

While You Have the Light

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- [0 : 0 0] Let's start by remembering our place in the story. Jesus has ridden into the city of Jerusalem to shouts of Hosanna. There were the Greeks who wanted to meet with Jesus. That triggered a moment of trouble in the soul of Jesus as he sees that the hour of his suffering is quite near. Jesus prayed to his father out loud, and God the Father answered back from heaven in an audible voice.
- And then Jesus has been talking to this crowd, explaining about how this hour that has come has big implications for judgment, for the kingdom of this world, and for the people of the world.
- The last thing that we heard Jesus say was in John 12, verse 32. Verse 32. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.
- He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. The crowd listening to this now speaks. Verse 34.
- [1 : 2 2] The crowd spoke up. We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can you say the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?
- So there are people in the crowd there who are thinking. And the big question on their minds is, is Jesus the Messiah? Is he the king that God promised long ago?
- That special king of God's choosing? Is Jesus that one? I mean, Jesus has just been paraded into the city to shouts of, blessed is the king of Israel.
- So some people obviously believe that he is. And these folks here in this crowd are thinking about it. They're listening to what Jesus is saying.
- They heard him say, I will be lifted up. And it seems from their question that some of them kind of understood a little bit of what he meant.
- [2 : 2 8] We've heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can you say the Son of Man must be lifted up? At the least, they understood that to be lifted up meant for Jesus to be taken away.
- Or perhaps they even recognized that it meant lifted up as in to die. Crucifixion. But we've heard from the law that when the Messiah comes, he will remain forever.
- They had certain ideas and expectations about how things would go for the Messiah when he came. One of those expectations was that when he did come, he would come to stay forever.
- And so they're looking at Jesus and thinking, well, that doesn't fit if you're saying that you're about to die or to be taken away from us. How does that work? The crowd also says that they get this idea from the law.
- That is, from the scriptures that Moses wrote long ago, the first five books of the Bible. And if we're looking at their question closely, we can kind of see a little bit of what's going on in their minds.

[3 : 49] It seems that they saw the Messiah and the Son of Man as being the same person. See if you see that in the question. We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever.

So how can you say the Son of Man must be lifted up? How can that be true about the Son of Man, that he will be lifted up if the Messiah will remain forever when he comes?

Jesus has often and obviously referred to himself as the Son of Man on many occasions. And there are many in Israel who are declaring that Jesus is the Messiah.

And to some who have asked along the way, Jesus has even admitted it point blank. Yes, I am the Messiah. But now the people are wrestling with this.

How can all this that has been promised long ago by God through the prophets, how can that all be true, Jesus, if you're about to die?

[4 : 54] If you're about to be lifted up to die or if you're about to be taken away from us, it just doesn't make sense. And it seems like they're really trying to take Jesus at his word.

They ask a follow-up question. Who is this Son of Man? Like, are we wrong in thinking that the Messiah and the Son of Man are the same person? Just who is it that you're talking about when you say the Son of Man will be lifted up to die?

Yourself or someone else? And Jesus gives them this very cryptic answer. In the next verse, Jesus told them, you are going to have the light just a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they're going.

Believe in the light while you have the light so that you may become children of light. Now, to some of us, this answer is frustrating.

[6 : 08] We're like, what does that mean? Especially in our world today where we have all sorts of people asking all sorts of questions about what's really going on and why certain decisions and courses of action are being taken and we're hearing answers to those questions, but often those answers are not nearly as clear and direct as we would like them to be.

Sometimes they're quite evasive. So, I get it if you feel frustrated when you hear that Jesus said this in his answer. But let's not make the mistake of thinking that Jesus is anything like the politicians of our day.

Jesus is different. He is the Son of God sent from heaven. He has shown on a number of occasions that he knows the very thoughts that people are thinking in their hearts even as he talks to them and even as they ask their questions.

Jesus is under no obligation to give them a full explanation here. In fact, he has often been teaching the people with parables, figures of speeches, analogies, illustrations, and he's made it quite clear that he does that on purpose.

God has a purpose for speaking in these kinds of ways through Jesus. We're not going to go into all that this morning, but I will say two things. First, when you hear Jesus say things like this, does it not draw you in to deeply consider what Jesus means?

[7 : 48] To really think about what his words mean when he says things like, you are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you.

We're kind of wired to try and understand things and make sense of things. It's in our very nature. The way he says this is intended to draw us in and to take us to a deeper level of thought and consideration about his words than we otherwise might go to.

Second, there's that saying that's not from the Bible, but is true. A picture is worth a thousand words. And Jesus is painting pictures here with his words.

Perhaps by saying it this way, Jesus is saying so much more than he could otherwise get across in the time that he has to answer with. So even though we really want the quick and straightforward answer to the question, Jesus challenges us to do the mental work of chewing on his words for a while to understand what he's saying.

Let's consider Jesus' answer. You are going to have the light just a little while longer.

[9 : 15] Walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. First, let's notice this.

Jesus seems quite content to leave parts of their loaded question completely unanswered. He doesn't say anything about whether the law teaches that the Messiah will remain forever when he comes.

Neither does he attempt to resolve the apparent conflict in their minds about how he can remain forever and how he will soon be lifted up to die. And neither does Jesus make a direct claim or answer their question directly of who is the Messiah or the Son of Man, rather.

Instead, Jesus tells them just what they need to hear. He gives them a brief statement about how a big change is coming and several instructions about what to do right now before that change takes place.

So let's start with his first statement. You are going to have the light just a little while longer. There's very soon coming a time when you will no longer have the light among you, says Jesus.

[10 : 38] And in what Jesus says next, he gets them thinking about how that works in an ordinary day. In an ordinary day, before the dawn of electricity-powered light bulbs and battery-powered flashlights, there was a limited window of opportunity to walk, to go about, to do your business.

And in those days, you better be at it while you have the light of day. Because when night falls and the darkness overtakes you, if you're still out there trying to get somewhere or trying to get something done, you're going to find yourself in trouble.

You won't be able to see where you're going. Have you ever experienced that in real life? Maybe found yourself outside in a place that's unfamiliar, in the dark, with no light.

I still remember a fishing trip that a group of us went on back in my Bible college days. We thought it'd be a great idea to make our way out into the boonies where two rivers met with each other we thought, that's got to be the place where all the biggest fish are hanging out.

We saw it on the map, we got everything ready, we went out, and unfortunately, that little bit on the map ended up being a lot longer than we thought.

[11 : 58] Nine kilometers of slow going as we waded across this river countless times as it wound back and forth. We decided a number of times, we were wondering, should we just turn back?

I mean, this is getting a little crazy here. There's no trails, there's no paths to walk on. Should we go back? Oh, but what if that spot is just around the next bend in the river?

We would have come all this way for nothing, so we just kept going. Eventually, we made it there. It was early evening. We fished, we caught absolutely nothing, and then we found ourselves scrambling to get back all those nine kilometers before the light disappeared completely.

It didn't help that during that time, we could hear a large pack of coyotes howling and yodeling somewhere in the area nearby, and then as it came to dusk, it was starting to get much harder to see, and there was one of our number who was sure that he saw a huge bear in the trees just over yonder.

I don't know whether it was or not. It could have been. By the time we were getting around the last bends in the river on our way back to our staging area, it was nearly pitch black outside, and thinking back on it, if it weren't for the river there for us to follow and for the Lord watching over us, we could have easily been lost out in the middle of nowhere, stuck all night with all kinds of animals prowling around nearby.

[13 : 37] Boy, did we feel unsettled and tense and anxious as the darkness overtook us out in the wild. This is the kind of picture that Jesus is painting for us here.

The light is here for a brief moment, but it will not stay. It will only be here a little longer. Each of you has a window of opportunity to do the things that can only be done while it's here.

And if you do not, you will be overtaken by the darkness. You will find yourself in big trouble, lost, and unable to find your way.

What's the meaning of this sort of mini parable or analogy? Well, if we've been listening to Jesus throughout his ministry, throughout the whole gospel of John, we'll know exactly what the light is or rather, who the light is.

What did Jesus say? John 8, verse 12. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

[14 : 52] he said it again in John 9, verse 5. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. John, the writer of this whole gospel, made the same sort of statements about Jesus, referring to him as the light, the one who has come into the world, the one who gives light to men.

He started his gospel with that. So what does Jesus mean when he says you're going to have the light just a little while longer? He means that the time that he is with them, among them, is very soon to draw to a close.

And think about what Jesus has been doing all this time. He's been bringing light to what's really going on in the world. he's been speaking truth from the Father to the people.

He's been illuminating, revealing all kinds of things about our sin and our guilt before God. About the punishment that we deserve because of our sin and guilt.

About how to be saved from that punishment. About a Father who still loves us and will take us back even though we have left home and lived shamefully.

[16 : 23] He's been shedding light on eternal life and life after death. About the coming kingdom of God. About how God's people should live in the world right now.

And about how things will go at the very end. Jesus has done among us what light does. He has enabled us to see and know all kinds of things.

The truth about us, about the world, about God. But now says Jesus I'm about to die and soon to leave this world.

And Jesus pleads with them. Don't miss your window of opportunity. Believe in the light says Jesus. believe in me while you have the opportunity before it is too late.

Believe in the light while you have the light. Now is the moment of decision about me says Jesus. And there are only two outcomes that Jesus describes here.

[17 : 36] There are those who believe in the light. Jesus says believe in the light while you have the light so that you may become children of light.

That's one outcome. That sounds wonderful. Those who believe in the light he says will become children of light. But the other outcome is not so wonderful.

Those who do not believe will be overtaken by the darkness and be lost. Do you hear what Jesus is saying to these people?

Do you hear what Jesus is saying to you? Now I want to be careful here. I don't think Jesus means to say that there's going to be no opportunity for these people to believe after he dies and after he departs to heaven.

But I think what he does mean is that his ministry of bringing truth from God to people face to face is coming to an end. Pretty soon the things they heard from Jesus the signs that they witnessed him do will be in their minds only memories of the past.

[19 : 01] And for others they'll be only events and descriptions that they have heard about or read about. So they could come to believe later after he dies after he leaves to heaven.

In fact thousands of Jews do at Pentecost as the apostles begin preaching and doing the same kinds of things that Jesus did.

Maybe some of these people in the crowd will be some of them. But there's also a sense in which I think Jesus is saying now today right now while the light is shining undeniably in your face now is the time to believe in the light.

Not later not someday if you don't accept and believe in me now when I'm staring you right in the face when I'm speaking to you with my own two lips what makes you think it will be any different later when I'm gone.

To us today Jesus has already gone. He died he rose he ascended into heaven the light of the world is no longer here in the world and so that light that Jesus is the truth that he spoke it comes to us second hand through the writings of those who were there to witness it and so there is for each one of us also a window of opportunity even though we do not see the light of Jesus first hand as they did back then we still have the opportunity to see it second hand through all that was written about him we weren't there to hear him speak in person but we have the very words that he said a good number of them we weren't there to see the signs and the miracles that he performed with our own two eyes but we have detailed out for us in these carefully preserved eyewitness accounts a good number of them and so there is for each one of us also a window of opportunity a chance to see from the

[21 : 19] Bible from preachers from teachers believers a chance for us to see the light that Jesus was and still is there is for us a window of opportunity in our lives to respond to him to believe in the light in Jesus and to become children of light now maybe you're thinking deep down inside I know that's true but I'm not ready maybe I'll get around to that later someday but not today listen none of us knows how many days we have people die all the time in all kinds of ways and enough of them die before they hit old age the next one could be you listen to these words of

Jesus again believe in the light while you have the light so that you may become children of light walk while you have the light let the darkness overtake you today is the day to decide about Jesus if you haven't already now do you believe in Jesus the light of the world during world war two an American naval force in the North Atlantic was engaged in heavy battle with enemy ships and submarines and it was an exceptionally dark night six planes took off from an aircraft carrier to search out those targets but while they were in the air a total blackout was ordered on the aircraft carrier in order to protect it from attack without lights on the carrier's deck the six planes could not possibly land they made a radio request asking that the lights be turned on just long enough for them to come in but because the entire carrier with its several thousand men as well as all the other planes and equipment would have been put in jeopardy no lights were permitted eventually the six planes ran out of fuel and they had to ditch in the freezing water and those pilots perished into eternity

I can't help but think of this story as I listen to Jesus words here it's as though he's saying to us the lights are on come home come to me now while you have the light to come walk while you have the light before darkness overtakes you today is the day to repent and believe if you haven't done this already if you haven't done this but you think you might need some help to figure out how to you're not sure what to do I want to invite you come talk to me after the service or if you're a kid talk to your mom and dad or anyone here who you know knows Jesus we would be happy to talk about that with you to listen to you to pray with you to help you however we can you will have the light only a little while longer these words hint at what comes next in the story of Jesus his death well in one sense we might hear what these people in the crowd are asking and we might think wouldn't it be nice if Jesus had come to stay that first time just set up the forever kingdom then and there but in another sense I think we know that the story couldn't go that way not if we want to be part of that good and glorious kingdom the prophecies about Jesus forever kingdom are true and they will all be fulfilled when Jesus returns but for this time for this hour of which Jesus speaks we have need of something else we need a way to get back to the father we need a way to mend and restore that broken relationship that we have with him because of our sins and our guilt and that's what Jesus death was all about he died on the cross to make a way home to the father for us his body was broken his blood was shed to atone for our sins and to secure forgiveness for all who will believe in him we mark this amazing hour of Jesus every month by eating and drinking from this table behind me bread which represents Jesus body the cup which represents Jesus blood we remember his death a gift of love for you and for me for all the peoples of the world and truly a gift it's ours if we simply believe in him the light of the world and so if that's you this morning if you believe in him if you believe that he is the light of the world the son of man the messiah and much more please join with us as we eat and drink

from this table behind me in remembrance of him if you're not there yet then I would ask that you simply let the bread and the cup pass you by until you've come to that affirmation in your heart let's take a couple minutes to reflect and to pray quietly and then Charles will come and pass out the elements we'll wait until everybody has been served and then we'll eat and drink together in unison amen Thank you.

Thank you.

[29 : 35] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 05] Thank you. Let's eat and drink together.