

The Light of the World John 8:12-30

Welcome to IDC... This is one of the most famous “I am” statements of Jesus: “I am the light of the world.” [Pray]

We know at a basic level the value of the light, don't we?

1. Light brings life.

- Things grow in light. Your plants, vegetables, etc. (50,000 mint leaves!)

2. Light is symbolic of truth, purity and goodness.

- “the lights went on” – I figured it out.
- “Come into the light” – be honest.
- “God is light” and in him is no darkness! – Perfect truth, purity, and goodness
- King of kings, Lord of Lords dwells in “Inapproachable light” (absolute purity)

3. Light illuminates your path.

- We turn our lights on to see at night. You shouldn't drive without them; you will get fined for driving without them. (People will flash lights at you, or yell at you!)

4. Light provides safety.

- How many of you wanted to sleep with the lights on when little?
- How many of you have been in a city/town and the power goes out?
 - Are people morally better? No! (Katrina – curfew at night for everyone's safety)

5. Light provides healing.

- People often move to warmer, sunnier climates for health reasons.
- People love Arizona because it's so sunny... give me So Cal (106, hair dryer)
- Get you some vitamin D!

6. Light brings joy.

- At a natural level, when the sun comes out after periods of darkness, rain, clouds – people get happy. Many fail to wear appropriate attire.
- Rain, darkness, cold has a negative impact on people right?
 - There's a reason Russians scare everyone just by the way they talk! They have no sun.
 - Vampires come from NW, not sunny Hawaii!
- It has been said that people in warmer, sunnier climates are happier.
- Comedian, Trevor Noah says he blames the British cruel attempt to colonize other nations on the weather! He says, “Bad weather makes you a bad person. There is no one from a tropical climate who is trying to take over the world! You don't every hear stories of Caribbean conquerors! There's no ‘Troy the Terrible from Trinidad!’ If you're living in a beautiful paradise, there's no need to leave.”
- Strong point.

Well, at a deeper level, the light of Jesus Christ is what brings true and lasting joy – regardless of what part of the world you live in!

- The reality is every place in the world is a place of darkness, regardless of the weather.
- Kimberly **used to live in Hawaii, and I remember one of the first things she said was, “It’s a dark place spiritually.”**
- (Our brother Kirk and Tory plan to go push back the darkness with a church plant, Lord willing).

The whole world needs the light of the world.

Jesus is the light who brings life; He is the embodiment of truth, purity and goodness; he illuminates our path; he provides eternal safety; he is the ultimate healer; and he brings the real joy.

Let’s look at Jesus’ statement and then the dialogue that follows.

- This is just remarkable. **Jesus is just talking here.** No miracles. **Just talking at the end of the festival.** And at the end, it says, **“many believed in him.”** (30)
- **We believe this still happens!** Faith comes by hearing the word of God.
- I want that to happen for you if it hasn’t! That the lights would go on in your heart!

I’ll break down the text with six big topics that emerge from the dialogue.

#1: The Claim of Christ (8:12a)

“I am the Light of the World.”

- **John Blanchard, “Christ’s statements are either cosmic or comic.”**
- **Indeed, they are either ridiculous or revolutionary.**
- It’s his second “I am” claim, a statement about Jesus’ deity.

“**Again**” implies a continuation of the previous section.

- **He’s still at Festival, and likely on the final day, or just after it.**
- **And this theme, and this setting factors into chapter 9 as well.**

Tabernacles occurred in late autumn. It **marked the passing of the long summer days — a fitting context for the light ceremony.**

The Mishnah’s chapter about the light ceremonies states that **you haven’t seen real wonder until you’ve seen Jerusalem lit up!**

- Four large stands each with four golden bowls were placed in the Court of Women (the most frequented part of the Temple).
- These sixteen bowls, reached by ladders, were filled with oil, and get this – **the priests’ undergarments were used as wicks. (I don’t know what to do with that)**
- **Jerusalem was lit up at night.**

- **In a world that didn't have public lighting, this must have been something!**
- The Levites would sing, and men would dance and sing with torches in their hands.
- **Jesus stands around these massive lights, and declares that he *is the light of the world*.**

“God's saving work in redemptive history was referred to as “light.”

- John has already associated Jesus with light in the prologue (1:5)
- Isaiah: The Servant would be a “light unto the nations” (49:6)
- God's first creative act was “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3)
 - 2 Cor 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.
- Songs: “the Lord is my light and my salvation” (Ps 27:1)
- **One day his glory will be the light of the new heavens and earth!**

#2: The Call to the World (8:12b)

Jesus' Colossal claim about **himself isn't an abstract idea left floating in the air.** There are real life implications of his claim.

Here's the appropriate response: *Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of the life.*

- Those who follow Jesus will never walk in darkness; that is, **the darkness of this world, or in the dark ways of Satan.**
- **“will have”** points to something that's **ongoing.**
- Jesus is the light **for the world**, not just a **tribe.** “Whoever”

Tabernacles Context: Israel was in bondage/darkness in Egypt, and God delivered them from slavery. Then he led the by a *pillar of fire at night.*

- **Following the light was to follow the Lord.**
- **The call to us, is to follow Jesus, to follow the light.**

Application: Let me break this down further... 4 realities about following Jesus.

1. Following Jesus begins with genuine belief.

- It happens at the end, and Jesus warns those who do not believe in verse 24.

2. We're called to follow Jesus in a dark world.

- **The light has to come because there's darkness in the world.**
- There are lots of **lies, corruption and injustice in the world.**
- It's **morally and spiritually dark world.**
- It's a beautiful world in one sense, but **sin has brought darkness and death.**
 - One of the horrors of **hell** involves **darkness.**
- **Notice here the assumption is that *everyone is in darkness.***
- **Skeptics often say, “I can't believe in Christ. Faith is such a leap in the dark.”**
- **It's not!**

- **It's a leap out of darkness into light!** It's a leap into the light!
- **Peter:** "God has called us out of darkness into his marvelous." (1 Pet 2)

3. We're called to follow Jesus overtly.

- Light is overt. Darkness is covert.
- **Some people are overt.**
 - Some kids, just tell it all!
 - Then there are covert kids. They don't disclose anything. They're holding the cards close. **How many of you were that kid? You're parents still don't know what you did to the cat?!**
 - Overt people, you know where they stand.
- **Peter – Overt.** He talked too much, but he was real, honest. He experienced grace.
- **Judas – Covert.** Stealing money, plotting Jesus' death. He lived in darkness.
- If you want to walk with Jesus, **you need to be overt, visible, and clear.**
- You have to be **wise** in doing this.
 - It's not always preaching with a megaphone in public.
 - **It involves your character reflecting your Father. (Matt 5:16)**
 - In **Philippians 2**, Paul says that by not being a complaining person, you shine as a light in a dark world. Want to shine in this world? Don't murmur and complain. That gets people's attention.
 - **In Ephesians 5**, it involves being a person filled with thanksgiving, a person that pursues purity, and walks in love... we expose the darkness...
 - **"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that" (MLK Jr)**
- In 1 John 1:7, John describes **discipleship as walking in the light.**
- **Here's why people don't want to come in light – they're darkness gets exposed.**
 - People love darkness rather than the light. (3:19)
 - **In our sinful nature, we're like a worm that wants to crawl back in the dark earth, after the rock is lifted up and we see the light.**
 - **God is not looking for perfect people, but honest people who shine!**
- **But if you bring your sin and darkness to Jesus, he will forgive you, and you can have a relationship with him, and walk in the light.**
 - **"The determining factor of my existence is no longer my past. It is Christ's past." (Sinclair F.). That's the reality for Christians. (Rom 8:1)**

4. We're called to follow Jesus together in community.

- The church is to be a community of light.
- **Church planting is about scattering communities of light in every nook and cranny of this dark world.**
- As a community of light, **we spur one another on to walk in the light.**

- We don't live with secret sin, sneaking around, being dishonest, etc. That doesn't build community, that doesn't bring growth and it doesn't glorify God. Secretive, sneaky, dishonest behavior that doesn't not glorify God.
- A community of light learns together, grows together, confesses sin and fights sin together;
- **As a community of light, we are to proclaim the good news and practice good deeds in this world, together.**

#3: The Conflict with the Darkness (8:13-20)

The Pharisees -- who represent one form of darkness, challenge Jesus again.

- **They don't really don't even address his claim.**
- **They refuse to listen and consider his teaching.**
- **The Pharisees weren't leading people to salvation, but to death, not to light but darkness.**

13: They complain that Jesus' witness is not valid because he's making these claims about himself.

- **It's an echo of John 5**, where they brought up his lack of witnesses. (5:31).
- Jesus presented multiple witnesses, and again brings up his father (18).

14: Jesus insists on the **truthfulness** of his witness.

- He says he is **qualified to bear witness because he knows his origin and destiny.**
- The Pharisees were **ignorant of heavenly realities.**
- The Pharisees **can't understand Jesus' unique authority.**
- **He's not just another religious rabbi. He's the divine Son of God!**

15: He emphasizes their inability to evaluate things rightly because they judge "according to the flesh."

- "I pass judgment on no one"? Jesus goes on to say: he does Judge.
 - **First, his judgment is not at all like the Pharisees. They judge according to the flesh, which Jesus doesn't consider true judgment. His ways are different.**
 - **Second, his coming into the world was not first about judgment but salvation**

16: Now Jesus spells out his judgment.

- He is not alone in his judgment, for the Father is with him.
- **One who is in perfect harmony with the Father is qualified to be the Judge.**

17: Jesus now appeals to what the Law says about judgment.

- The law spoke of two witnesses to as sufficient to establish testimony (Duet 19:15; 17:6).

18: He emphatically states that he has the necessary two-fold witness: He bears witness to himself, and the Father bears witness to him also.

- In chapter 5, Jesus gave a series of witnesses.

- Here, he is saying his claims are so great that no other witness than the Father is sufficient.
- No human witness can validate his divine relationship with the Father.

19: Their root problem: they don't know the Father.

- They don't have true discernment because they don't know the source of true spirituality, God himself.
- Without a knowledge of God and his love, you can't know the Son – an echo of 5:42

20: The context is given, and another statement is made about Jesus being on a divine timetable. He's in charge.

Here's what I want you to know:

I'm not trying to convert you to religion; I want you to follow Jesus.

- **We don't need more Pharisees in the world; we need more Christ-followers.**
- The Pharisees and other religious elites nailed Jesus to the cross.
- They didn't bring light.
- **There's a lot of darkness in religion.**
- People do horrible things in the name of religion.
- There is only light in Jesus.

#4: The Consequences of Unbelief (8:21-26)

Once again, Jesus makes an astonishing claim! "I am going away..."

- We see several parallels with 7:25-36: his origins, his departure, and more.
- In chapter 7, they take him to mean he's going to the Gentile territory.
- Here they take it to mean his death, which was true, but it was the path to the cross that would be the means for his ascent to heaven.

21: His departure means going back to the Father, and they won't be able to find him.

- **And He says they will die in their sins if they persist in unbelief.**
- **To die in your sins is the supreme disaster.**
- **How do you avoid this? Look at 8:51-52.**

22: The Jews think Jesus is speaking about killing himself!

- They are right to assume he's speaking of a final departure, but wrong in their assessment of what it will entail...

23-29: Jesus responds... and his response highlights his identity and their inability to comprehend.

23: A pair of contrasts

- **You are from below; I am from above.**
 - Jesus is not just a prophet, but more: the divine Son of God.
 - He's not a religious teacher, but God incarnate.

- **You are of this world; I am not of this world.**

What can be said of them can be said of all humanity, but Jesus is really getting at their **attitude**.

They are standing in front of the SON OF GOD and they want to argue with him; they won't listen to him; they want to kill him!

Darkness of unbelief are on display.

24: Because they are of this fallen world, they will die in their sins if they persist in stubborn unbelief.

- There is one way to avoid this: believe on the Son.
- This involves rightly viewing Jesus: "I am he"
- Unless we see Jesus for who he claims to be, the I AM, we will die in our sins.

25: They still don't get it. They respond with, "**Who are you?**"

- Jesus says, "Just what I've been telling you from the beginning."

26: He points out that he has more things to say about them, and they will be words of judgment, but now is not the time.

27: This sort of idea is totally beyond their grasp. They don't recognize Jesus' heavenly origin.

Application: We can't overemphasize how important this is: without Jesus, you will die in your sins.

- **You will die.**
 - **How do you view it?**
 - **It doesn't matter how much kale and Quinoa (KWIN-wah) you eat, seaweed salad, how many probiotics you take, and purified water you drink... if you are on the Samuel Morris workout program.. Phil 3:20-21, lowly body...).**
- **How will you die?**
 - **As a forgiven sinner, who knows and loves Jesus?**
 - **As an unforgiving sinner, who persisted in unbelief?**

Forgiveness and eternal life are possible because of the death of Jesus, to which we now turn...

#5: The Cross of Christ (8:27-29)

In Mark's gospel, Jesus predicts his coming death three times (8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34), as he gets closer to Jerusalem.

In John's gospel, Jesus also predicts his death three times – described as a "lifting up" of the Son of Man (3:14; 8:28; 12:32)

Jesus took our death, our darkness at the cross...

28: Here Jesus says that his supreme moment of self-revelation is his *passion* (the cross and the events surrounding it) – “being lifted up.” (cf., Isa 52:13)

Many will not recognize him until they have crucified him.

His *identity* is so bound up with his *cross*.

- Notice here: The cross has a **revelatory function**.
 - **It reveals his identity clearly.**
 - **It reveals what kind of Messiah he is clearly.**
 - **So some see him there, reflect, and realize that Jesus is more than just a human rabbi. They see him as the Divine Son of God and Savior of the World.**
 - **They go from darkness to light!**
- They will see that “I am He” – God in flesh. (a reference to the divine name, “I am” – Isa 43:10)

29: Jesus follows this prediction with a statement of intimacy with the Father.

- How can Jesus endure all that he has endured?
- **We’re only in chapter 8, and he has already endured so much hate, hostility, criticism... more is coming.**
- **He knows the Father will not forsake him.**
-

This is how we endure as well: We know that we are chosen, and not forsaken; life is not easy, but our Father is with us!

- **He adds that he is committed to doing the will of the Father.**
- **Always doing the will of the Father – this too is a pattern for us.**
- **You can live to please people, or to please the Father.** (cf., Gal 1:10)
- **We are to be about the Father’s business, walking with Him.**

#6: The Converts to Christ (8:30)

30: As Jesus is saying these things, many believed! **We assume this is legit.**

- We read of the same kind of statement at the end of **chapter 11.**
- We are not told who they were, but that they did believe.
- Maybe those who were debating, or perhaps by-standers.

- Later Jesus says, “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light” (Jn 12:36)
- These who believed were transformed! They became sons of light.
- That’s what coming to Jesus does: He changes you.
- He changes your identity, your affections, and your eternity.
- “You were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” – walk as children of the light. (Eph 5).

Unbeliever:

- You don't have to die in your sins, you can believe in him!
- If you sense him calling you, come out of the darkness into his marvelous light!

Believer:

- *Walk in the light. You were darkness, now you are light. Live in the light.*
- *Proclaim the light.*
 - This passage illustrates how powerful preaching of the gospel is. Don't doubt it.
 - **One of David Livingstone's first converts in Africa, was a chief named Sechale. Chief Sechale, thought he could make his tribesman believe by force. So he suggested to Livingstone, "I shall call my head mad, and with our whips of rhinoceros hide, we will soon make them all believe together."**
 - We'll that's the wrong approach.
 - **Faithful evangelists, in love, don't unleash a whip; we unleash the Word.**
 - The whip doesn't work anyway.
 - You need something more than physical force to call people out of darkness into light. **The Spirit and the Word alone can do it.**
 - Like Livingstone, let's proclaim the light to this dark world.