

I Am the Light of the World

Recently my wife and I visited the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibition in Los Angeles. As we walked through the exhibition, we saw ancient fragments from the book of Genesis and other books of the Old Testament. There were also other documents and artifacts. It was a thrill to see these old documents that dated before the time that Jesus Christ lived and walked on the earth. Also, we saw a temple tax (silver shekel), a widow's mite, clay inkwells, bathtubs with built-in seats, a wooden comb, phylacteries measuring 0.5 inch x 1.0 inch, gold-pearl-pendants, glass earrings and oil lamps from Jesus' time. The oil lamps were especially surprising. They were very small. I was surprised that I did not see larger oil lamps. Small oil lamps have advantages over larger lamps. For example, small lamps can be placed almost anywhere potentially lighting narrow passage ways. But one large oil lamp could illuminate more area and shine brighter. The Bible states that Jesus was greater than the largest possible oil lamp - He was the Light of the world.

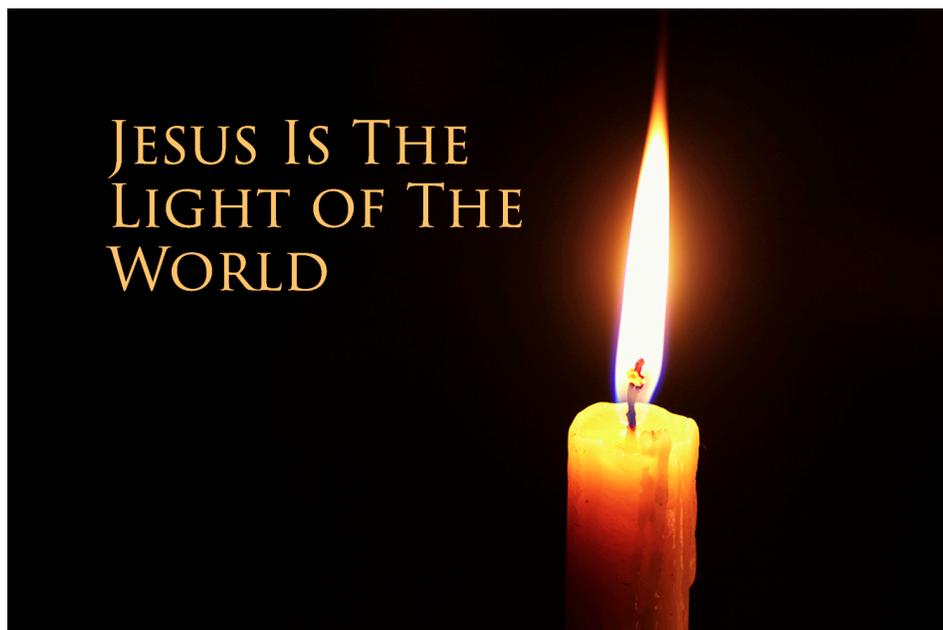
I Am the Light of the World. After the woman who was caught committing adultery (John 7:53-8:11) had left, Jesus spoke to the crowd. John 8:2 has already told us that this is the morning of the next day after the final day of the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (John 7:2, 37). The sun is rising and Jesus declared,

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." John 8:12 (NASB)

The Greek word that Jesus used to describe Himself as light is *phos*. It was the common word for light as well as the light from the sun. Jesus said that He was the *phos*. That is, He was a light but not light in a dark world. Now obviously, during the day, light from the

sun illuminated the earth and there were candles and torches in the nighttime. Jesus was not saying that He illuminated our physical world so that we could see with our physical eyes. He was talking about a spiritual dark world and He came as spiritual light. There wasn't any spiritual light until He came!

Have you ever awakened in the night and because it was so dark you stumbled on something you could not see? You stumbled because there was no light. That is Jesus' point. Those who do not come to Jesus and follow Him are in spiritual darkness and they do not understand what He is talking about. They are clueless, stumbling in spiritual darkness.

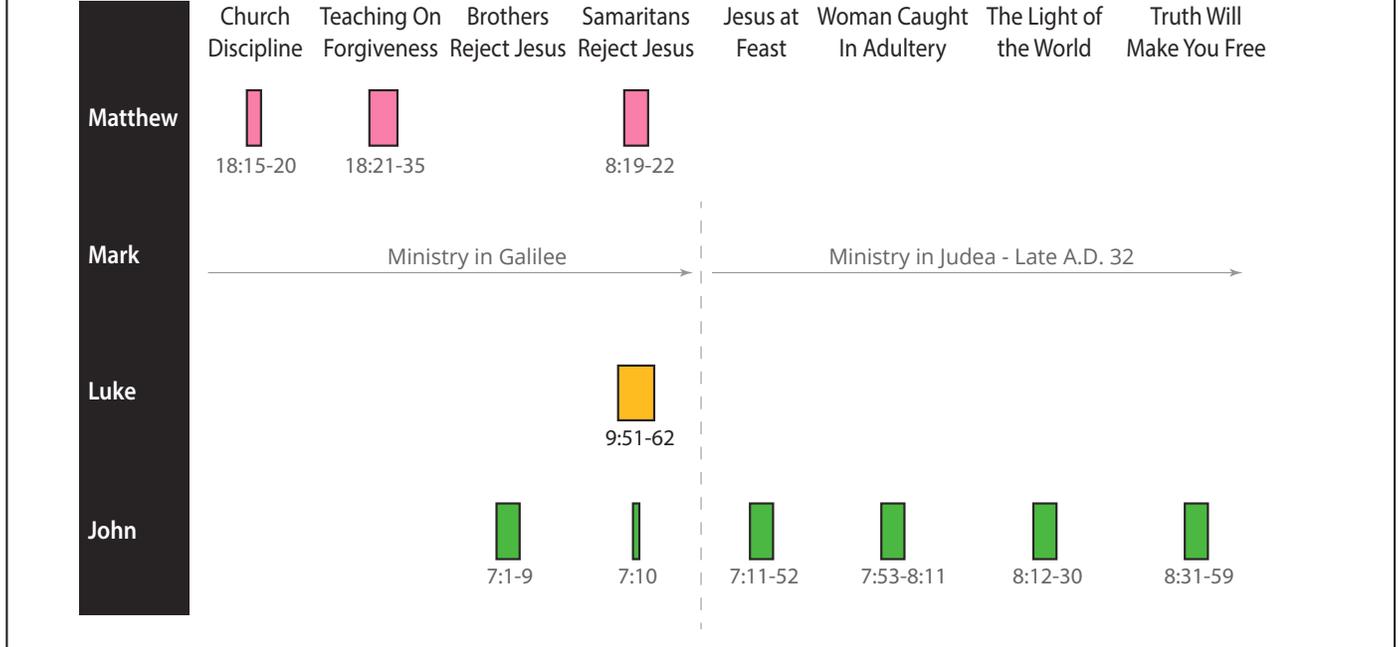


The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. John 1:5 (NASB)

Jesus adds that He is the "Light of Life." The Greek word for life is *zoe*. There are three Greek words for "life" -

Life and Heart of Jesus

Ministry In Galilee - Late A.D. 32



bios, psuche and *zoe*. The first Greek word refers to living life upon this earth and the activities connected with living. The second Greek word has the idea of the functioning physical life and personality. The word Jesus used, *zoe*, has the idea of the spiritual life of the person. *Zoe* is the word that is always used for eternal life - spiritual life. That is, Jesus is the light who reveals spiritual life. He is the Light of Life. That cannot be said of anybody else. That is why He spoke these words also,

While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.
 John 9:5 (NASB)

Tony Evans tells an event in his own life about light and darkness with these words,

One morning I got up at 3:30 a.m. and decided not to turn on the light. Now, there is a light right next to me on my nightstand, but I decided to not turn on the light. I figured that I knew where things were so I

didn't need the light. I figured I could make my own way in the darkness, so I didn't turn on the light. However, in the middle of the floor were some shoes I'd left out from the night before.

I don't know how many times I've been told not to leave my shoes on the floor and to put them up. So there they were in the middle of the floor and I had no light so I didn't see them sitting there. As far as I was concerned, there were no shoes in the middle of the floor and I was all right. I knew my room, I'd been living there for a lot of years.

A few minutes later, as I tried to pick myself up off of the floor after stumbling, tripping . . . I was reminded that when things are dark you don't see things as they really are. You may think you're okay when you're not okay. You may think you're fine when you're not fine. You may think you know what you're doing when you don't know what you are doing - all because you are trying to do your thing in the dark. If I would have

turned the light on, I wouldn't have had to go through all of those issues. I wouldn't have had to face all those problems because the light would have revealed something was wrong in the middle of the floor.¹

Those who do not turn on the Light called Jesus Christ are walking in a dark world and they do not know the world is dark. They do not know that there are shoes all over the floor. They do not know that they are spiritually dead. But they do not have to be like that. All they have to do is turn on the light called Jesus. All they have to do is listen to Him and follow Him. They will never stumble again and they will see clearly. Later in John we read this,

So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." John 12:35-36 (NASB)

Jesus calls us to trust in Him so that we can become sons of the Light and have spiritual life. Ephesians 2:1-2 tells us that unless we believe in Jesus Christ we are spiritually dead

people.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins . . . Ephesians 2:1 (NASB)

We become sons of Light when we believe that He died in our place and suffered the Father's wrath in our place. His resurrection was proof that He was sinless and God (Romans 1:4; 4:25). Only those who believe that Jesus did that and trust

Him to forgive their sins will become Christians or sons of Light. If you try to earn forgiveness by human effort, you will not be forgiven (Romans 4:3; Ephesians 2:8-9).

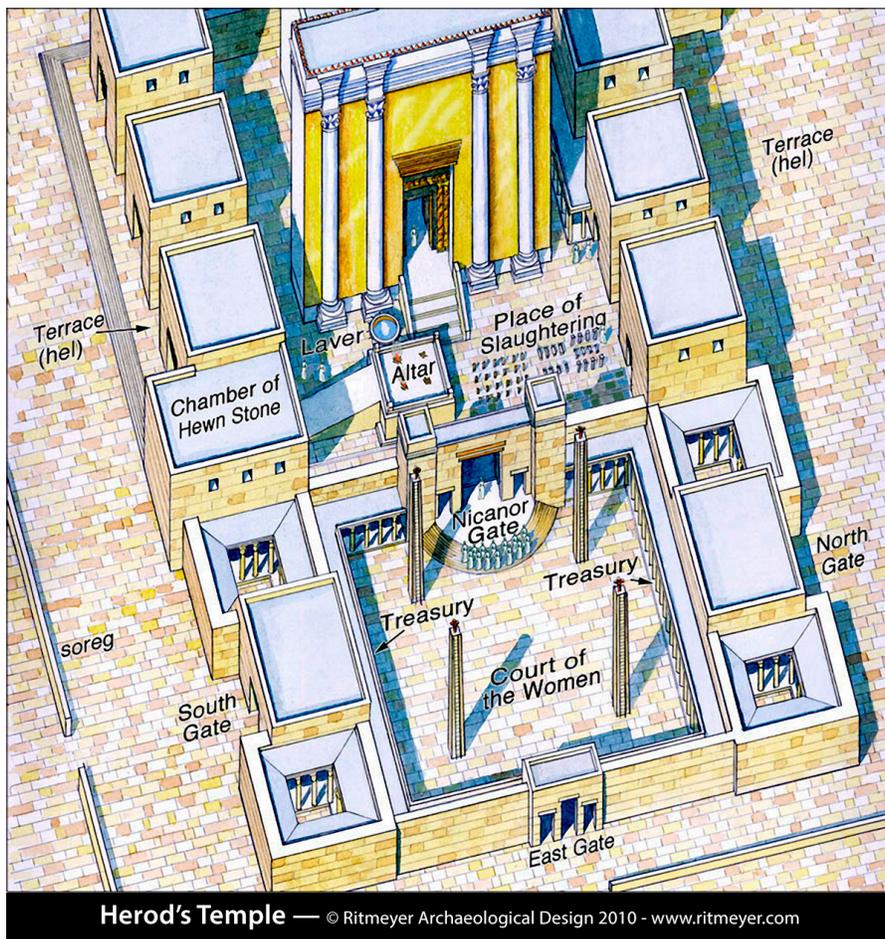
Pharisees Reject Christ.

Upon hearing that Jesus claimed that He was the Light of the world and the Light of Life the Pharisees were extremely upset.

So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your

testimony is not true." John 8:13 (NASB)

They challenged Him in two ways. First, they accused Him of being biased about Himself and, secondly, He lied. That is, Jesus had a character problem and taught error. Anyone in the crowd who was listening would have had to determine if the Pharisees were telling the truth. This would have been a difficult decision to make since the Pharisees were highly respected among the people as being godly. We can be sure



1. Tony Evans. Tony Evan's Book of Illustrations. Moody Publishers. 2009. p. 195.

that the crowd was interested in Jesus' reply.

Jesus had two replies. First, they did not really know Him. Secondly, according to the Mosaic law if the testimony of two witnesses agree, then they are to be trusted. Two witnesses agreed that Jesus is speaking the truth. Here is Jesus' first response.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going." John 8:14 (NASB)

This could appear to be an argument between immature adults. At first it might appear the Pharisees are saying, "You are not who you say you are," and Jesus is replying with, "Yes, I am!" That appears to be what happened, but what would you do if you were Jesus - God in human flesh? If you knew that you had come from heaven and would return after your death on the cross what would you have told the crowds? Heaven was your home and not earth! Would you tell them that you were only visiting? You are the God of the ages and for awhile you had chosen to be confined in a human body until you fulfill your mission by dying on the cross. But how could they know that? They were sons of darkness who were living in darkness. No one else could have known, except maybe John the Baptist, Mary and/or Joseph.

What Jesus said was true! He knew that He had come from heaven. He was only visiting. Later in John 8:24 and 58 He will reveal that He is the One who told Moses that He was the "I AM" (Exodus

3:14). That means He existed at least thousands upon thousands of years before. Yet, He only looked to be about thirty years old. His miracles, wonders and signs proved He was God as did His incredible teaching (Mark 1:26-28). He knew where He had been and where He was going. He had personal experience. But they didn't. They were clueless. Even worse, they were evil and so they hated Jesus - the Light. They did not want to believe Him.

For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. John 3:20 (NASB)

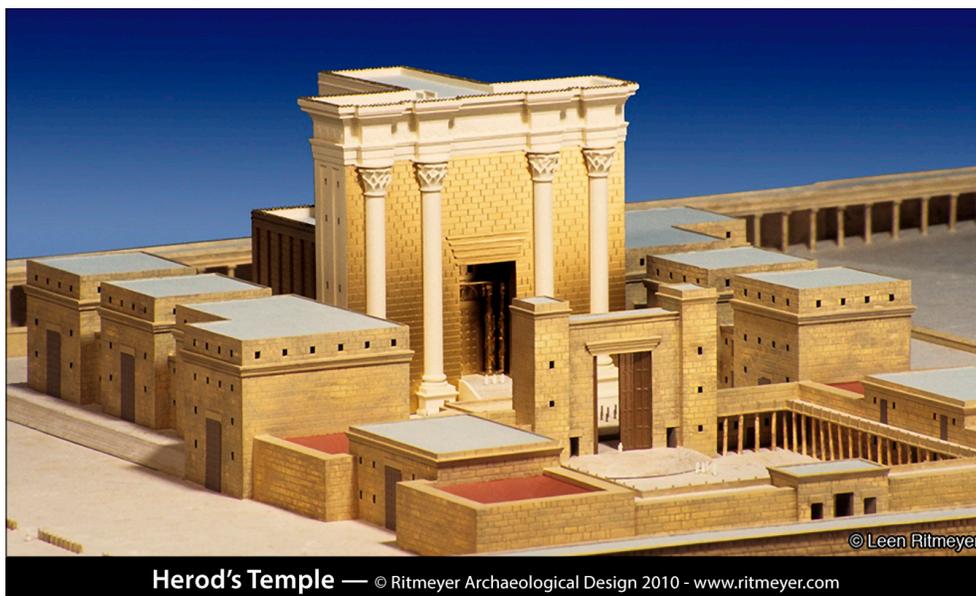
Then Jesus tells them that they were bad judges. They had bad discernment.

You judge according to the flesh . . . John 8:15a (NASB)

What an incredible statement. Jesus tells us what was wrong with their judgment. Their problem wasn't a lack of intelligence, lack of wisdom or poor planning. He says their problem was they judged *according to the flesh*. Romans 8:5, 7 reveals what the phrase "according to the flesh" means,

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit . . . because

the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot



Herod's Temple — © Ritmeyer Archaeological Design 2010 - www.ritmeyer.com

please God. Romans 8:5, 7-8 (NASB)

That is, they were not interested in the things of the Holy Spirit. They were only interested in the things of the world. They thought like ungodly men - self-centered men who were hostile toward God. They made decisions from a worldly perspective. That is, they did not think biblically.

Some years ago a man was a leader in our church and at first he seemed like a godly man who had a great passion for the things of the Lord. But after awhile we discovered that he objected to almost every decision that was being considered. Several men would try to show him from scripture that his position on a particular issue was wrong. Each time he continued to strongly argue for his point of view, ignoring the scriptures. Finally, one day he was extremely frustrated and declared that the Bible did not have any principles that applied to any of the decisions that we were considering. Now this man thought he knew the Bible just like the Pharisees. But the truth was that he just twisted the scriptures in an attempt to win his argument. His problem was like that of the Pharisees. He had the world's view on almost every issue. He judged according to the flesh.

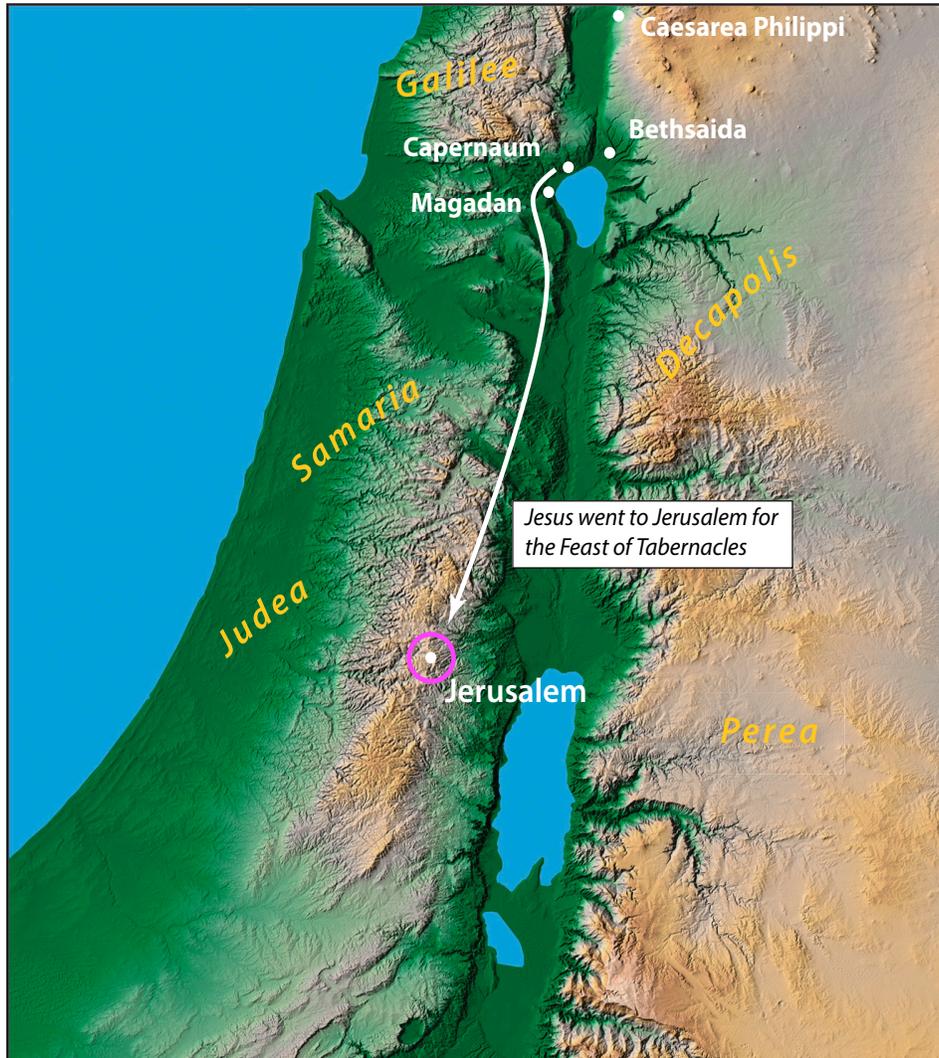
One wonders if he was really a Christian since he displayed so much anger and so frequently. Church leaders must be Christians and men of integrity who are committed to following the truth and defending it. Unfortunately, there are too many men who know a lot about the Bible but they understand it according to the flesh. We would be surprised at some of the strange things that they believe. The Pharisees knew the

Old Testament scriptures but they understood it according to the flesh. They missed the truth because they were in darkness and so they missed Jesus! These Pharisees were ungodly men who had no spiritual life and were incapable of understanding Jesus. You see, when you are in total darkness you cannot see.

... I am not judging anyone. But even if I do

judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. John 8:15b-16 (NASB)

After telling these religious leaders that they judged like ungodly, unspiritual men, Jesus states that He was not judging. It appears that Jesus is saying He was not making judgments as they did. In fact, He was not judging at all. Earlier in John 5:22 and 27, Jesus said God the Father had given all judgment to Him. Then in John 5:30-31, Jesus added that



His judgment was always accurate because He is repeating what God the Father says is true. Then He added that John the Baptist, His works, the Father and scripture all witnessed about Him. Apparently, the religious leaders did not understand or accept His earlier statement. Therefore, it appears He is repeating Himself and adds that His statements are true because He is repeating the judgments of the Father. One would think that since the Pharisees believe that the Father spoke truth, they would surely believe Jesus Who is repeating what the Father has said. Then Jesus reminds them that the Law says they should believe what two or three witnesses claim is true.

Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me. John 8:17-18 (NASB)

This is a shortened version of statements in John 5:27-47. His point is very simple; We both claim that I speak the truth, why don't you? Now a non-spiritual man would reject such statements as foolishness, but these were the spiritual leaders of Israel. Shouldn't they have understood after hearing the testimony of John the Baptist, seeing Jesus' works, reading the scriptures? One could understand that they might doubt Jesus' claim that God the Father approved of Him since they could not see or speak with Him. Yet, anyone who did the things that Jesus did should have been given more respect and trust.

Today, we have the advantage of looking back at the evidence about Jesus Christ that screams at us that Jesus was God. Many ignore or try to explain away the eye witness account of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea from AD 26–36. In one of his reports to the Roman Emperor he states that Jesus Christ performed amazing miracles, died and fulfilled prophecies in the scriptures.² But the religious leaders, who saw the same evidence, were not interested in truth. They were judging Jesus in the darkness.

The Insulting Comment. Therefore, it is not surprising that they asked this stupid and insulting question,

2. Cyclonic and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. 1867-1887. 62-63.

So they were saying to Him, “Where is Your Father?”
Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.”
John 8:19 (NASB)

Their question was incredible after all that they had seen Jesus do and say. Earlier Jesus had told them that He was God (John 5:18). Then He had already told them that He did the same things that the Father did (John 5:19-23, 26-27, 30, 37, 43). Later the disciple Philip will ask Jesus to show him the Father. Jesus will ask,

Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, “Show us the Father?”
John 14:9 (NASB)

The religious already knew the answer. This was an insulting challenge. Scripture had already revealed that no one could see God and live (Exodus 33:20; John 1:18). If the Father did show Himself, they would instantly die and not be around to tell anyone about what they experienced. This was just an insulting comment by the Pharisees. It was not going to happen. From their perspective it would make Jesus look like a liar. Rather than being confrontational, Jesus gives them a warning. They did not understand Him and it was obvious that they did not know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They did not know Jehovah God.

Conclusion. The Pharisees hated Jesus. They wanted to murder Him. They ignored the testimony of scripture and so they did not understand Him. It is like receiving a new electronic kitchen appliance. Upon receiving the new electronic kitchen “toy,” some people immediately take it out of the box and start using it without reading the manual. Now some people are successful but they usually miss some important details. Other people read the manual in order to understand what they just received. The Old Testament scriptures is our manual for understanding Jesus - who He is and why He came. But the Pharisees ignored the manual. We rejoice that they did because as a result they fulfilled the prophecies that said He would die on the cross.

Then the Holy Spirit tells us that all of these events the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:20) and this discussion between the Pharisees and Jesus occurred in the treasury of the temple.

These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come. John 8:20 (NASB)

It is important to notice that Jesus was teaching in the temple. It was the flashlight that Jesus used to help those who were in darkness see the light of spiritual truth. They could close their eyes and ignore the truth or they could open their eyes and see. Which type of person are you? If you are interested in spiritual truth, then read the gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They will give you spiritual truth about Jesus Christ. You will discover that He is our God who willingly died on a cross for our sins, was raised from the dead and is now Savior, Lord and coming King. May God bless.