

John 69 – The Word of Christ

11/23/2025

Scripture 1: (Jn. 12:34-50 ESV)

So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment-- what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

Scripture 2: (Lev. 18:5 ESV)

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

Sermon:

Across this Gospel, the Evangelist John has portrayed the duration of Jesus' ministry as lasting for about three years; at least, John notes Jesus as traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover on three separate and distinct occasions, whereas the Synoptics only describe one such visit, His final. So, we may conclude that Jesus' ministry lasted for at least three years. It could have been longer but it was certainly not less. Although it seems ironic that John presents the longer duration due to the lack of obvious public teaching content from Jesus, like what fills the other Gospels.

Now, while the majority of Jesus's teaching recorded in this Gospel is contained within the up coming “Upper Room Discourse”, during the evening when Jesus celebrated His last supper and the Passover with His disciples, there has still been a significant amount of teaching mixed in with the record of Jesus's miracles; His confirming Signs. There has been enough teaching to cause many of our modern study Bibles to include a note describing this passage as a “summary” of Jesus's teaching. However, I would suggest that it is not the content of His teaching is being summarized. Instead, I would suggest that rather than being a summary of Jesus's public teaching, the Evangelist presents and repeats the framework for rightly understanding what Jesus taught: the framework which explains where and how His teaching fits into the story of our redemption, leaving the majority of Jesus' teaching content to be presented by the other earlier Gospels.

Before He sequestered Himself from the public, from both His enemies and His followers, “*Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer.”*”.

- Remember that Jesus has already identified Himself as the “*light of the world*” (John 8:12): an expression, or title, that is rightly associated with the LORD in the symbol of the “*golden lampstand*” (Exodus 25:31-40). Through His reference of time, “*for a little while longer*”, it is evident that Jesus was foreshadowing {implying} His impending departure from the world.

Then He continued, “*Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.*”

- Jesus telling them to “*walk*” while they have the light, while He is present with them, was a command of obedience. Saying “*to walk*” was a common metaphor, or euphemism, used to describe a prescribed pathway or a regularly ordered process. Throughout John's Gospel, light and darkness are always contrasted in dualistic opposition, with the light being associated with goodness and God, while the darkness was associated with wickedness, sin, evil, and the devil.
- Describing being in the light as something to be desired, while the darkness should be avoided and feared, Jesus was commanding them to flee the darkness for the light.
- Jesus's description of the light is an echo of Leviticus 18:5, where God commanded Israel, “*You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*”
- Therefore, Jesus commanded them to live and love, to work and act, in all righteousness; to flee from evil and sin, to seek the LORD and obey Him, rather than the devil, so that they may have eternal life.

“*While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.*”

- But then, Jesus added an additional, “extra” caveat to “*{walking} in the light*”, they must also “*believe in the light*”. Not only was Jesus commanding their obedience, He also was requiring their confident faith, *pisteuo*. He was requiring them to absolutely trust and depend on the light.

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- This additional element of required faith facilitated the adoption of believing persons as the “*sons of light*”, as the “children of God” (John 1:12).
- This additional element of required belief, of faith, had to be something more than just a mere conscious decision because it was consequential and trans-formative.

Despite the Pharisees and other Jews putting forth their best effort to “*walk*” in the light, their excesses of self-righteousness demonstrated that they did not confidently “*believe*” in the light. But rather, they proved that they did not actually trust the light. So, in the dualistic contrast, if they did not become “*sons of light*” then logically, they must remain, “sons of darkness” (John 8:39-45). Those are the only two options available for humanity, either to be a “child of God” or a “child of the devil”, while the testimony of our human nature: our bad choices and decisions, the constant lustful desires of our heart, and our total inability to be the good that we know we ought to be, against our best efforts; prove that we are all, by original nature, “children of the devil” apart from the providential grace and loving mercy of God.

Surprisingly, the world is actually correct when it suggests a universal “brotherhood of man”, asserting that everyone worships the same god, and arguing that all roads lead to the same spiritual destination. The world is right, from a certain point of view. It is right, but only apart from the miraculous and wondrous providential work of God, apart from the merciful grace of Jesus Christ.

- There is a universal “brotherhood of man”, because ever since Adam’s fall, we have all been naturally born to our singular father in hell.
- All of the countless “gods” and their myriad pantheons, all of the different perverse fantasies which have been worshiped throughout human history, are merely different faces or facets and avatars of the same, singular devil.
- Every spiritual road and path that is stretched out before humanity leads to the same hell: to the same righteous judgment and to the same just condemnation.

Except there is a solitary, small, narrow, and exceptionally difficult path that the LORD God has provided as a merciful alternative. This path is found only by God's grace and only traversed in the power of the Holy Spirit. This path is illuminated by the light of life (Job 33:30; John 8:12). This path is only open to the righteous; to those who carry the key of Jesus's blood through faith and trust in Him, alone.

This framework presented by John is a framework of covenant. It is the framework of the covenant of grace. The framework which supported the Mosaic administration also upholds the Gospel administration. Remember, covenants in the Ancient Near East followed a standardized formula: Historical Preamble or Prologue, Stipulations, Blessings and Curses, and Oaths; and we can plainly identify these elements here and in the context of this Gospel.

- Jesus has identified Himself as the “light of the world”, as the *Phos* who is *Theos*. That is the Prologue, thus the parties involved in this covenant are identified as “the light”, as the Suzerain, and His present hearers (those who “*believe in the light*”), as His vassal.
- When Jesus's command to “*Walk while you have the light...*” is contrasted against “*The one who walks in the darkness...*”, it says that they should {walk in the light}, meaning that they need to be obedient to Jesus's commands and instruction; instructions that were no different from the LORD's commandments and covenant Stipulations given originally through Moses.
- While the inclusion of Jesus' command to “*believe in the light...*” might seem to be a slight difference as an extra or new “stipulation”, it was actually a verbal declaration of an already existing and understood requirement: belief and confidence in the covenant-giving Suzerain, trust in their ability (and willingness) to follow through with their promises. This is the key premise within the Hebrew expression of *chesed*, a term that we often interpret and translate as “steadfast love” but which more

specifically describes “covenant faithfulness” or “covenant loyalty”; describing the fidelity expected within the expression of love.

- The expected “Blessing” that shall be received by His vassals is the blessing of becoming “*sons of light*”, while the “Curse” is the implicit judgment and condemnation of having the “*darkness overtake [them]*”, thereby causing them to remain as the “sons of darkness”.
- Despite there being no oath immediately declared, we know that every promise of God comes with a binding oath. Meanwhile, a person's profession of faith and their submission to the Christian sacrament of baptism, is their responsive oath to God, sworn before the world in the presence of Christ's Church.

But, why is this formula and framework so important for us to recognize and understand?

It is important and necessary because it shows the continuity between the old covenant and the new covenant; between the Old Testament and the New Testament; between Moses and Jesus; between the Law and the Gospel. It shows that God does not change, that He has not changed, and gives us confidence that He shall not change. It shows that the salvation of the Elect; that our redemption, justification, and adoption as the “People of God”, as His beloved children (Exodus 4:22; John 1:12), has always and only ever been by the same means: through faith in the LORD, which is faith in Jesus Christ, according to His gracious covenant.

It is important and necessary because it explains the “Why” of our responsibility, in the “How” of our salvation. Jesus commanded those who would follow Him to walk in the light; commanding that we must flee from the darkness, lest we be lost.

- Therefore, if we truly do “*believe in the light*”, then we will respond to the light in the obedience of faith.
- Therefore, if we truly do “*believe in the light*”, then we will respond to the light in the obedience of repentance, as we turn away from the darkness of our past sins.
- Therefore, if we truly do “*believe in the light*”, then we will respond to the light in the obedience of our love for Christ; with covenant fidelity in our trust of Him.
- Therefore, those who truly “*believe in the light*” and who demonstrate the earnestness of their faith by responding appropriately, are blessed by being made to become the “*sons of light*”.

Those who follow Christ do these things, in this kind of belief, by keeping the commandments of God in faithful love, by trusting that His commands are given for our good benefit, by obeying His Word because it is the right, proper, and good thing to do (because He is Sovereign and because we must, according to His covenant) and not because of the benefit that we hope or think might be earned through our works of obedience.

- We do not obey and trust Christ in order to receive God's blessing.
- We obey and trust Christ because of the blessings that God has already bestowed upon us.

That is why recognizing this covenant framework is so important. Such covenants were dictated by the greater Suzerain, following an earlier work of the Suzerain's grace or help; after the Suzerain has already come to the vassal's rescue. The agreement by and the future continuing covenant fidelity of the new vassal was their faithful response to the Suzerain's work. Although the vassal's covenant fidelity was preserved through fear of sanction by the Suzerain's Curse, their original salvific blessing (and the continuation of them being blessed) always depended on an initial act of grace by the Suzerain.

- Thus, we conclude that those who have become “*sons of light*”, “*believe in the light*” and walk in the light because they have been called by God, and have been drawn into the light (John 3:21) for their salvation and preservation (John 6:39, 8:12, 10:29).

Meanwhile, this formula and framework are also important and necessary for us to recognize and understand because John uses it to explain the “How” of our salvation, in relation to the just judgment of God.

To do so, the Evangelist summarizes two more points, “*And Jesus cried out and said, 'Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment-- what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.'*”.

The first point that John summarizes concerns why Jesus was born; the reason for why the Son of God became incarnate. Jesus said, “*I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.*”

- Jesus Christ: the Son of God and God the Son, the *Logos* who is *Theos* and *Andros*; came into the world as the *Phos*, the “*light of the world*” (John 1:1-14, 8:12), so that all those who believe in Him (those with *pisteuo* in Him) would be rescued and removed from the darkness of sin (John 3:16-21).

As the light, as the *Phos*, Jesus clarifies that those who “*believe in the light*” must necessarily have *pisteuo* in Him. He concludes therefore, that within the Gospel administration of the new covenant, “*Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.*”, equating their faith in Jesus with faith in His Father, the LORD God, which conversely means that the ancient Israelites' faith in the LORD, under the old covenant Mosaic administration, was equated with faith in Jesus Christ. Once again, John also demonstrates Jesus's claim of equality with God, declaring that “*...whoever sees me sees him who sent me.*”, arguing that those who see Jesus with the eyes of faith also see God the Father.

The second point that John summarizes concerns the authority and purpose of Jesus's Word: the source and degree of its authority as well as its consequential role for judgment; recording Jesus' claim, “*For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment-- what to say and what to speak.*”.

- Jesus did not claim to speak or teach under His own authority. He appealed to a higher authority, the highest.
- Jesus's authority to speak and the authority inherent within His Word came from God the Father. Jesus's Word has divine origin and divine authority. Jesus's Word is God's Word because Jesus is God the Word: the *Logos* who is *Theos*. Jesus's Word carries the full authority of the universal and absolute sovereign: His power and His enforcement; and the sovereign LORD cannot be denied, thwarted, or circumvented; any such appearance is only a matter of His temporary condescension to permit it. Justice will surely be done, and since vengeance belongs to the LORD (Deuteronomy 32; Romans 12:19), His judgment and retribution against all sin and wickedness is absolutely certain and sure.
- But, a skeptic would surely object to Jesus' claim of authority, just as they would deny His claim of divinity, as “the Jews” did. Yet Jesus had said nothing new, different, or innovative over the course of His ministry. Everything He said was consistent with the Old Testament, Hebrew Scriptures. What Jesus said with this authority and the spiritual things that Jesus commanded, were the same as what Moses had said and commanded in Torah under the LORD's authority; the same authority now being claimed by Jesus. Jesus's Word repeated Moses's Word, which repeated God's Word. Jesus's Word held the same authority as Moses's Word, which was God's Word.

The Word of Jesus, as the Word and Law of God, is the Word of Life {as confessed by Peter} (John 6:68), as Moses promised God's people in Deuteronomy, “*You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.*” and which Jesus reaffirms now, “*I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.*”

While most everyone loves to hear that “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*”, the verse which follows it makes us pause and feel uncomfortable, “*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*” (Jn. 3:16-17 ESV), because everyone likes the idea of “love” and dislikes the idea of “condemnation”. It is really no wonder that one of the most commonly misinterpreted, misunderstood, and misapplied statements in Scripture is, “*Judge not, lest ye be judged.*” (Matthew 7:1). Unfortunately for our feelings, the love of God remains closely associated with the judgment and condemning of sin.

Once again, Jesus reiterated His purpose in the world, saying “*I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.*”, although that salvation could only be effected through the condemnation and punishment of sin; an effect that could only occur after judgment. But, again John has already told us that “*...this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*” (Jn. 3:19 ESV). He explained, “*If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him ... The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*”. The good news is that Jesus did not come, the first time, to judge and condemn the world's sin. Jesus did not need to judge it because it already had, and has, a judge: God's Word, the Word of Christ. The judge is the Word which Jesus spoke (that Moses spoke) because the Word spoken by Jesus is the authoritative standard, the absolute and unchanging (immutable), impartial and non-subjective Word, Rule, and Law of God.

- God has gave us His Word to live by.
- God's Word is the judge over our lives.
- God's Word is the standard by which we shall all be judged.

This Word divides all people into one of three categories according to their response to it:

- The first category contains those who hear and reject the Word of Christ. These people stubbornly refuse to accept it and they do not obey it, but they will still be judged according to it because it is the divine Law: “*ignorantia juris non excusat*” or “ignorance of the law does not excuse”. Just as in our civil life, we do not get to choose what laws we are obligated to obey, though we each choose which laws we are willing (and often eager) to disobey. These are the atheist, the pagan, heathen, and infidel. They choose and prefer to live according to their own preference and understanding. Though they choose to live according to human law rather than God's law, they are nevertheless judged by the Word of Christ and condemned.
- The second category contains those who hear and receive the Word of Christ but still, do not obey it. While they know its good benefit, its righteousness, and its just nature, some feel as if it does not do enough or go far enough, while others wrongly assume that the whole of it does not actually apply to them. The first are legalists, like the 1st Century Jews (like the Pharisees and Sadducees) affirming God's Law but failing to understand it or to keep it rightly. The second are anti-nomians wrongly assuming that since “*love covers a multitude of sins*” (1 Pet. 4:8 ESV), they may justify everything in the “name of love”; wrongly assuming that since our sins are forgiven in God's grace and because we are “*...not under law but under grace...*” (Rom. 6:15 ESV), that Christians can continue willfully sinning, so that Christ's grace would abound even more (Romans 6:1-18). Legalists disobey God's Law by going beyond it,

adding to it and restricting things that are not forbidden, while anti-nomians disobey and disregard God's Law purposefully. Both are judged by the Word of Christ and justly condemned.

- The third category contains those who hear and receive and accept the Word of Christ, rejoicing and obeying it. They recognize and accept its authority and power over their lives, submitting themselves to it gladly. These are earnest, faithful, repentant, and obedient Christians. They walk in the light because they believe in the light. They too shall be judged by the Word, but because they have received the righteousness of Christ, imputed by their faith, and because Christ has already suffered their deserved condemnation, they shall be accounted righteous will receive the blessing of eternal life, for they have already become the sons and daughters of the light.

This closing summary bears a close similarity to Jesus' Parable of the Four Soils found in Matthew 13, verses 1-9. The ones who hear and utterly reject the Word of Christ are like the seeds that fell upon the path and were devoured by birds. The ones who hear and receive the Word of Christ, but do not obey it, are like the seeds which fell among the rocks and the thorns; the ones among the rocks are like the anti-nomians, who wither away because they have no root, while the ones among the thorns are choked by the excessive rules and regulations of legalism. But those who hear, receive, keep and obey the Word of Christ are like the seeds which fall upon good soil and grow to produce an abundance of fruit.

This is how the world is saved through the love of God. This is what the author of Hebrews described as, Christ *"...has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."* (Heb. 9:26b-28 ESV). Our sin has been dealt with, now we may walk in the light, believing in the Light who defends and protects us, until He returns to finally rescue us and remove us from the darkness.

Finally, how are we to rightly walk in the light, since we are believing in the light and we are wanting to be in this third category?

- **Step One: *Self Examination*** – Examine yourself. Examine your heart and your motivations. Examine your feelings and your thoughts. What sins are you retaining and protecting within your heart? What sins are you stubbornly refusing to give up? What idols have you not yet torn down and what idols have you recently set up on their "high places"? You need to pray. We each need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to bring up any such sins and bring them out of the safe harbor where they have been hidden within our heart.
- **Step Two: *Repentance and Confession*** – Once we recognize and identify our remaining and latent sins, whenever we are feeling convicted by the Holy Spirit for our sin, we need to confess them to God first, and also to whomever else we are wronging with them (Psalm 51:4). After we have confessed our sins, we must also repent of them; saying "I'm sorry" is not enough. We must do more than just apologize, because an apology is not true repentance. We must offer and provide appropriate recompense for our sin (Exodus 21:23-25). Then, we must stop engaging and indulging in those sins. We need to stop and turn around. We must turn away and do what is right rather than whatever was wicked.
- **Step Three: *Move Forward in Faith*** – After we have identified our sin, after we have confessed our sin, and after we have repented of our sin, then (this is a hard part) we must accept and believe Scripture's assurance that God has forgiven our sin, by washing it away with the blood of Jesus Christ. We must believe and trust that the justifying work of Christ covers our debt of sin. We must live and walk knowing that, even though we will sin again, because our hearts have been more rightly inclined by the Holy Spirit, we shall now live in a manner that is pleasing to God our Father and so that when we do sin again, He will be gracious and merciful to forgive us again, when we repent.

But however, we cannot even begin to do any of these Steps unless first, we know the Word of Christ; unless we know God's Word better and more well than we do; unless we know the content and the specific details of the Word of Christ, unless we understand what it means and how to rightly apply it to our life. Therefore, improving our Biblical literacy and interpretive understanding is everyone's Step Zero.

- **Step Zero: Know the Word of Christ, God's Word** – This is the most important step because it is the foundation upon which all the others stand.
 - We must each better know and understand the Word of Christ because it is the self revelation of God; because it tells us Who Jesus is, What Jesus has done, and What Jesus will do. We must know the Word of Christ because Jesus Christ is the “*Word made Flesh*” (John 1:14), the *Logos* who is *Theos* and *Andros*, and because in it He is revealed to be the “*the light of men.*” (Jn. 1:4 ESV): the light of life and the light for us to live by. Studying Scripture is the only way for us to truly know Jesus and to hear Him speak. We must know Scripture first, before we can “*believe in the light*”.
 - We must know and understand the Word of Christ because it contains and explains God's Law; the rules and stipulations of the covenant that God's people must live according to if we are going to walk “*in the light*”. We must know the Word of Christ if we are going to follow and try to keep the Word of Christ; if we are to obey Christ, faithfully. We must know what Christ commands us not to do and we must know and understand what He commands us to do.
 - We must know and understand the Word of Christ because it contains God's perfect standard for holiness and holy living. The Word of Christ is the standard against which we are judged to be either righteous and just, or wicked and evil sinners. When we know the Word of Christ, it becomes a mirror showing us that we do not measure up to God's standard and that we cannot measure up to it on our own. Knowing the Word of Christ shows us where we need to repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness.
 - When we know and understand the Word of Christ, it shows us that Jesus alone measures up and it shows us how we can be considered to have measured up, through our faith in Him; explaining how His righteousness may become counted as our righteousness. It shows us how we may be made righteous because He has taken our unrighteousness onto Himself. It shows us how He suffered the punishment of Hell we deserve, so that we may enjoy the blessing of life eternal He deserves.
 - We must know and understand the Word of Christ because when we do, we are comforted and assured by the Holy Spirit that we are being transformed and sanctified; to know that we are being made to become more and more like Christ and conformed to His Image, as “*the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*” (Col. 1:15 ESV); that we have been made to become “*sons [and daughters] of the light.*”. Then we may know that we are being made holy, as God is holy (Leviticus 11:45), and that we now have the true hope of life because we are living according to the Word of Christ.

So, study and know and believe the Word of Christ. Examine yourself and ask the Holy Spirit's help to root out your latent sin. Confess and repent of your sins because “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” (1 Jn. 1:9 ESV). Then, live in the assurance and conviction of your faith and trust in God that by the blood of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven.

AMEN