

The Light of the World (John 8:12–20)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (11/21/2021)

“Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12).

Introduction

1. The *setting*: The Feast of Tabernacles

The *scene*: the “*great day*” at night in the Court of the Women (the Treasury, v. 20).

The *ritual*: two colossal golden lampstands on which hung a multitude of lamps lit after the evening sacrifice, diffusing their brilliancy over the whole city. Around these lamps the people danced and sang with great rejoicing. In this context, Jesus’ words, “*I am the light of world,*” came with stunning force.

2. The *significance*: the second “*I am*” declaration recorded

The first “*I am*” declaration was “*I am the bread of life*” (John 6:35). Now we have the second, “*I am the light of the world*” (John 8:12). This “*I am*” declaration, being the second (the number of *witness*) was also the second proclamation of Jesus on this last and great day of the feast. In this, Jesus was giving *witness* to His Messianic mission (vv. 17, 18).

I. The Light Motif

1. Light and darkness illustrate the spiritual condition of the human race. *Darkness* is not a thing in itself, but the *absence* of something—the absence of light. The miserable spiritual condition of the human race, darkness, is simply the absence of God, who is the Light (John 1:4, 5, 9).

This light was promised in the OT, not only to Israel, but to the whole world (Isaiah 9:2; quoted in Matthew 4:6). Thus, Paul declares, “*For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. ... But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light*” (Ephesians 5:8–14).

2. Light, a common religious symbol, compels John to stress that Jesus is the *true* (the genuine authentic) Light.
3. Light signifies the Lord’s presence, protection, and salvation for His people.
 - a. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the goodness of the Lord in providing His presence and guidance for Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21, 22). Thus, the Israelites were encouraged to sing: “*The Lord is my light and my salvation*” (Psalm 27:1).
 - b. God’s salvation (light) is promised in order that His praise might fill the earth (Habakkuk 3:3, 4). This salvation would come through the Lord’s Servant, His Agent to bring light to Israel and to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6).
 - c. In the future age, God Himself will be our light (Isaiah 60:19–21; Revelation 21:22–25).

II. The Declaration (v. 12)

1. The clear assertion of Jesus’ declaration is that He is the One symbolized by the Shekinah glory cloud and pillar of fire in the wilderness. The audacity of Jesus to make such a statement compels us to examine His claims carefully. Indeed, Jesus’ claim argues that He is the Servant of whom Yahweh spoke in Isaiah 49.

2. The promise connected to the declaration is equally audacious. Jesus promises a *permanent* solution to the human condition: “*Whoever follows me will not [never again] walk in darkness.*” Light and life are joined as light produces life.
3. Believers *live* because of the Light of Life came into the world. The light/life of the believer is due to regeneration in the new birth (2 Corinthians 4:6). The evidence of new light/life is that true believers will live out their new spiritual life by walking in the light (1 John 1:5–7). To enable believers to live in the light, the Word of God is provided (Psalm 119:105). Nevertheless, the Scriptures also warn of the danger of spiritual neglect (2 Peter 1:8, 9; Revelation 3:17).

III. The Response to Jesus’ Claim (v. 13)

1. The blind Pharisees (see 9:40, 41) responded, “*You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.*” These men understood His words in a purely judicial sense, ignoring a simple truth: Jesus’ declaration did not need witnesses, but *demonstration*.
2. The spiritual blindness of the Pharisees prevented their observing an obvious truth: light cannot but attest to its own reality. “*When anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light*” (Ephesians 5:13, 14). *Judgment* means division or *separation*—separating what is true and what is false—between light and darkness. Their intention was to condemn Jesus due to their blindness (John 3:19–21).

Conclusion

1. If Jesus is what He is purported to be, then one is obligated either to find Him true or prove Him false. Remember, light by its very nature attests to its own validity. Light dispels the darkness and reveals what is true.
2. If we are believers, we have experienced the light-producing Word of the living God (2 Corinthians 4:4).
3. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship*” (1 John 1:5–7).
“*For with You is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light*” (Psalm 36:9).