

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
GGG. Christ's Identity Claims In The Temple Itself
(John 8:12-20)

I. Introduction

- A. One charge against the validity of the Christian faith is that Jesus and His disciples did not view Him as Messiah and God, that those views rose long after Christ. (J. McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1990, p. 246-252)
- B. However, in the setting of the court of the women in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, what Jesus said there unquestionably revealed His full intent to assert that He was both God and Messiah!
- C. We thus view John 8:12-20 on Christ's claims in God's temple itself for our insight and edification:

II. Christ's Identity Claims In The Temple Itself, John 8:12-20.

- A. The events of John 8:12-20 occurred in the "treasury" according to John 8:20 KJV, what was also known as the court of the women. (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 283-284, citing J. W. Shepard, The Christ of the Gospels, 1946, p. 352)
- B. Near that court was a huge golden candelabra standing 75 feet high, and its lamps were lit each night of the Feast of Tabernacles and their light spread all over the city of Jerusalem. Near the candelabra, the people performed festive dances with the sound of flutes and other instruments as the Levites chanted psalms. (Ibid.)
- C. The reason for the candelabra's existence in the temple at this feast rose from the Rabbis' Messianic hope:
 - 1. Scripture foretold "earth's great harvest-joy in the conversion of the heathen world and so pointed to 'the days of the Messiah.' In connection with this . . . the term 'light' was specially applied to the Messiah." (Pentecost, loc. cit., citing A. Edersheim, The Life and Times Of Jes. The Mes., vol. 2, p. 165-166)
 - 2. In the "Midrash . . . after a . . . discussion on such names of the Messiah as 'the Lord our Righteousness,' 'the Branch,' 'the Comforter,' 'Shiloh,' 'Compassion,' His birth is connected with the destruction, and His return with the restoration of the temple. But in that very passage the Messiah is also specially designated as the 'Enlightener,' the words: 'the light dwelleth with Him,' being applied to Him." (Ibid.)
- D. Thus, when Jesus in the court of the women of the temple beside the giant candelabra at the Feast of Tabernacles said He was the Light of the world, that he who followed Him would not walk in darkness, but have the light of life (John 8:12), He stunned His Hebrew audience by clearly claiming to be the Messiah!
- E. Such a "claim could not go unchallenged by the Pharisees" (Pentecost, op. cit., p. 285), so they charged Jesus with bearing record of Himself so that His record was not true, John 8:13. Rabbinic tradition rejected self-testimony, and the Law required two witnesses to establish a fact in capital offenses. (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; John 8:17; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 303)
- F. Jesus replied that though Rabbinic tradition rejected self-testimony, "Sometimes an individual is the only one who knows the facts about himself. And only God can give testimony to Himself. Jesus was competent to give a true witness of Himself because as God He has a comprehensive knowledge of His origin and destiny (7:29)," Ibid. Thus, Jesus defended His testimony about Himself in John 8:14.
- G. Christ also noted that His critics judged Him based on external criteria, viewing Jesus' earthly body and not His unseen deity, where Christ did not come to judge people in His first Advent but to save them, John 8:15.
- H. Besides, even if Jesus were to judge, His judgment would be true, for He was not alone in His judgment, for God the Father's judgment perfectly coincided with Christ's judgment, John 8:16. Since the Mosaic Law taught that the testimony of two witnesses was true (Deut. 17:6; 19:15), Jesus' critics were to believe His testimony and the testimony of God the Father Who had sent Him (John 8:17-18) and Who had also publicly announced that Jesus was His Beloved Son at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:16-17).
- I. The Pharisees asked Jesus where His Father was, and Christ answered that they neither knew Him nor His Father, that if they had known Him, they would have known His Father also, John 8:19.
- J. Though Jesus thus implied that He was unknown to His critics because He was God along with His Father Whom they also did not know, no one took Him into custody, for it was not His time to be arrested, John 8:20.

Lesson: *During the Feast of Tabernacles in the court of the women in the temple where the hope of the promised Messiah as the Great Light was illustrated by a great candelabra and celebrated there, Jesus claimed to be that Light and Messiah along with being God with God the Father.*

Application: *May we believe that Jesus Christ claimed in God's temple to be both God with God the Father as well as God's Messiah for the world, thus holding to the credibility of the Christian faith from its very inception.*