

June 12th, 2016

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 8:12-20

Throughout the gospel of John, the LORD Jesus Christ gives us seven “I AM” statements. “I AM the bread of Life” (John 6:35); “I AM the light of the world” (John 8:12); “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); and “I AM the true vine” (John 15:1). In each of these statements Jesus reveals more and more of His glory, and how He relates to the human soul.

We’ve already seen this in His first I AM statement “I AM the bread of life” (John 6:35). **Jesus Christ is to our souls what bread is to our bodies.** He is our nourishment, our sustenance, our energy, the very thing that gives us life.¹ If we don’t have bread we die physically, if we don’t have Jesus Christ, we die spiritually. In this second I AM statement “I AM the light of the world”, we discover that **Jesus Christ is to our souls what the sun is to the world.** I believe Jesus *means* for us to think of the sun when He says He is the light of the world, because the sun is the chief and greatest light for planet earth. And so His declaration that He is the light of the world will find illustration with how the sun relates to planet earth.

Once again I want to draw attention to the fact that God fashions the whole universe with one thing in mind, *mainly*: to display the glory of Christ. All things are God’s servants² sent to draw attention to Christ. The sun is a luxury item added to this galaxy. God didn’t need to add it. In the new Jerusalem, there will be no sun. **Revelation 22:5** says “And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light,” What

¹ “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6:51)

² “By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants.” Psalm 119:91

we should deduce from this truth, is that *the main reason* the sun exists now, is so that we could learn how Jesus is the light of the world.

Doctrine

Jesus Christ is the only light that leads people out of the spiritual darkness of this world

☆ Jesus Testimony: I AM the Light of the World (v.12)

☆ Jesus' Defense: I AM the Light of the World (v.13-20)

I. Jesus Testimony: I AM the Light of the World (v.12)

v. 12 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."

The redemptive significance of light

Scholars who believe vv.1-11 don't belong in this part of John point to the fact that if it were omitted, v.12 flows nicely from 7:52. It's the last day of the Feast of Booths, Jesus just finished saying "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." (7:37) We've already seen a double significance of this because Jesus said this during the water pouring ceremony of the Jews, recalling when God gave the Jews water from the rock in the desert. But there was a another ceremony during the Feast of booths and this was the lamp-lighting ceremony. In the evening, the Jews would light these huge candle trees, (candelabrum) and they would blaze light through the blackened sky. One commentator notes "So brilliant was their light that one ancient Jewish source declared, "There was not

a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect [their] light.”³ This lamp-lighting ceremony was to remember how God led the Israelites through the desert by a pillar of fire when they left Egypt.

So imagine the scene, these torches are lit up, violently forcing their light into the blackness, and all the people see that sign and remember God was their light when they came out of Egypt. And then Jesus speaks up “I am the light of the world.” ‘Just as your fathers followed that pillar of fire, so you are to follow me.’

But these Greek speaking Jews would have heard something more. When Jesus said “I am”, the Greek *egō eimi* is literally translated to mean “I AM, I AM.” “I AM, I AM the light of the world” hearkening back on God’s self-disclosure to Moses “I AM WHO I AM” (**Exodus 3:14**) For anyone to look at the NT and claim that Jesus never claimed to be God is being dishonest. He said it nearly every time He opened His mouth.

So now everyone within earshot of Jesus’ voice turn their gaze from the lights and are transfixed with His words. Some in this very crowd, because they hear Jesus’ words, believe and are saved (v.30). These are the very words of life that Peter confessed two chapters ago.⁴ These words can give you eternal life today. “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me [Jesus says] will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

“I am the light of the world”

There are five truths that we need to see when Jesus says He is the light of the world: 1) **When Jesus says “I AM the light of the world” He means that He the *only* source of light.** There are not two suns in the heavens, one providing light for one part of the world, and another for the other part. Likewise, Jesus is the *only* light of the world. You either worship Jesus or in are in darkness.

³ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago, IL,: Moody Publishers, 2006), pg. 334

⁴ John 6:68

There's not a third choice. Those who walk in the light of other religions, or who reject religion altogether remain in spiritual darkness.

2) When Jesus says "I AM the light of the world" He means He is the **light for all peoples**. The sun offers its light to all peoples on the earth, and likewise Jesus offers his saving light to all races, all tribes, and all tongues. The Arab in the middle east, the child in the Congo, and the woman in Peru are invited to believe the gospel just as the ancient Israelite. Long was Jesus prophesied in the OT that He would be the light for all peoples. **Isaiah 49:6** "I will make you as a *light for the nations*, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

3) When Jesus says "I AM the light of the world" He means He is **revelation itself**.⁵ One of the chief properties of light is that it *reveals* things that are hidden. Without light we are blind to all things around us. Jesus is saying without Him we are blind. John Newton the slave ship owner whom God radically saved, famously penned the words "I once was blind but now I see" when He encountered Jesus Christ. Jesus revealed to him that he was the true slave, bound in chains of darkness, blinded by the devil, in love with His own sin, without hope and with God in the world. And then that great Abolitionist Jesus Christ shone His light into His soul so He could see. He could see the vileness of his sin, and the holiness of God, and he was led by the light of Christ to repentance and faith.

4) When Jesus says "I AM the light of the world" He means that He is **life-giving**. The light of the sun gives life to everything on planet earth. It gives light to plants for photosynthesis, it thaws out the winter soil, it calls birds back to their nesting grounds. When the sun appears, all things come back to life.⁶ And so it is with the light of Christ. Jesus doesn't simply show us the way to God, His light is the very life of our souls. That's why Jesus ends v.12 by saying "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have *the light of life*."

⁵ In Jesus alone "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (**Colossians 2:3**)

⁶ <http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaGlsby9nZXRvYmpIY3QucGw/Yy45OjE5LndqZW8=>

Nobody who has been given the light of Christ by the Holy Spirit of God can fail to have eternal life.

5) When Jesus says “I AM the light of the world” He means that He is **gloriously beautiful**. Light is beautiful. It paints one of a kind sunsets every evening. It stops traffic with it’s rainbows. It’s captivating. Jesus claims this attribute of light as well. ‘I AM the beauty of the world, I give everything it’s splendor.’ Every physical beauty is an echo of the true beauty that belongs to Jesus. Every soul that has truly seen the beauty of Christ’s light longs for more of Him, more than any other light. Seeing the true light creates longing for more of it. As the Psalmist says “...my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.” (Psalm 130:6) Or as the church says to Christ in the Song of Solomon says “O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.” (Song of Solomon 2:14)

In summary, when Jesus said “I AM the light of the world,” He is claiming to be *the Person* who defines, illumines, and interprets all of reality, not only in history past but for eternity future.

“Whoever follows Me...has Me’

Jesus continued “Whoever *follows* me will not walk in darkness.” “Whoever follows me” not whoever lags behind me disinterestedly. Following Christ, means pursuing Him *as He has revealed Himself*, namely as the only life-giving revelation of truth and beauty in one Divine Person. Just like we saw in chapter six, believing in Christ means coming to Him hungry, and receiving Him as all-satisfying bread; so here *following* Jesus, means to be guided by His light alone, and entrust your soul to His direction. Jesus promises here that if you do that “...you will *have* the light of life.” To follow Christ is to possess Him as your own.

The opposite truth is implied here ‘Whoever does not follow me will walk in darkness.’ Meaning, that if you refuse to follow Christ, your mind and heart

are completely blind to the evil of sin, and the loveliness of God. You're lost. You're in spiritual darkness. Your heading for eternal judgment if you don't follow the light of Christ. That's Jesus' message in v.12. He claimed that He was the absolute exclusive Teacher of all truth in the world, and that anyone who rejected Him rejected life itself. When these Pharisees heard this, they knew Jesus was indicting them. They knew the implications, and so they go on the attack.

II. Jesus Defense: I AM the Light of the World (v.13-20)

The deceptive dismissal of unbelief

v. 13 So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."

This is completely dishonest how these Pharisees respond. They totally ignore what Jesus said *because* they think t Notice how these Pharisees accuse Christ of being a false witness.⁷ This is how every unbeliever operates. They hear the testimony of Jesus, and they call Him a liar—"your testimony is not true" **John 3:19-20** "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed." Unbelief is rebellion against the light. Unbelief is not misunderstanding of the facts. It is loving the darkness and accusing Jesus of being a liar.

That's what these Pharisees are doing but they are clothing their unbelief in a technicality. They think they have caught Jesus in a contradiction. Jesus had said earlier in **John 5:31** "If I...bear witness about myself, my testimony is

⁷ R.C. Sproul, *St. Andrew's Expository Commentary: John*, (Orlando, FL,: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2009), pg. 157

not true.”⁸ So these Pharisees now hear Jesus bearing witness about Himself, and they use His own words to accuse Him of being a false witness. Is Jesus contradicting Himself? Of course not. Jesus’ point in 5:31 was that if He were to witness about Himself in a way that was disconnected from the Father’s witness then his testimony would not be true.⁹ Not that if He ever spoke on His own behalf He should be dismissed. These Pharisees ripped Jesus’ words from their context in order to dismiss Him. Using language like this is evil. This is just like what the devil did when tempting Jesus in the wilderness. ‘Throw yourself off this temple Jesus because Scripture says that God will command his angels to guard you. (Luke 4:9-10) Jesus you ought to sin and attempt suicide because God said He is going to guard you.’ What’s Satan doing? He’s using the word “guard” in a way that God didn’t intend. That’s what these Pharisees were doing here. They were deliberately twisting Jesus’ earlier words in order to try and dismiss His witness here.

Jesus gives three answers to this first objection from the Pharisees.

Jesus’ first answer

v. 14 Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness 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.

Jesus completely ignores their underhanded twisting His words. The light of the world doesn’t need to provide an argument for His truthfulness. Light is self-attesting. Nobody demands that our sun would have other witnesses corroborating it’s existence. It carries with itself it’s own evidence. And so with Jesus. Jesus Christ came from heaven. He was sent from God and was God Himself. The Pharisees ought to have known that from His very works and

⁸ “The English versions that add the word “alone” in verse 31 — “If I alone bear witness about myself” — are interpreting, not translating.” <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-am-the-light-of-the-world>

⁹ *ibid*

words. But they suppressed the light. They covered up all the windows of their soul with black paper and refused to see.

Jesus' second answer

v. 15a You judge according to the flesh;

Jesus points out here that their judgment comes from their sinful nature. They weren't competent judges because their hearts and minds were dead to sin. Unless they were born again, they would never be able to make right judgments about Jesus. Jesus continues at the end of v.15 "I judge no one." Meaning, 'I don't judge according to fleshly standards like you, but only judge the way that my Father is judging.'

Jesus' third answer

v.16-18 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. [17] In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. [18] I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."

Jesus' ultimate answer to the Pharisees is that His Father is the one who sent Him. His judgment comes from His Father, His witness comes from His Father. The light that He shines on the world, is a perfect reflection of His Father's light. Everything that He is doing, He is doing because God the Father sent Him.

Conclusion

v. 19a They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?"

This was not an honest question. It is a mocking question. 'Produce us your father and we will question him, and all will see that you are a fraud.'

v.19b Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

Jesus circles back to his claim in v.12. 'I am the key to knowing the Father. I am the light of the world. If you enjoyed my light and let me lead you, you would then know my Father, because my light leads people to Him. But you have rejected me, and therefore have rejected my Father. Since you don't recognize me as God, you don't recognize my Father as God.'

These words were so highly offensive to the Jews that violence should have been done to Jesus. Humanly speaking, they should have hauled Him off that moment and stoned Him. But verse 20 shows us what is happening.

v.20 These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come

It was not self-restraint that stopped this Pharisees from destroying Jesus at this point, it was God's Divine plan. This should have been an evidence of Jesus' claim in itself. How is it that all the leadership hates Him and He's teaching in the temple and yet nobody reaches out their hand to shut Him up? Because His hour had not yet come.

Application

Our Doctrine: Jesus Christ is the only light that leads people out of the spiritual darkness of this world

Every nation that has not claimed Christ has been in spiritual darkness, practicing the worst kinds of violence against women, children, Christians, Jews, they have worshipped devils, practiced self-mutilation, and sought after idolatry of every kind. And nothing has illustrated this better than the time between Malachi and the coming of Christ. When Malachi wrote his final words in the OT, the light of special revelation went off for 600 years. And it was as if God was saying to the world, 'Try and produce your own light.' And during this time the greatest secular intellects the world has ever produced lived,

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc. How did they fair apart from spiritual light?
Jonathan Edwards comments:

“[During this] time learning and philosophy were risen to their greatest height in the heathen world.—Almost all the famous philosophers [and]...all the wise men of Greece and Rome flourished in this time. What these philosophers in general chiefly professed as their business, was to inquire, wherein man’s chief happiness lay, and how to obtain it. They seemed earnestly to busy themselves in this inquiry, and wrote multitudes of books about it, many of which...still [exist]; but they were exceedingly divided, there having been reckoned several hundreds of different opinions which they had concerning it.¹⁰ Thus they wearied themselves in vain, wandering in the dark, not having the glorious gospel to guide them. God was pleased to suffer men to do the utmost that they could with human wisdom, and to try the utmost extent of their own understandings in order to find out the way to happiness, before the true light came to enlighten the world. God suffered these great philosophers to try what they could do for six hundred years together; and then it proved by the events of so long a time, that all they could do was in vain; the world not becoming wiser, better, or happier under their instructions, but growing more and more foolish, wicked, and miserable. He suffered this, that it might be seen how far reason and philosophy could go in their highest ascent, that the necessity of a divine teacher might more convincingly appear.”¹¹

¹⁰ “They advanced, as Varro tells us, no fewer than 288 opinions in relation to his matter.”— Jonathan Edwards, cited in *Thy Word Is Still Truth*, Ed. Peter A. Lillback & Richard B. Gaffin Jr., (Phillipsburg, NJ,: P & R Publishing, 2013), pg. 494

¹¹ <http://edwards.yale.edu/archive?path=aHR0cDovL2Vkd2FyZHMueWFsZS5lZHUvY2dpLWJpbi9uZXdwaGlsby9nZXRvYmplY3QucGw/Yy45OjE5LndqZW8=>

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The Apostle Paul preached these truths to the Corinthians who were fascinated with the sophistry of the Greeks “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.” (**1 Corinthians 1:21**) In other words, human reasoning alone results in darkness, because human reasoning is blinded by sin. This is the effect of the fall. No one on planet earth is able to think right thoughts about God apart from Jesus Christ.

We need a divine teacher. That's why the Father sent Christ, because the world was swallowed up in darkness. Swallowed up in sin. Darkened in our our understanding and unable to grope our way to God.

Our Duty: Let the light of Christ constantly illuminate your soul

There is a planet earth video where they show what happens when a tree falls in the Amazon. This is significant because the Amazon is so wet and lush that every available space is filled with with a tree. An arial view looks like a carpet of tree tops. Well when a tree falls, all the surrounding vegetation, fights for the opening of light hat the fallen tree has left. The time elapsed photography is amazing because it shows this race of vines, and branches all vying for the sunlight that has broken through to the rainforest floor. Nature needs light. It fights for light.

Dear congregation, do you fight for the light of Christ in your everyday life? Coming to church and receiving light on Sunday's *only* will produce weak Christians at best. Imagine letting your flowers bask in the sunlight for only an hour a week, and then locking them up in the closet the other 6 days. They would die. The church is exhorted to constantly walk in the light. The Apostle Paul says in **Ephesians 5:8-10** "...at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord." Paul connects 'walking in the light' with 'discerning what is pleasing to the Lord.' Dear congregation, do you ever ask yourself 'what would please the Lord today?' That's how you walk in the light. What would please the Lord today? Do you know what pleases the Lord? **When we treat Him as light.** When we bask in the light of His Word daily. When we share the light of His gospel with others—Jesus is the light for all nations. When we see Him as beautiful and are drawn to follow Him more than all the false lights of this world. Can you say with the Psalmist "...my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning." (**Psalm 130:6**) Has lesser lights drawn you away from pursuing Christ as you ought to?

The lesser lights of our American culture is certainly technology and social media. Question: How much time do you spend in front of an electronic light compared to the light of Christ? Dear congregation, this is the false light of a prosperous culture. Entertainment. Entertainment is not bad in itself, but if you are spending more time entertaining yourself than enjoying the light of Christ, I dare ask: How is that walking in the light? How is it pleasing to the Jesus if we pursue the culture's light more than we pursue Him? Will you fight for the light of Christ to illuminate your everyday life? Will you treat Christ as the only light of the world?

Our Delight: Whoever has the light has Jesus Himself

Look at v.12 again, but this time I'm going to omit some words. Jesus says "I am the **light**...whoever follows me...will *have* the **light**..." Do you see the connection? Jesus is saying He is **the light**, *and* all who follow Him have **the light**. Meaning, all who follow Jesus *have* Jesus. Jesus gives Himself to us when we put our trust in Him. He doesn't give us some abstract thing called light, but Himself. If we receive Christ as light, meaning if we recognize that He is the only source of truth, that He is life-giving, that He is the revelation of the Father, that He is all beautiful, then we *have* Him.

