

Theme: Jesus is the Light of the world, calling everyone to leave the darkness and walk in the light of God by following Him in daily obedience.

I. Intro - The Importance of Light

- A. People everywhere understand the importance of light
- B. Life is not possible without light; humans become disoriented if left in total darkness
- C. Religions have often used light as a metaphor
- D. What does Jesus mean by I AM the light of the world?

II. General Background for This I AM Saying

- A. The general Old Testament Background
 - 1. Light was used as a metaphor for God Himself
The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? Psalms 27:1
 - 2. Light was used as a metaphor for God's Law
Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalms 119:105
 - 3. Light was used as a metaphor for God's servant
"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6
- B. Judaism and other religions at the time of Christ
"Jewish literature was generous with the title "light of the world," applying it to Israel, Jerusalem, the patriarchs, the Messiah, God, famous rabbis and the law (cf. 1:4-5); but always it refers to something of ultimate significance." (IVPNT Background Commentary)

- 1. It was a rich, widely used concept in Judaism
- 2. Also common in Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls)
- 3. It was also widely used in Gentile mystery religions - but this is not the background for Jesus and other Jews

C. The Gospel and other writings of John

- 1. John stressed this metaphor in Jesus' teachings
- 2. John is 33 of 73 uses of φῶς (light) and 10 of 16 uses of σκοτία (darkness) in the NT!

III. Specific Background for This I AM Saying

A. The Feast of Tabernacles/booths (Sukkot)

- 1. Jesus is in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles
 - a. We know this from John 7:2
 - b. This was one of the major feasts for Israel
 - c. Everyone was to live in little huts to remind them of wilderness wanderings (see Leviticus 23:34-43)
 - d. NOTE: This is also hinted at in John 1:14 - The Word became flesh and 'tabernacled' (same Greek word as used for Feast of Tabernacles)
- 2. The Feast had two major ceremonies
 - a. Water - Jesus alludes to this in John 7:37-39
 - b. Light - huge candelabras lit, placed in Court of the women (near offering boxes), dancing, lit Jerusalem
 - c. The people turned to the Temple doors, away from the sun and said they worshipped Yahweh, not the sun

3. Josephus called this the holiest and greatest of the Israelite feasts (Holman Bible Dictionary)

4. All to commemorate the wilderness wanderings

B. The wilderness wanderings

1. Refers to the period of time after Israel left Egypt until they went into the Promised Land

2. This period provided the background for several major pronouncements of Jesus in John 6-8

a. John 6 - I AM the Bread of Life - Manna (Exodus 16)

b. John 7 - steams of living water - water from the Rock (Exodus 17:6)

c. John 8:12 - I AM the Light of the world - pillar of fire

3. The Pillar of fire

By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Exodus 13:21

a. Pillar of fire gave light to God's people in darkness

b. Pillar of fire guided them as to where they should go

c. Pillar of fire gave them protection from enemies (Exodus 14:24)

4. Jesus amazing statement

a. All of this is the rich background for this statement

b. A building crescendo in John 6, 7, and 8

c. This is just too much for the Pharisees to take

d. Jesus is claiming to the light of God's provision, guidance, and protection!

e. Jesus is claiming to be the fulfillment of these OT symbols and feasts

f. This leads to the resounding I AM of John 8:58

g. He is claiming to be nothing less than God tabernacling among us!

h. He is claiming to be nothing less than the Light of God's glory come to us!

IV. Applying the Word of Jesus the Great I AM

A. Jesus offers the light to each of us

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

1. Jesus is not just the Light of a few - the world

2. The Light shines upon all - including us

3. The question is - how will we respond?

4. There are two reactions to the light - flee or come

a. In animal kingdom light causes cockroaches to flee

b. The same light attracts moths to the flame

5. We have the same basic responses to Jesus as the Light of the world - we flee from the Light of Jesus or we are drawn to Him

B. Do not flee from Jesus the Light to embrace darkness!

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. John 3:19-20

1. Jesus had warned us that we love darkness
2. We love the dark because it hides our sin and evil
3. The fear of our evil being exposed makes us flee
4. We were created for the light, but many flee the light of Jesus, preferring to keep their sin and evil.
5. I beg you - do not flee the light to keep your sin
6. The darkness of sin will maim and destroy - it will twist and distort us - think of how Smeagol became Gollum in Lord of the Rings
7. In the end darkness is eternal death - distortion now and eternal death and destruction later!

C. Come to Jesus the Light of the world!

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. John 3:21

1. Jesus says some will come into the Light
2. These come because they live by the truth
3. This at least includes the truth of their own sin and need for cleansing
4. It's not possible to walk with Jesus & live in the dark
When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. **Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness**, but will have the light of life." John 8:12
 - a. This is the strongest negation possible in Greek
 - b. Must not, will not, can not walk in darkness

5. This is an ongoing walk in the light rather than dark
 - a. Present participle - continually follows Me
 - b. We are called to follow Jesus like the Israelites followed the pillar of fire - even when doing so exposes our own sin - He loves us!
6. This is a big part of what we should be doing in this season - as we fast, ask God to uncover our own sin and vice
7. As God uncovers our sin - do not flee the Light. Come to Him, confess your sin, receive cleansing
This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.
1 John 1:5–7

D. Concluding prayer - for others and ourselves

Jesus Is the Light of the World

John 8:12

February 21, 2016

Prayer

Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Deity of Christ; name of God; discipleship; typology; Lent

The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24–26

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12