

Light of the World - Part 1

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[0 : 00] We return to our series in the Gospel of John.

We're making our way through. We're in chapter 8, and we will keep moving inch by inch until we finish this great book. So may the Lord bless the reading of His Word now, and as we pray and proclaim Jesus, bow with me now in the word of prayer once again.

Father, thank You. Thank You for Your love. Thank You for that great grace, that great grace that saves us, that great grace that sustains us, that great grace that will take us all the way to glory and into the new heavens and new earth.

Thank You. Help us, Lord, now to be Your people, to be Your people of light, to walk with Jesus, to hear His voice even now, and give us ears to hear.

Help us to perk up a little bit, to have ears to hear what Your Spirit is saying to Your people through Your Word. Grant Your unworthy servant grace to proclaim Jesus and all of His benefits from Your Word.

[1 : 22] Your Word is life. Your Word is powerful. Your Word created the heavens and the earth. Your Word recreates us. Your Word. And so, Lord, we sit in our tent doors to hear Your Word.

Even as Your servant has heard it, may I hear it again, even in the preaching of it. Bless this moment in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Turn to a very familiar passage in John chapter 8, beginning at verse 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.

So, the Pharisee said to Him, you are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true. Jesus answered, even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true.

[2 : 27] For I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I came from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh.

I judge no one. Yet, even if I do judge, my judgment is true. For it is not I alone who judge, but I am the Father who sent me.

In your law, it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.

They said to Him, therefore, where is your father? Jesus answered, you neither know me nor my father. If you knew me, you would know my father also.

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. That is the word of the Lord.

[3 : 29] Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Thanks again, praise team.

Thank you so much. You know, I don't particularly enjoy walking or driving in the dark. I know some people like driving at night because this usually means there's less traffic on the road.

You get to where you're going. But who really likes driving because it's dark? I'm just curious. Is anyone just—you just like being in the dark.

Is any—I'm just curious. Anybody out there? I—I—I—yeah, I didn't think so. I just—there's something—listen, we like driving in the light and walking in the light. Why? Because you can see the scenery.

I love driving. I call it—this is a good day for a drive. My family get in the car and take a long trip to Philly. And when the sun is shining, you know, and I'm on the road, my smooth jazz playing, my family beside me.

[4 : 36] That's a good day if it's rainy and drizzly and dark. I want to see. I want to see exactly where I'm going.

In our passage and in life, Jesus comes as the light of the world. That says some things already. But I got a question for you. Do you really want to see where you're going? Remember where we are in chapter 7.

This—we just ended chapter 7 a few months—some months ago. We're still in the same place location-wise with Jesus. He's at the Feast of Booze, remember?

Every male Jew was required to attend this great—this great feast. It commemorated Israel's wanderings in the desert after God had delivered them from bondage in Egypt.

[5 : 38] There were—remember—two important rituals in this feast. And Jesus co-opted them both. The first we looked at already was the water ritual, which showed how God supplied their great need of water in the wilderness.

Water was poured out every day at the feast on the altar. And remember, Jesus stood up at the end of chapter 7 near verse—around verse 37 and says, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Looked at that. But now in our passage, we come to the ritual of light. In this ritual, it commemorates how God guided and protected the Israelites at night by sending a pillar of fire. In this festival—in this part of the festival, four candelabras would be lit every night. But on the last night, only three were lit, we're told, to somehow maybe symbolize that the Messiah had not yet come.

But it would be very bright, very—lots of light there during this time of the lighting. But there's something—remember something happened in between these scenes.

[6 : 50] The woman caught in adultery. Now, some question whether that really should be there or not, but I think it really does belong there, because I think it's doing something very powerful.

That passage, this dear woman—remember, she was used by a mob of religious hypocrites to trap Jesus. John includes this story not just because he wanted to show how gracious Jesus was. Amen. Amen. That's true. This is a dear woman who was caught. It wasn't like she was—she didn't do it. No, she did do it.

She was being used. I think those men who used her bear the greatest sin. However, she had been caught, and she had been brought to Jesus to be condemned.

And I love it. Jesus reaches out to her and gives her living water. He reaches out with her and says to her, you don't have to find your significance, security, and satisfaction in a man who's not your husband.

[7 : 57] You can find it in me. Yeah. Living water. But then his words to her were very powerful.

He says, remember, neither do I condemn you. Go now, and from now on, sin no more. Living water was given.

I don't condemn you. He made her alive. But how is she going to now go now and sin no more? How is she going to really accomplish that?

She's going to have to have some light. They go together. She's going to need Jesus to be the light of the world, to help her walk out of the darkness in which she had been living.

And so these scenes, though they may not seem connected, they are very connected. And she becomes the example of one who receives Jesus in both those ways.

[9 : 06] And how we also can receive Jesus in both those ways. So, let's talk about this light. First of all, I want you to notice the person of the light.

Jesus simply says, I am the light of the world, but you can't move too fast there. Because there is one of the I am sayings, the second one found specifically in the Gospel of John.

The I am statement there, he's not just saying I exist. This is something really deep here. And those of you who have been around the Bible, you know about this. It is a reference to God's revelation of himself in the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3.

You remember Exodus chapter 3? Moses is on the backside of the desert, the King James says. He had run for his life. There was a contract out on Moses for killing an Egyptian who was assaulting one of the Israelites.

Moses thought he was going to be their savior right then and there. It didn't work out the way he thought. You never get ahead of God. And so, Moses, the contract goes out and Moses says, I got to get out of Dodge.

[10 : 23] He jumps on the train smoking into the desert. And that's where we find our boy 40 years later. I mean, that's a long time to be hanging out, running for your life.

He was in witness protection. And so, he's out with the sheep and all of a sudden he sees this bush.

Exodus chapter 3, it says this. This bush is burning and it's not being consumed. Then Moses said to God. I mean, he speaks to him out of the burning bush and calls him to be a prophet.

Moses said to God, though, if I come to the people of Israel, you want me to go back? You want me to go back? You want me to go back? Hold it. You want me to go back to the people who want to kill me? Okay. But, and you want me to bring your people out?

But, here's the question. If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, well, what is his name? What should I tell them?

[11:26] And God speaks, say to this people of Israel, I am who I am. I am has sent me to you.

Yes. You know, if you said that to me, I'd be like, okay, yeah, right. You're just being smart. God is revealing himself.

He gives them really what amounts to more like a proper name. I am. In other words, I am the self-existent one.

The always is and always will be one. The uncreated one, and therefore the creator of all reality.

This is how God is talking to them.

You tell them it's me. I am. I mean, wow. Not like the gods of the Egyptians. Not like the gods that you create with your own hands.

[12:37] He is the self-existent one. He is dependent on no one or no thing. He was never created and depends on nothing to sustain him.

I am. I am. In the Bible translations, you might see the actual letters. Some translations write it out for you.

When it says I am, that name of God, it'll just say Y-H-W-H. Or in your Bible, you'll see capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D.

The word Lord, for all caps, that is that name. I am. The Jews wouldn't even pronounce it. They wouldn't even say it because it was so holy to them.

Jesus, being a Jewish man, stands to the people what they will not say.

[13:30] He says, I am. Literally, literally, it's funny because when you look at the Greek text, Jesus wasn't speaking Hebrew at this point. He does. He did speak it, of course.

But in this text, the Greek, he literally says this, I am, I am. Egoemi, I am, I am. It's emphatic.

He is, again, identifying himself with that burning bush God. The one who spoke to Moses and said, take the shoes off your feet, for the ground on which you stand is holy.

Why is that ground holy? Because God touched it. God was present. In his majesty and glory, he was present, and therefore, sinners must bow.

And Jesus says, I am. He's displaying, he's announcing for those who have ears to hear his deity.

[14:30] He, as it were, is the light of the burning bush. He is the glory of the burning bush.

Because remember, fire gives light. And as that light shone, as it were, I love what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, 6. For God who said, let light shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God. That's Jesus. In Hebrews 1, he is called the radiance of God's glory.

Oh, the bush has become a man. The bush now walks among us. His holiness, his glory, his self-existence.

Jesus was not created. To my Jehovah Witness friends, he is not a created being. He is the creator. He is the I am.

[15:44] I love how even Isaiah was looking ahead, as it were centuries ahead. He prophesied in Isaiah 9, 2. He said, the people, talking about Jesus, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Those who dwell in the land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. That the I am is walking among us.

But that light has power. There's power in this light. Notice what he says again. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Jesus says to follow him. Follow me is what he said to his disciples when he called the 12 to himself. That was a common way for him to call disciples.

It is still true today. He says, follow me. Not think great thoughts about me only. Not sing about me only.

[16:58] Not talk about me only. That may not be discipleship. All of us may not follow me.

That's discipleship. That's true faith in Jesus. It is because of his grace and his taking you for his own, taking you to be a disciple.

You seek now to conform your life to his teaching by walking in his steps with him. To follow him, therefore, is to walk away, is what he's saying, is to walk away from and walk out of darkness.

Remember this lightning, this lightning, this lightning ritual commemorates the pillar of fire. That pillar of fire was the presence of God with his people.

As he led them out of bondage. Notice how it's described in Exodus chapter 13, verse 21. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

[18:18] But I thought, why would God want them to travel by night? Maybe it was cooler. They were in the desert. I don't know.

But I think there's a point there. God was their light at night. And he was showing humanity that we need his guidance and that he is willing to lead us because our world is a place of darkness.

You see, he led them at night, but that was actually chronological time. Now he's talking about, I am the light of the world. That goes beyond just one day. We live in a world that's full.

The light of darkness. John will say later in 1 John that the whole world lies in the evil one. Doesn't mean that Satan runs the world, but he makes the point that this world is being governed in some ways by that world system, that system of living and thinking that leaves God out, is controlled by the enemy, by the evil one.

That's why we see, we continue to see brokenness. Yes, because we're broken, but even sometimes crazy broken. Because that brokenness in each one of us is being encouraged.

[19:45] It's being pushed. Temptations. Temptations. Temptations. The horrible things we hear that we do to one another.

That's not just sin. It is sin. But there's also a darkness at work whereby the spiritual forces of evil are at great work, stoking the fire, stoking the fire.

But there's hope. Because just like God sent this fiery pillar to lead his people Israel as they wandered in the desert, a journey they could have made in a week or so, but God knew they weren't ready.

And they said he wandered the desert, and for 40 years, that pillar of fire was there. For 40 years, he never left their side.

At one point, he said he was going to. He told Moses, they crazy. They won't listen. I'm done. And Moses prayed, and God knew he was going to.

[20:53] God was drawing Moses out. He was making Moses an intercessor. If Moses had said, yeah, Lord, you're right, kill him. I don't think he would have been the great man of God he turned out to be.

God was pulling his soul, drawing him out to see, will you love my people? Will you love my sheep? Will you care for them? Or are you caring for yourself? And God tells Moses, I'll stay with you.

I'll stay with you. And he did. He led them. And now Jesus comes. And he wants to lead you.

He wants to lead you. He wants you to see him as this light of the world and light of your life. Do you want to be led?

Here's the problem. Isn't that the problem? Let's back up for a minute and talk about Jesus' time. When Jesus showed up, that was an amazing time.

[22:02] The Roman, the Greco-Roman world had produced those philosophers that we've studied in school, Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato.

They had all died out, but their teaching had reached its zenith. The Roman Empire was the best there ever was at that time. That society saw itself as highly enlightened in all areas of life.

Politics, medicine. I mean, they had it going on. They were the America of their day. But even the Jews were also, they had been given some freedom.

They weren't at their zenith. They were underfoot. But they had freedom in the empire. And they thought they knew. And Jesus showed up and said, you're all in the dark.

Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, et cetera, dark. Jews of that day, religious folk in the dark.

[23:20] Sounds like today, doesn't it? We're no different than they are. We've built on those philosophers. We've progressed even further in medicine, psychology, sociology, technology, science, even human rights.

We've gone beyond them. But do you see yourself as still needing light? Do the people you know see themselves?

Your professors, if you're in college or in school, do you think they see themselves just needing light? Or do they have it all figured out? I watch TV. I watch the news on occasion.

I see a lot of folk talking. And they got it all figured out. Science has figured out how the universe came to be.

It was an accident. It was. That's what, that's all we got. It was a point, this tiny point of something.

[24 : 34] Power, matter, I don't, I don't know what it is. But it exploded. And everything bounced around and bounced around and bounced around until boom!

It bounced the right way. Single cell organisms came to be. And boom, we got Anthony. They could have gave you hair.

I don't know what happened there, brother. It's all a big cosmic oops. No divine hand behind it. Just is.

But you know what that means? Do you know what that means? It means, therefore, that life is an accident. There's no meaning behind it.

You shouldn't even look really for meaning behind it. It's just an accident. You just is. You just are. And if that's true, what you do doesn't really matter.

[25 : 43] You're here today, God, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. If there's no real meaning and purpose, if life is truly a scientific accident, then the guy in the hood and the guy on the hills, the hills meaning missionary ridge, lookout mountain, signal mountain, compared to where mountains I've been on, they're hills.

Those two guys are just the same. And I know we're trying to make a big deal difference between the two, but really they're just the same.

They're just animals. They're just animals. This is the enlightenment we have come up with. We're all just animals, and therefore what happens is we act like it.

The guy on the hill acts like an animal, except the guy in the hood acts like an animal. They just use different methods of acting like animals, and they will kill you.

One will use a gun, and another will use banking and influence. They're all murderers. They're all just animals in this system of thinking.

[27 : 00] We've figured it all out. We've got it all figured out. We know. We know. And Jesus says, you're in the dark.

We legalized marijuana because we wanted to be happy. And now we've got hemp stores and CBD stores so people can feel good about themselves. And Jesus says, you're in the dark.

We've lost what it means to be male or female. Biology doesn't matter anymore. We don't know who we are. We don't know what we are. Are we happier because of this enlightenment?

CNN reported February 2022, the Gallup poll. Gallup does a poll about happiness in America. February 2022, just 38% of Americans say they're satisfied.

38%. Tennessee ranks 43rd out of 50 on the happiest states list. And everybody keeps moving here.

[28 : 12] And we're 43 out of 50 on the happiest, happy scale. They do a thing about happiness for nations. America, the freest and most economically expansive and diverse in the world, militarily strong, all that stuff, is number 18 on the happiness list.

18. So I guess money and stuff don't make us number one. What's the problem?

We're still walking in darkness. To put it succinctly, we are living as if we are self-saviors. We're going to save ourselves.

We can do it. We're like little children. You know, I love little kids. I love being around little kids. And, and, and, and, and you, the little boy's trying to put something on the table and he can barely, he's, he's little, he can barely reach it.

He's, he's down here and he's, he can't, and, and, and you're, and you want to help him. And, and he's, and what, what, what does he say? I can do it. I can do it.

[29 : 31] I can do it. And you know he can't do it. He's not tall enough to do it. But he thinks he can do it. That's us. That's humanity.

That's America. We think we can do it. And Jesus is saying, I don't care how smart you are, how technologically advanced you are, how financially solvent you are.

You can't fix yourself and you can't fix your world. Because you're in the dark. Yes. And we keep telling God, the light of the world.

We don't need you. So we end up being our own gods. And that's what happens. You either worship the one true God, or you worship something in creation, starting with ourselves.

We're in the dark. We need light. And the light is designed to reveal reality.

[30 : 41] When Jesus says, I am the light of the world, if you follow me, you will not walk in darkness. He's saying to you, follow me, and I will show you what's what.

I will reveal to you what's really going on around you and in you. I'll show you.

Because you're in the dark. You can't, you can't figure it out. What reality? Who you are. That's a very important understanding.

And again, I point to you that our culture doesn't know. Who are you? Latin. You are the imago Dei. You are the image of God in your humanity.

You image Him. You have dignity. Even if you have no money, if you didn't have a place to stay, if you were sleeping in your car, Jesus still says to you, you are the image of God.

[31 : 45] Fallen. Yes. Sinful and broken. Yes. Yes. But still, who are you? Jesus says, you're not an animal. You're not one step away from my cocker spaniel.

You are a human being. And when God made you, He said, let us make humanity in our own image. And He wasn't talking to the animals when He said that.

It was an inter-Trinitarian conversation. Who are you? You are somebody worthy of respect. You have dignity.

And purpose. And honor. Why are you here? Why are you here? To get a good job and make some money. To glorify and enjoy God.

By worship and shaping His creation. Work. Your work matters. You are here to glory, to exalt Him.

[32 : 53] You were made to image Him in all of creation. You were made to be His, His, His, His liaison, as it were, to creation. You were made to take what God has given, all of, and, and shape it, and use it for your good, and the good of the community, and the good of the world, but even more, for His glory.

Your work matters. Even if you're driving a bus, your work matters. If you're working at Wendy's, your feeding phone, your work matters.

If you are a banker, your work, you are fulfilling part of your creation. Jesus also answers, does God exist?

That's the question we're asking, right? Does God exist? Well, that's, He answers that in a big way, doesn't He? The answer is most definitely. But He answers one more question that's big.

The light reveals it. What happens when you die? Because you will. Sooner than you think. You will die.

[34 : 07] What happens? Jesus' resurrection from the dead shows us we are not destined for the grave. The grave has to give up. Has to give up life.

Has to give us up. And you will rise even to everlasting joy or everlasting condemnation. But the grave has to give you up. Because your soul is immortal.

What happens when you die? To be absent from the body for those who follow the light is to be present with the Lord.

Think about my dad. God saved him just before he died. Amen. Amen. Think about my wife's mother.

One of the greatest women I've ever known. Greatest people I've ever known. Mom Brown. Absent from the body. Present with the Lord. He answers the big questions.

[35 : 18] He gives light for the big questions. Jesus said men love darkness rather than light so they wouldn't come to him.

In John 5. I'm praying. I'm hoping. That you don't love darkness so much that you turn away from the light that's shining right now.

Can I ask you a question just for more application thought? How have you seen Christ lead you out of darkness lately? Can you think about that sometime today?

Maybe just ask. How have you seen Christ lead you out of darkness lately? Praise him for the light that he's shown you.

Don't walk in the dark. Amen. Every time I walk in the dark bad things happen. That little toe.

[36 : 30] Why is it? It's the little toe. Why not the big toe? But you know that. You know what I'm talking about. I don't turn the light on.

I know what I'm doing. I know how my room. I know the layout of my room. I know my room. I know my world. So I don't need any light.

Get up. Go run into the bathroom. Bam! Oh God. God. God. I think I've broken that toe a few times. And it's very painful.

When you choose darkness you will always end up in pain. Because you think you know. Turn on the light. Let Jesus turn on the light.

You will save yourself some pain. Father. Help us. We like darkness too often.

[37 : 32] Thank you. Oh Lord. Give us a better taste for light. Open our eyes. Eyes to see Jesus as the light of the world. And help us to walk with him.

In his name we pray. Amen. We're not done yet. Part two next week. Lord willing.