

# The testimony of Jesus contested

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn then to John chapter 8, and we're going to look not at everything that was read, but at the first verses 12 to around 20.

So, while you're finding John chapter 8, verse 12, let me say something about our method of operation.

We, particularly in the mornings, we follow through what Scripture says bit by bit. That means sometimes we're looking at easy, obvious pieces of Scripture, and sometimes we're looking at things that are a little bit more difficult to follow.

And that's the beauty of going through bit by bit, chapter by chapter. And I think this one is not so easy. But nevertheless, it's in God's Word, so we have prayed that God would speak to us, and we look to Him to do so.

So, we're going to think about this. Start with this saying, Jesus said, I am the light of the world. It's there in verse 12. Let's think about the importance of light to the world.

[ 1 : 32 ] Is light an important thing? In fact, when God made the world, in Genesis chapter 1, verse 2, it's one of the first things that He said and did.

And God said, let there be light. Think of life on this earth. The thing that provides light to us is the sun.

Almost all other light is reflected from the sun. Daylight comes from the sun. And the sun produces all sorts of effects. It is so important.

It produces warmth. So, do you remember when there was the total eclipse for a few minutes, a few years ago? Do you know just how cold it went? The sun produces not only light, but warmth.

And where there is that sunlight, there is life. So, I've drawn a beautiful tree. And not only for the world of vegetation, because that's where our food comes from, doesn't it?

[ 2 : 44 ] The light produces chemicals in leaves. And the leaves then produce chemicals which turn into food.

So, it's very, very important. It produces life. And there's humanity doing something productive. And Jesus Himself said, when it's dark, you can't work.

So, you need sight. You need to see where you're going. You need that information. And that knowledge of where you're walking.

Where the tree is. Where your spade is. And all sorts of work and activity come from light. And if you think about it, without that light, life would just be impossible.

And that's true in the world, which is the physical world and the world of human knowledge. The mental world of humanity.

[ 3 : 45 ] And how much more true is that picture when it comes to the spiritual realities and the personal realities of this universe.

To do with God. To do with people made in His image. Jesus, or no, in John's Gospel, right at the beginning, it says of the word, In Him was life.

And that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not understood it. And right at the beginning of John's Gospel, he says, now just think about this.

In the beginning was the word. The word was with God. The word was God. In Him was life. That life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness. Referring to Jesus. And then it also says, The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

[ 4 : 56 ] So light, now we're thinking not just physically, but spiritually. There is a light and a life which gives light to everybody. And that light came into the world when Jesus came into the world.

And I've got a little picture of something with seven branches on it. Anybody, any guess what that might be meant to be? Yeah, a menorah. What's a menorah?  
It's a Jewish candlestick. Yes. Do you know where the original one was that that's a sort of copy of? In the tabernacle in the temple.

Yes, there was a, the tabernacle would have been dark. It didn't have any windows. And in that place where God was, a light was shining in a dark place.  
So the idea of light is very important. And if you think about it, not just important for ordinary life, but it goes further than that.

[ 6 : 00 ] So we're looking at Jesus saying, I am the light of the world. And he goes on to say, and I'm quoting, whoever follows me will never or not, definitely not, walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

What an amazing statement. Somebody can say, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me, they too will have light.

They will not, not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And that's, we're going to follow through as Jesus said this.

Now let's put it into context. He was in Jerusalem. He was at the Feast of Tabernacles. Tabernacle is a strange sort of word, but it just means tents.

And this was a national Jewish holiday or festival. It was the festival that reminded them of the time when they were, had temporary homes.

[ 7 : 14 ] In other words, they lived in tents as they were trekking from Egypt, the place of slavery, to the promised land, the place of freedom.

And they hadn't got there yet, but they were en route to the promised land, and they lived in tents. And this is meant to remind them of that. And during the Feast of Tabernacles, there was a water pouring ceremony, and there was a lighting ceremony with great big lights.

Don't know how they were worked, presumably not by electricity. And it was said in one of these Jewish documents, it says the Jewish Mishnah from Sukkah 5, verses 1 to 4, if that's any help. But this is what was said. He who has not seen the joy of the place of water drawing has never in his life seen joy. Such a terrific, amazing ceremony there in Jerusalem.

All getting very excited about it. There was dancing and there was singing. And this is the situation. Interestingly, Jesus said, if you thirst, come to me.

[ 8 : 21 ] And here he says, I am the light of the world. And I'd like to think about this with three headings, which I have neatened up, so they all begin with C, if that's any help.

Claim and Challenge and Confirmation. So let's look first of all at the claim. This is what Jesus is claiming. Jesus claims to be spiritually and really what the sun is physically.

That's what he's doing, isn't it? He's saying, as important as the sun is to physical human existence and the life of this world in that sense, Jesus says, well, I'm like that on the deeper level of reality, of God, if you like, spiritually.

When I say spiritually, I don't mean less real. I mean more real. So Jesus is saying, I am the source of light and life and sight and information and knowledge and all work and activity is done by me.

Only work and activity that's worth doing, if you might put it in that rather crude way. And he's saying, I shed light. I am the source of light.

[ 9 : 50 ] It all comes from me. And if you can see anything else, it's because of his light. Rather like the sun is the reason that we can see our newspaper and our book.

By his light and only by his light, we see everything else clearly. In other words, the world and its meaning can only be seen clearly in the light of Jesus.

And other people can only be seen clearly in the light of Jesus. And we ourselves, we don't know ourselves unless we put ourselves in the light of Jesus.

And only in the light of Jesus do we see the beginning of things. And only in the light of Jesus do we truly see the end of things. And only in the light of Jesus can we see clearly to take the very next step in our lives.

Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

[ 11 : 03 ] That's what Jesus is claiming. It's a claim about himself and it's a claim about what it is to follow him.

It's a claim about what it is to follow him. Notice he does say follow. If you follow me you will have the light of life.

And that's not quite the same thing as talking religion. Actually quite a lot of people can talk religion. They can talk about being a Methodist or being a Buddhist.

They can talk about being a Protestant or being a Catholic. And Jesus isn't saying talking is very illuminating. He's saying talking may or may not be illuminating but the light I give I give to people who follow me.

And he's not just talking about religion. He's not saying well you can get enlightenment and Buddhism and there's certain amount of good things you can learn from Hinduism.

[12:09] And everybody has a bit of light. Everybody has a spark within themselves. He's not saying that. He's not saying that. He's saying I am the light of the world.

that's where the light comes from. That is the source of light. There are not many sources of light. There is one source of light as there is one sun that shines upon us.

That's where light is to be found and you need to follow me. And following Jesus then involves boil it down trusting and obeying.

trusting and obeying. If you really trust Jesus you will obey him. If you only talk about it but you don't do anything it's not really faith.

James says you talk about your faith but unless it actually translates into action it's not really faith at all it's just talk. So Jesus claims to give light to every follower.

[13:16] And what sort of light does he give? he being the source of all knowledge and the source of all understanding and the only way to see everything. What sort of light does he give?

Well I'd like to suggest to you that the Bible doesn't say if you follow Jesus you will therefore know how to play chess. You might think it does imply that but Jesus isn't saying I give every piece of knowledge I who know everything and shed light on everything I give every piece of knowledge to every follower.

He's not actually saying that is he? If you become a believer you don't necessarily then know how to play chess. You don't necessarily know the end from the beginning.

Now God knows the end from the beginning and Jesus himself says I know my end and my beginning but following Jesus doesn't necessarily mean that every follower will also know the end from the beginning but what it does do it seems to me is that Jesus says you will know enough with certainty that you can live your life.

I think that's what Jesus is saying. There will be enough light shed that you will know how to live and it won't be guesswork it will be certainty.

[14:43] Have you ever gone for a walk on a dark night? Have you ever had one of these head torches make you look really stupid? Probably you might not even need a head torch.

I should not go down that way should I? But it doesn't show you everything it just shows you the bit in front of you and that's all you need. And I think Jesus is saying if you follow me I don't necessarily promise that you'll see everything but you will have the light of life you will not walk in darkness and I would like to venture to say that there is enough light for our life there is enough light to help us deal with trouble there is enough light to shed joy into our lives there is enough light for us to make the decisions we need to make there is enough light for us to face the darkness of death there is enough light to give us hope and there is enough light to give us peace and I think that would be enough wouldn't it?

Would you be satisfied with that? Jesus says I am the light of the world if you follow me you will have the light of life and not walk in darkness and I think that's a great promise it's a practical promise and a valuable promise so that's claim now let us look at challenge because John the gospel writer does not go on to enlarge on the meaning of light as such but he does go on to look at the challenge that Jesus faced and John chapter 7 and 8 are full of contradictions and challenges and controversy and so the Jews challenge him do you see that in verse 13 the Pharisees in particular challenged him so there are the Pharisees challenging Jesus and they have a particular reason for challenging they say here you are appearing as your own witness your testimony is not valid though let me point out the importance of the word testimony and they're saying one person saying something in an unsupported way is not acceptable as a true witness so let me first of all invite you to look at the word testimony which appears in the text at various different points therefore it's important verse 13 your testimony is not valid verse 14 even if I testify on my own behalf my testimony is valid and verse 17 in your own law it is written that the testimony of two men

is valid

I am the one who testifies for myself the other testifying person it is the word for testimony but it's translated witness the other witness is the father so there's a lot about testimony do you understand testimony it's when people say this is what I saw this is what I'm telling you it's testimony it's testifying the person who does it is a witness in Greek it's all the same word and another preoccupation of the passage is true it gets translated different ways but it crops up again and again so in verse 13 the word valid is could equally be translated true single testimony your testimony is not true verse 14 even if I testify on my own behalf my testimony is true and verse 16 if I do judge my judgments are true actually it's the word true there and what did I say verse 16 verse 17 in your own law it is written that the testimony of two men is true and it's actually there also in verse 26 where it's do I mean 26

I have much to say in judgment of you but he who sent me is true so there's a lot about being true and as I say the translation doesn't always make that quite clear so Jesus is saying I am something and they're saying you're just saying that on your own so we're not going to believe you because your testimony is not true that's the challenge and here's the rub here's the question Jesus says I am the light of the world so do you remember my illustration of the light shining from the screen that's where the light comes from and what the Pharisees are trying to do is take their own little torches and shine it on there to make things clearer and it doesn't it doesn't work what light do you shine on the sun to investigate it how can you prove the existence of the sun by shining a torch onto it do you see how do you prove the existence of the sun here we are let's go out onto Brighton beach

[ 20 : 32 ] I think it might be sunny how do you prove the existence of the sun well you you just look don't you it's there turning the sometimes when it's dark no do I mean that yes when we turn the lights on in here it doesn't help see the overhead screen that's the sun is its own proof you can't prove it by shining a light on it the sun proves itself if you want a long word for it or two words it's self authenticating you don't prove it by something else the sun proves itself so something there about the challenge now let's look at how Jesus rebuffs that challenge it's very interesting how he does it not quite sure I understand all of it but this is what I offer this morning that Jesus rebuffs this challenge they've said you need confirmation you're just standing there saying this yourself but

Jesus says well let's follow what he does say verse 14 even if I testify on my own behalf my testimony is true for I know where I came from and I know where I'm going but you have no idea where I come from or where I am going it's a rather lovely translation that you have no idea it very much brings across the thought of it which actually says I know you don't know but you have no idea is brilliant and Jesus is saying I know truth you don't there is such a thing as truth I know it and you don't know it that's the real state of affairs there is such a thing as truth Jesus says I know the truth and you don't you have no idea notice what Jesus doesn't say 21st century people might like him to have said well no one can really know these things

God has just left us hints in the universe we don't really know no one can really know that's sort of what the previous Archbishop of Canterbury said but Jesus doesn't say that he doesn't say well you know each of us has our own thoughts about the world and reality and no one knows anything for sure see Jesus doesn't say that he says I know exactly I know you don't my testimony is true not a problem with my with me I know there is a truth I know it and you don't simple as that second thing that he says is in the next verses where he says in verse 15 you judge by human standards I pass judgment on no one but if I do judge my decisions are right because

I am not alone it's sort of flipped over into judgment but that's what the Pharisees are doing they're judging Jesus Jesus says you're trying to judge me incidentally I'm not judging you at this particular moment we'll see some more about that in a moment but what he says about them is you are judging by human standards literally according to the flesh you're using your own little torch and that's all you've got and that's all you're doing and you're using that and it won't work he's saying something quite serious and quite profound about human endeavours to know Jesus and he's saying if you try and do it using science and history and psychology and the advanced tools of scholarship all the human tools that is not enough to capture me you are judging according to the flesh and that isn't big enough and strong enough to understand me it is like

I tried to think of an illustration this is one that came to mind you're in a thunderstorm and a thunder and lightning and you say isn't this storm big yeah it's a really big storm it's the biggest storm I've seen this summer let's measure it how should we measure it I've got a tape measure my wife

carries around a tape measure in her bag it's very useful measure curtains we can measure a thunderstorm with it and you think what a ridiculous stupid thing to do I mean for a start you know the tape measure is only this big anyway and it's the wrong sort of thing you can't measure a thunderstorm with a tape measure it's just the wrong sort of thing and he's I think this is what Jesus is saying you're trying to measure me by human standards you'll never understand me by human standards I'm bigger than that remember Paul saying we used to we used to know Jesus according to the flesh but we don't know him that way anymore he's bigger than that you use human tools to judge whether they're tools of scholarship or intuition or whatever notice what

[ 26 : 13 ] Jesus does my third point here Jesus makes himself the key to knowledge he makes himself the key to knowledge in other words you don't know Jesus by getting the key somewhere and then seeing what it says about Jesus it's the other way around Jesus is the key to knowledge so what he says in verse 14 I think this is a rather to me puzzling statement verse 14 even if I testify on my own behalf my testimony is true ok prove it but he says well I know where I come from and I know where I'm going and you don't know where I come from and you don't know where I'm going therefore you have no idea and I think what Jesus is doing is saying if you haven't understood me you can't understand anything if you understand the whole world you know

$E \text{ equals } MC \text{ squared}$   $F \text{ equals } MA \text{ S equals } UT \text{ plus half } AT \text{ squared}$  these are all equations you see I've understood everything now and Jesus says no you haven't because you haven't understood me and unless you understand me the whole universe remains a riddle to you nothing else fits into place I know says Jesus my origin my destination you don't therefore you're stuck and notice what he says in verse 19 they say well tell us this about the father what's all this about and Jesus says you do not know me or my father if you knew me you would know my father also if you had understood me if you had grasped who I am the magnitude of who I am the reality of who I am then and only then will you have access to the father no one comes to the father except through me you've got to grasp me before you can go on to understand the father and Jesus is making himself the key isn't he he's making himself the key to understanding life the universe and everything so if you want to put it this way

Jesus is the first riddle to solve you don't solve all the other riddles and then Jesus sort of follows on once you've climbed up that far he's saying here's your number one question who am I now you won't get anywhere until you've answered that question satisfactorily you won't understand yourself you won't understand your life you won't understand this world you won't understand where we've come from you won't understand where we're going to you won't understand the value of anything or the meaning of anything until you have understood who I am says Jesus so here's another thing we were talking about judgment and then Jesus makes some statements here in a very Jesus like way and I've summarized it Jesus does not make judgment his main current task you're judging me verse 15 you judge by human standards

I judge no one now if John's gospel works like this you get contradictory statements with just a full stop separating them he came to his own but his own received him not yet to those who did receive him he gave the authority to become children of God so no one came and some did come that sort of contradiction and Jesus expresses the same thing here I don't judge anybody but when I do judge I judge rightly he does not make judgment his main current task let's take that statement I do not judge verse 15 and then the next statement verse 16 when I do judge or as and when I judge my decisions my judgments are true because I am not alone I with the father who sent me have a think about that

I think we could say these two things number one Jesus did not come first of all to condemn the world but to save the world so this particular point as Jesus is talking to the Pharisees although he could say many things to condemn them there and then that's not what he's aiming to do he's aiming to save them he's aiming to save them it's interesting all this dialogue all this argument Jesus could just have cut it all short and said forget you lot and in a sense he could have sent them to hell straight away but what he's doing is dialoguing with them to save them isn't he I didn't come to condemn the world but to save the world and this is the day of grace this is the time at which Jesus is in the business of not condemning people and writing them off but redeeming and saving and then there is a sense that Jesus is often very cautious about the way he expresses this he is the judge he is the judge of the living and the dead one day we will all meet

[ 32 : 06 ] Jesus we will all have to stand before him and he will determine our final destiny that's why it's so important to get to know Jesus now before that day comes but Jesus is at pains to point

out even in judgment it is not his private decision he is doing what he only ever does which is to express precisely the will of the father so he says when I judge my judgments are true because I am not alone he says I am the father who sent me in other places he would perhaps spell that out a bit further I do exactly the father's will so that was number four and let's say a couple more things under this heading confirmation

Jesus is saying that his testimony is true because in fact it is not just one person on their own but it is something confirmed by a second person that is the father I don't know whether you've ever thought about this but you could go down London road and make all sorts of bizarre statements you could go down our local street and you could stand out and you could stand and cry in a loud voice I am a dust bin I haven't tried it I don't recommend it but it could be done do you think people would believe you you could go and you could say I am Napoleon now the fact that you said it doesn't make it true and this is really what people are saying to Jesus you could say that but just saying it doesn't make it true but Jesus says well the difference is this the person saying I am a dust bin it's just their opinion

I don't think there's anybody else going to back them up you know city clean will not write in and say here's a dust bin we emptied in last week so Jesus is saying I witnesses with him and how does the father confirm the witness of Jesus well one thing is that Jesus always insists that what he says are the words of the father he never says anything that is just him he only ever accurately brilliantly perfectly expresses the father so the words of Jesus are the words of the father but not only the words of the father but the works of the father so on another occasion

Jesus says well look at what I'm doing feeding the five thousand opening the eyes of the blind walking on water changing water into wine these things they're undeniable if it was a crime scene whose fingerprints would be on the crime scene whose fingerprints are on the feeding of the five thousand whose fingerprints are on walking on water I'll tell you the answer I am died died! died died! died died! died died! died! died!!! died! died that's a shortened form of the name of God, the God of the Bible. And Jesus says, if you look at my works, you will see the Father's fingerprints.

[ 36 : 07 ] The Father himself is backing me up. And if you think about it, if God wasn't with Jesus, what on earth was God doing allowing these miracles to happen?

There is the works of the Father and the huge testimony of the words of the Father in Scripture. And did you notice even in, did we have it in that passage?

Maybe not. I think it was another passage that we read earlier this morning. Jesus is constantly aware that his life fits in with Scripture, is formed by the template of Scripture, is in obedience to Scripture, the Word of God in other words.

And the words of the Father in Scripture are constantly witnessing to Jesus. And Jesus says, I'm not on my own. I'm not crazy. Go and read your own law.

All the things that it says there, all the things that Moses says, whom you put your trust in, are actually talking about me. Look at the things I've been doing. What do you think they are?

[ 37 : 25 ] Just conjuring tricks. They are the witness of the Father to the unique person of Jesus. Jesus' testimony is true. So, can we reach a solution?

Can we reach a solution about knowing Jesus? If the sun shines, and people get out their torches to try and prove it, or people just say, prove it, prove the sun's shining, I don't think it's a problem with the sun.

I think it's a problem with the people who are saying, prove it. And there's a word for it, if you can't tell whether the sun's shining. It's the word blindness.

The inability to see light is called blindness. And I think this is what this passage of scripture is about.

The Pharisees are blind. They can't see what's obvious. Jesus is trying to help them. He's talking them through it. He's trying to open their eyes.

[ 38 : 47 ] And we sang it, didn't we? Light of the world, come down into our darkness. Open, is it opened or open my eyes? Let me see.

Jesus is, sorry, that should say is. Jesus is not only the sun, shining, but he is the saviour, redeeming. And we need to pray, open my eyes.

The problem is with me. Open my eyes. Let me see the light that's there all the time. Open my eyes to be able to see it.

In chapter 9, we find three verses in a row. Verse 5, Jesus says, I am the light of the world. In verse 6, he touched a blind man's eyes. Actually, he spat, made mud, put it on the blind man's eyes.

[ 39 : 52 ] And verse 7, do you know what happened in verse 7? When the light of the world met a blind man, the blind man went home, seeing.

Seeing. That's the miracle of becoming a Christian. Let's sing together.

