God was trustworthy.
- The Bible says that Jesus’ words confused the authorities. He said that after they had crucified him, they might understand that he was not making any claim for himself.

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