

September 15, 2019 The Incredible Claims John 8:12-20

It is a fair question to ask...Why were the Gospels written? Each of the Gospel accounts conclude with the direction given by Jesus that HIS followers, His disciples should go and tell the entire world what they knew about Him.

Matthew was one of the 12 disciples. He wrote his account as an attempt to address Jews (people like himself) to share the fact that in Jesus he had found the Messiah, promised in the Old Testament. Mark was related to Peter. He was a teenager at the time of the crucifixion. Clearly he followed Jesus, and he tells the story as he experienced it, with the insight of his uncle Peter who was very close to Jesus. Luke was a physician and he wrote both the Gospel that bears his name and the book of Acts to tell Theophilus, who Jesus was and that the story did not end with the crucifixion and resurrection. The story goes on as word spreads about Jesus. John was one of the 12 and the only one who died of old age, all be it, in a concentration camp on the Isle of Patmos. All 4 of these men wrote to tell the story of Jesus who was crucified, and on the 3rd day, a Sunday morning, rose from the dead. Every Sunday morning since, every worship service you have ever attended on a Sunday morning is an anniversary of the resurrection. Whether we work, worship, relax or watch football Sunday is the reminder that Jesus was crucified and then rose from the dead and was seen and heard by HIS followers.

What we have here in John chapter 8 is testimony, a sharing of incidents and words that were witnessed first hand by the author, who for the whole of the rest of his life, cared for Mary, the mother of Jesus. It is part of the evidence of just how close the relationship was between Jesus and John. In the hour of Jesus dying, Jesus told John to do this, to care for HIS mother. In the hour of HIS dying, Jesus told HIS mother to live with John as if he were her son. He told John to provide for her in every way he could as though she were his own mother.

Jesus was in Jerusalem. In fact if you look at the first verse of chapter 8 you discover he has been to the Mount of Olives on the next hill east of the Temple. This conversation belongs to a collection of Jesus words during the last phase, and possibly the last week of HIS ministry. Time is growing short. Jesus is doing and saying things that HE is led to say and do. He is endeavouring to make it as clear as possible who HE is and why HE is come to the holy city, and to this world.

Jesus makes a number of incredible claims in this conversation beginning with, "I am the light of the world." First of all there is a Genesis connection in those words. "God said, 'Let there be light and there was light.'" And yes, Jesus is saying as clearly as HE can, that when it comes to life, HE is as important as is the sun which energizes our planet and indeed the constellation of which we are a part. "Whoever follows me," said Jesus, "Will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." His words mean, "I am the answer." If you are

trying to figure out what life is all about, I am the answer. I am the light of the world. Follow me and life will make sense. Follow me and you will find meaning. Follow me and find your destiny. Follow me and I will be the light of your world.

At one and the same time, a universal truth, something everyone needs to know, and a personal truth, shedding light on your existence every bit as much as mine. Jesus claims to have the power to be the light of your life, the light of my life, the light of the life of every man, woman and child. "I am the light of the world." It is an incredible claim! It is a claim that requires of everyone who hears it, a response or a reaction. You have responded to that claim, incredible or not. You by your presence here and your continued attention to Jesus and His words, have exercised a measure of faith, you may not even have recognized as such.

The Pharisees were priests. They were leaders in the faith community of Israel. They were Old Testament scholars. And the fact is most of them reacted. They challenged Jesus. They challenged HIM for saying, "I am the light of the world." Their challenge was a very simple one. Oh yes, who says so? Any one can make claims. Just you saying these words does not make them true. In this translation it says the Pharisees said, "Your testimony is not valid." It sounds like the results of a chemical test...the test results are not valid. In the KJV it is translated this way: "You bear record of yourself; your

record is not true.” Your words are not the truth. You are not the light of the world.

From the point of view of the Pharisees, truth must have at least 2 witnesses if it is to have any chance of being recognized as valid. From their point of view, Jesus is only one voice. Their words drip with sarcasm...”So you say.” They are not about to believe it.

Jesus replies, “My words are true, for I know where I came from and I know where I am going. But you have no idea of where I come from or where I am going.” Notice this because it is really important. Jesus is playing the divinity card. He is saying I come from God and I will go to HIM when I am crucified. And you really do not have a clue. He says, “I am not alone. I stand with my Father, who sent me.”

Critics of the Christian faith, often like to argue that the church invented the doctrine of the Trinity centuries later at a Church Council. You need to be aware that is not the truth. The church clarified its teaching on the nature of God centuries later based on what Jesus said as recorded in these ancient documents. When I went to Seminary half a century ago, we thought that the Gospels were written down toward the end of the first century. I was ordained as a minister of the Gospel in 1972. Ever since I have watched as papers have been published based on the Dead Sea Scroll finds and other archeological discoveries as the evidence mounted that the Gospels were written earlier and earlier. Today some scholars are convinced

that the Gospels can be credited with being written as close as 2 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. I acknowledge we will never be able to be certain of such things in this life. I do make this point: When it comes to the nature of God, these ancient documents tell us Jesus talked in terms of the Trinity.

Jesus said, "I testify for myself, my other witness, my second witness is my Father who sent me. In another place Jesus says "I and my Father are one." He tells the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit is given to them.

So what does all of that mean? First of all it means that basic credal statements are not doctrinal mumbo jumbo. The Gospel accounts are valid ancient documents. They were preserved in greater numbers than most ancient documents. There is a uniqueness about the quantities of the Gospel accounts. And fundamentally the documents agree. That is why Christian scholars have said there is more reason to believe in Jesus than there is to believe in Julius Caesar or Pericles. The documents tell us that Jesus did not hesitate to play the divinity card. When the Pharisees smirked and asked, "Where is your father?" Jesus did not hesitate to say words that stung. "You do not know me or my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." He said, 'You don't know me or God, if you knew me, you would know God.'

Two final things. The Pharisees were really angry. John tells us they wanted to kill Jesus. That angry! And they did

not because it simply was not Jesus time. Secondly, John thought these words were so important, he told us where this exchange took place with great precision. Verse 20: Jesus spoke these words while teaching in the Temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized HIM because HIS time had not yet come.”

Let us pray;

Lord we thank you for the Gospel accounts and especially for the account written by John. Bless us when we read your word. Lead us as we learn from the Scriptures. Assure us of your love and lead us that we might live in the light. In Jesus name we pray. Amen