

JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

(John 8:12)

¹² The spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The overriding theme of the Gospel of John is that Jesus is the Christ and he is the Almighty God. Yes he left his first estate and came to the earth. He took on a fleshly body and became a man. He was made a little lower than the angels. He got hungry and thirsty. He suffered pain and death. But he never became less than God himself.

This is the story of John's gospel. This man Jesus is God. If you go back to the very beginning of the gospel, this message is stated clearly.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

John 1:1-4

And on and on goes the Gospel of John proving over and over again that Jesus is very God.

Now there are many ways to state that Jesus is God. John stated it verbally and in a very straightforward way in the very first verse. And he stated it in many other ways throughout the gospel.

One day John the Baptist was standing by the river Jordan with his disciples and he pointed at Jesus and he said, You see that man over there? I was baptizing him and I saw the Holy Spirit come down out of heaven like a dove, and it abode on him. (John 1:32) And I heard a voice out of heaven say, "This is He which baptizes with the Holy Ghost."

When Jesus was calling Nathanael to be his disciple, he saw Nathanael under the fig tree even when Nathanael was far away. Jesus was able to see Nathanael under that tree because Jesus was God.

Jesus went to a little town called Cana of Galilee and there he turned water into the best wine of the entire marriage ceremony. This was evidence that Jesus was God.

Then, Jesus went into the temple at Jerusalem and ran the moneychangers out of the temple and exerted his authority. This demonstrated his authority as God over his own temple.

After he cleansed the temple, Jesus then proceeded to publicly perform many miracles in Jerusalem. And his miracles were so conclusive, according to Nicodemus, that there was no doubt that he was a man come from God. Ah, Nicodemus was partially, but not completely right. Jesus was God himself.

After these things, Jesus went up into Samaria and there he met a woman who had five previous husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband. And in the course of his conversation with this woman, Jesus told her directly that he was the Christ, the long expected Messiah.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

John 4:25, 26

Jesus then went back into Cana of Galilee and from Cana he healed the Nobleman's son from a distance. You remember that the nobleman was from Capernaum and his son lay dying there. And Jesus told this nobleman, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." And this was further evidence that Jesus was God.

Jesus then went back to Jerusalem at another feast and he found a man who had been lame for 38 years lying around the pool of Bethesda. And Jesus healed him. And this proved that Jesus was God.

And as a sideline to this story, Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath Day. And the Jews were all fired up because Jesus had worked on the Sabbath Day. And Jesus told them that God has always worked on the Sabbath Day and therefore, he works on the Sabbath Day. Jesus was asserting that he was God himself.

Jesus then fed 5000 men plus women and children with five loaves and two small fishes. This was an astonishing miracle which proved that Jesus was God.

Now Jesus used this miracle of the bread as a springboard for his "I am the bread of life" discourse. And Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35) And by this Jesus instructed that he was God.

In his bread of life discourse, Jesus taught that "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me." (John 6:37) And furthermore, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44) And many of his disciples went away after these hard sayings. (John 6:60) They didn't like the doctrines of sovereign grace. And Jesus asked Peter if he also would go away. And Peter said, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:69) And so you see that the gospel of John establishes over and over that Jesus is the Christ and he is God himself.

Now the other theme that runs side by side with this theme is that the Jews continued to reject this message. They did not believe that he was the Christ. They did

not believe that he was God. And they wrestled against his message and against all of this evidence.

Now, we come to our text. And Jesus once again makes an astonishing announcement.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 8:12

Now this is the second of seven “I am” discourses in John’s gospel. We saw the first “I am” discourse in chapter six where Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” And now we come to the second “I am” discourse where Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” Later we are going to see that Jesus said,

I am the door. (John 10:9)

I am the Good Shepherd. (John 10:11)

I am the Resurrection and the Life. (John 11:25)

I am the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6)

I am the true Vine. (John 15:1)

When Jesus said, “I am the bread,” he was describing himself in one way. And when he says, “I am the light,” he is describing himself in a different way. Jesus is a very glorious Person and he can be described in many ways. This morning we consider that,

Jesus is the light of the world.

This is obviously a metaphor. When the sun went down, the body of Jesus didn’t glow in the dark. But the use of the word light to refer to Jesus instructs us as to his essential nature. God has always been associated with light. There is something about light, as opposed to darkness, that is very glorious and very divine.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is not darkness at all.

I John 1:5

So, I want you to see that the Scriptures often associate light with God. Now of course it is not a one-to-one correspondence. God is much more than just light. God is love. God is mercy. God is justice. God is holiness. You get the idea. All of these words are descriptive of God. And it would take all the words in the universe and many more to

describe God. But there are certain words that are so closely associated with his very nature that the Scriptures simply say, “God is love,” and “God is light.”

Now when we consider the phrase, “God is light,” if we have a physics background, our natural inclination is to think of photons and physical light. And certainly God created light in our physical universe.

In the beginning darkness was upon the face of the deep and God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3) So God created light even in our physical world.

Note: God provided physical light on the very first day of creation. (Genesis 1:3) But he created the sun and the other lights of the heavens on the fourth day. (Genesis 1:14-19) This would suggest that God provided light initially from his own essence. And he easily did so because God is light. (1 John 1:5)

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt they were led by a cloud during the day and during the night by a pillar of fire. That is, God provided them with light. Now of course, light in our universe is a very glorious thing. And it helps us to understand the greatness of our God. When you stand on the shore of the ocean and you watch the sun come up over the horizon in the morning, you cannot help but be struck with the awesome greatness of God. But that is just physical light. That is just a mere type of God’s true light. God is light in a much greater sense than that.

God himself is described in terms of light. Look what the Psalmist said,

The Lord is my light and my salvation.
Psalm 27:1

Now when the psalmist said, “The Lord is my light,” he didn’t mean that the Lord was the sun and the stars. What he meant was that the Lord did for him spiritually what the sun and the stars did for him physically. Just as the sun came up in the morning and wiped out the darkness and allowed him to see in the physical world, the Lord also came up and cast a light upon his heart and allowed him to see things that he otherwise could not see.

One thing that we talk about often around here is that there is a blackness and a darkness to the fallen human heart and the human mind. And there is simply no light. Sin has darkened our understanding. It has rendered us blind spiritually. And we are pitiful creatures, stumbling around in spiritual darkness.

But there is a God of light. And He can turn the lights on whenever he wants to in your mind and in your heart.

Example: Consider the cast of Lydia. Lydia was a Jewish woman who was stuck in that old form of Jewish worship. And look what Luke says about her.

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Acts 13:14

Example: After his resurrection Jesus appeared to two men walking along a road. And they were sad because of the crucifixion of Jesus. And it says Jesus opened the Scriptures and starting at Moses and all the prophets he explained the Scriptures to them. And they asked him to stay for dinner. And when he said the blessing, their eyes were opened. (Luke 24:31) And they went to Jerusalem and told others. And while they were gathered together with the others, Jesus appeared to them and it says he opened their understanding. (Luke 24:45)

You see, God is light and he not only provides physical light, but he also provides spiritual light. That is, he causes the blind to see. He causes the ignorant to understand. This is one of the marvelous things about first coming to know Christ. There is a sensational experience of having the lights turned on. Suddenly you see the truth and you wonder how you never saw it before. But this is not only a sensation for those who first come to know Christ, it is a continuing sensation throughout the Christian experience.

I want you to look at a prayer that Paul uttered on behalf of the Ephesian saints.

I . . . cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his might power . . .

Ephesians 1:15-19

Paul understood that God is light and by his power he can turn the light on in the human heart whenever he decides to do so by his great power.

So, God himself is light. He is full of understanding and knowledge. He has all the truth of the universe contained in a bottle. All the mysteries of all the sciences are easily known to Him. There are no dark corners to our God. He knows every last theorem and every mathematical equation and every philosophical reality. He is the source of all possible knowledge, for he created it all.

When prophets had visions of God in the Old Testament, they saw Him as a great light.

And above the firmament, that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the

likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. The was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

Ezekiel 1:26-28

When John was exiled to the isle of Patmos he had a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Phiadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Revelation 1:10-16

When the Old Testament foretold of the coming Messiah, it spoke of him as being a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6) and a light to his people. (Isaiah 60:19-20)

The Old Testament also foretold that in eternity there would be neither night nor day but at evening time it would be light. (Zechariah 14:7) Heaven will be one eternal day and there will be no sun because it will be lit by the true light which is God himself.

And in our text, Jesus, speaking to these unbelieving Jews said, "I am the light of the world." This was an unmistakable declaration of deity. There were lesser lights in the world. There was the sun that came up every morning and went away every evening. But that was only a physical light and a typical light. There were the candlesticks in the tabernacle and later in the temple. But these were only types of Christ. But Jesus came and said, "I am the light of the world." And by this Jesus declared that he was God himself.

This is the theme of the book of John – that Jesus is God.

I want you to notice that Jesus said, I am the light of the world. He was not one light among many. He was the light. All other lights were merely shadows of Him. He is the light that lights the world. Whatever other lights are in the world are lesser lights.

They are temporary lights. They are foreshadowing lights. But Jesus is the true light. (John 1:9)

All other lights were merely moons and stars flickering in the night. The prophets were not the true light. They were little sparks of truth here and there. But when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the true light of the world began to come up over the horizon and all other lights began to fade into insignificance. Jesus was the light.

And notice that Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." This is a statement that extends his authority to unlimited proportions. His authority and his influence was global. It was universal. It was not limited to Bethlehem or to Nazareth. But his light would shine in all parts of the earth. His light would not only light Israel, but it would also light the Gentiles. And so, when Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," it was a claim of absolute deity.

Now when Jesus used the word light to describe himself, he was not talking so much about physical light. His body was not a reservoir of photons and light particles. Rather he was talking about other qualities associated with light.

Certainly Jesus was the light in that he was the depository of perfect holiness and purity. His moral perfections were so stark and brilliant that they shined forth as light in a dark place. When you looked upon Jesus, not his body, but his actions and his words and his demeanor, you saw a brilliant display of holy living such that had never been approached by human beings before. You saw something like the sun shining at high noon. He was loving and compassionate and gracious and kind. He was self-sacrificing and caring. He was humble and gentle. And truth came out of his mouth like rays of sunshine. And he was the light of the world. There was no mistaking him. There was no other light like him.

But he was also the light in that he was the perfect revelation of Almighty God. Other prophets had told us about God. We knew something about God from creation and from his Word. But now we could see for ourselves what God was like in a human body. And he was the perfect reflection of the very essence of God. And because he shone forth the brilliant perfections of God, he said, "I am the light of the world."

When he said, "I am the light of the world," he meant something even more than all of that. He meant that life itself, that most precious quality of all, was in him.

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.
John 8:12

Jesus is not merely the display of moral perfection. He is not merely the perfect revelation of God himself. But he is also the possessor of life. If anyone wants to live, then he must follow Jesus.

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.
John 8:12

Do you want to live? Then follow Jesus. He is the light of life.

We live in a very dark world. We are led around by very dark minds. We are moved by the passions of a very dark heart. And in our natural condition we live in darkness.

Example: Do you ever get up at night and get disoriented in the dark. And you think the bathroom door is over here, but it is really over there. And you stumble around knocking pictures off the wall because you are navigating through the darkness.

And that's the way we all are in our natural condition.

But Jesus came into the world and said, "I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Now by this, Jesus meant that you have two options in this life. You can reject him and remain in spiritual darkness and stumble around in ignorance and unbelief and eventually die in your sins, or you can follow him and have life. There is no other option. There is no other door into eternal life. There is no other way. Jesus said,

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.

John 10:9

Jesus said,

I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.
John 14:6

There is only one light of the world, and a sinner can only find the Father by following that light. There is only one door and a sinner can only enter the kingdom through Him. There is one Shepherd and only He leads the sheep to the Father.

And so, Jesus said,

I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 8:12

I am going to put this as simply as I know how. If you will put your faith in Jesus Christ and follow him wherever he leads you, then he will lead you out of darkness and

you will find eternal life. His word will be a light unto your path and his steps will lead you down the path of righteousness and peace and joy.

But if you reject him, like the masses of fallen men do, and like these Jews did, and if you reject the light and follow your dark instincts, then you will find yourself in utter darkness, eternally lost with no light and no life for all eternity.

It is a grave choice, isn't it? To follow your sinful inclinations and die or to follow the light of Jesus to life; that is the choice that each must make.

For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:13

The Doctrine of *ego eimi*

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

Exodus 3:14

And so the children of Israel knew God by the name *I AM*. And this was a pretty good name for God because God had no beginning and has no end. He has simply always existed. He is the eternally existing One.

When this phrase was translated into the Greek (which they used in the time of Jesus) it was the phrase *ego eimi*. God was *ego eimi*. And this same phrase is used in the Old Testament in several places.

Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Isaiah 43:10

Yea, before the day was I am he . . .

Isaiah 43:13

And even to your old age I am he . . .

Isaiah 46:4

Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.

Isaiah 48:12

And so when you referred to the *I Am* the Jews knew exactly who you were talking about.