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Price: \$15

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Jesus: I AM the Light to follow



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This morning we are listening to Christ's 2nd declaration of Who He was and what He can do to all who come to Him. What did He say? He said, "I AM the Light of the World."

As we turn to our text in [John 8:12](#) we need to ask ourselves several questions. Remember, to fully understand God's Word by the power of the Holy Spirit we need to "search the Scriptures". We do this often by asking questions. Here are the key questions for this passage:

1. Where was Jesus when He declared He was the Light of the World? The Courtyard of the Temple of Herod.
2. When in Christ's life and ministry was it that He declared He was the Light of the World? During the Feast of Tabernacles.
3. How did Jesus say we could have the benefits of Him as the Light of the World? Follow Him.

There they are, the three keys to walking in the Light:

1. We need to watch Jesus against the backdrop of the Divinely prescribed Worship of Israel, that is the 1st key to walking in the Light.
2. We need to see Jesus in the events of the Divinely appointed Feasts of Israel, that is the 2nd key to walking in the Light.
3. We need to follow Jesus the way He asked us to in this passage, that is the 3rd key to walking in the Light.

When Jesus walked into Jerusalem as the crowds swelled the city's population for the Feast of Tabernacles, He was planning on making His greatest offer to Israel in His ministry. To perhaps the largest crowd of all, this happy celebration drew faithful Jews from all over the Land and even the world. And here, at the great feast God had given to Moses to write 1,500 years earlier as a testimony of Christ, Jesus arrives and offers Himself to any and all who would listen.

Have you found Jesus as your light? Last time we studied what it meant to be trusting Jesus. This morning we need to study what it means to be following Jesus. To do so, join me again in the remarkable setting of this great I AM THE LIGHT declaration by Jesus. To do so we must ask the 1st Question. Okay, here we go. **Where was Jesus** when He declared He was the Light of the World? The answer? In the Courtyard of the Temple of Herod. What do we need to do? We need to watch Jesus against the backdrop of the Divinely prescribed Worship of Israel, that is the 1st key to walking in the Light.

To understand the magnitude of Christ's declaration that He was The Light of the World we need to turn back to the second book of the Bible. Remember when we studied Creation a while back? We saw that there are only two chapters[1] in the Bible are devoted to the creation story, whereas some fifty chapters focus on the Tabernacle (see especially Ex. 25 -40). Why did God give so many details about the Divinely prescribed worship for Israel? Clearly the Tabernacle is important and demands attention in our study, because it is a giant portrait of Jesus Christ. **Everywhere you look in the Tabernacle you can see Jesus Christ the Lord!**

Walk again with me through Exodus 37-38 this morning. The courtyard of the Tabernacle was one hundred fifty feet long and seventy-five feet wide. As we walk around it on a Scriptural Tour we can find every object we see in some way points to Christ. And also His great I AM declarations are featured in this sacred place.

1. **Exodus 37:1-9 there was only one way to god.** Jesus reflected this when He declared I AM THE way, the truth, and the life. The only object[2] in the Holy of Holies was the **ark**, which represents Jesus Christ, the true **mercy seat**. When we meet Jesus Christ as Savior, we are ushered into the presence of God, into the true Holy of Holies. God no longer communes with men between the wings of cherubim on a gold mercy seat. He communes with men in His Son, by whom the veil was torn in two.

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Part: 1 Jesus: I AM the Light to Trust

Jesus Christ is the mercy seat. Only on the basis of the blood of a goat would God have fellowship with Israel, and only on the basis of the blood of Christ will God have fellowship with men. John, in using the term "propitiation," in [1 John 2:2](#), relates Jesus to the mercy seat, since that very word *hilastērion* is used for mercy seat in the Septuagint translation of [Exodus 25:17](#).

- Exodus 37:10-16 there was one source of food in the tabernacle of god's presence.** Jesus reflected this when He declared I AM the Bread of Life. On the right was the **table** on which was the **sacred bread**, or show-bread. This table, like the base of the altar, was of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was three feet long, one and a half feet wide, and two and a quarter feet high. Every Sabbath twelve loaves of fresh bread were set on it, one for each of the twelve tribes. At the end of the week, the priests, and only the priests, were allowed to eat the loaves.
- Exodus 37:17-24 there was only one source of light in the tabernacle of god's presence.** Jesus reflected this when He declared I AM the LIGHT of the world. Still moving west across the courtyard, we come to the Tabernacle proper - forty-five feet long, fifteen feet wide, and fifteen feet high. The **holy place** took up two-thirds of this area, which means that the **holy of holies** was a perfect fifteen-foot cube. Only priests could go into the Holy Place, in which were three pieces of furniture. On the left, as the priest entered, was a solid gold **lampstand** having seven branches, each filled with the purest olive oil.
- Exodus 37:25-28 there was one place of a constant offering rising to god from the tabernacle of god's presence.** Jesus reflected this when He declared I AM THE VINE, and we are to abide in Him or we amount to nothing. Farther in and to the center of the Holy Place was the **altar of incense**. It, too, was of gold-overlaid acacia wood, one and one-half feet square and about three feet high. On this altar were placed the burning coals from the bronze altar in the courtyard, where sacrifice was made. The altar of incense pictures Jesus interceding for us, the perfect Sacrifice becoming the perfect Intercessor.
- Exodus 38:1-7 there was one sacrificial altar in the tabernacle of god's presence.** Jesus reflected this when He declared I AM the Good Shepherd who gives MY LIFE for my sheep. So Jesus our Lamb offered Himself for us. The first article of furniture in the outer court was the bronze altar. It was made of acacia wood sheathed with bronze. It was seven and a half feet square, stood four and a half feet off the ground, and was topped with a bronze grate. The coals were placed underneath the grate and the sacrifice was placed on top. On the four corners of the altar were horns, to which the animal was bound when it was being sacrificed. **The bronze altar is again a perfect picture of Jesus Christ, who Himself was a sacrifice for sin.**
- Exodus 38:8 there was one place of cleansing in the tabernacle of god's presence.** Jesus reflected this when He declared I AM the Resurrection and the Life. He shed His blood to cleanse us from our sins, we are washed in His blood. Once we have received forgiveness for our sins through Christ's sacrifice of Himself, we still need His daily cleansing that restores fellowship and joy. So the next piece of furniture in the court was **the laver** or basin, also made of bronze. In it the priests would wash their hands, and even sometimes their feet, as they went about the bloody services of sacrifice. **Here is a picture of Jesus Christ as the cleanser of His people.**
- Exodus 38:9-20 there was one entrance to the tabernacle of god's presence.** Jesus reflected this when He declared I AM THE DOOR: There was only one entrance into God's earthly presence, a single gate, on the east side that was thirty feet wide and seven and a half feet high, allowing a large number of people to enter at the same time. It is a graphic picture of Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way" and "I am the door." Just as there was only one entrance to the Tabernacle, there is only one way to God - the only Way and the only Door, Jesus Christ. Christianity is exclusive, not because Christians make it so but because God has made it so. Throughout the centuries, of course, Christians have made the earthly church exclusive in many wrong ways. But God has intentionally made His spiritual, eternal church exclusive. It can be entered only through Jesus Christ.

All the pieces of furniture also picture Christ. Everything in the outer courtyard was connected with salvation and the cleansing of sins. Jesus accomplished His sacrificial work on earth, outside God's heavenly presence. The outer court was accessible to all the people, just as Christ is accessible to all who will come to Him. But in His heavenly sanctuary He is shut off from the world, temporarily even from His own people.

- From His heavenly place now, Jesus lights our path (pictured by the golden **lampstand**), "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world," Jesus said ([John 9:5](#)). When He left the world, the world was left in darkness, and only for believers is He the light of life. He is the light that directs our paths, the One who, through the Spirit, illumines our minds to understand spiritual truth. He is the One who, by the indwelling Spirit, guides us through the world of darkness. He is our light.
- He feeds us (pictured by the table of **sacred bread**), and Jesus is our sustenance. He is our table of sacred bread. He is the One who feeds us every day, who sustains us with the Word. The Word is not only our food but our light. And the oil is the Spirit of God, who lights the Word for us.
- He intercedes for us (pictured by the **altar of incense**). The altar of incense pictures Jesus interceding for us, the perfect Sacrifice becoming the perfect Intercessor.

2nd Question: "When was it in Christ's life and ministry that He declared He was the Light of the World?"

Pretty amazing once you put all those pieces together in the Divinely inspired Book we hold this morning. Now we next ask, "When was it in Christ's life and ministry that He declared He was the Light of the World?" The answer is that it was during the Feast of Tabernacles. We need to see Jesus in the events of the Divinely appointed Feasts of Israel, that is the 2nd key to walking in the Light.

Jesus was walking in the monumental Temple built by Herod at the end[3] of the Feast of Tabernacles on the day after the spectacular nighttime ceremony known as the Illumination of the Temple. That event took place in the Temple treasury before four massive golden candelabra topped with huge torches. It is said that the candelabra were as tall as the highest walls of the Temple, and that at the top of the candelabra were mounted great bowls holding sixty-five liters of oil. There was a ladder for each candelabrum, and when that evening came, healthy young priests would carry oil up to the great bowls and light the protruding wicks. Eyewitnesses said the huge flames which leapt from these torches illuminated not only the Temple but all of Jerusalem.

The Mishnah tells us that "Men of piety and good works used to dance before them [the candelabra] with burning torches in their hands singing songs and praise and countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals and trumpets and instruments of music." Imagine the smell of the oil, the heat of the smoking torches, and the shadows of perspiring, bearded priests as they whirled and danced before the fire-dazzled throng. This exotic rite celebrated the great pillar of fire (the glorious cloud of

God's presence) which led the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness and spread its fiery billows over the Tabernacle.

It was after this ceremony, and in the same Temple treasury the following morning, with the great charred torches still in place, that Jesus lifted his voice above the crowd and proclaimed, "I am the light of the world" ([John 8:12](#)). There could scarcely be a more emphatic way to announce one of the supreme truths of Jesus Christ!

Now think over just exactly what it was that Jesus was saying. Remember, WHEN did He make this declaration? That makes all the difference to feel the magnitude of what He declared! It was after the entire nation had just relived for 14 days the great exodus deliverance and wilderness experience. And then after all that Christ was saying to all of them by association:

- I AM the pillar of fire that came between you and the Egyptians.
- I AM the cloud that guided you by day in the wilderness.
- I AM the pillar of fire that illumined the night.
- I AM the cloud that enveloped the Tabernacle.
- I AM the glorious cloud that filled Solomon's Temple at a Feast of Tabernacles 1000 years ago.
- I AM all of the great events you have been celebrating, the Light you seek - IT IS HERE, it is ME!"

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" ([John 8:12](#)). He is everything suggested by the sublime metaphor of light — and much more.

The apostle John tells that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles at the temple. In Jesus, God came in the flesh to celebrate with his people. On the last and greatest day of the Feast of Tabernacles, God incarnate stood in his temple calling out to his thirsty people to come to him and drink ([Jn 7:37](#)). **How ironic that his unrecognized voice was a disturbing presence in the festivities that had for so long been celebrated to welcome his presence!**

All seven of the Feasts speak of Christ. The three that were required for all Israel to participate in especially spoke of Him.

- **Passover** speaks of the death of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (Ex. 12; [John 1:29](#)); the
- **Feast of Firstfruits** is a type of His resurrection ([1 Cor. 15:23](#)); and the
- **Feast of Tabernacles** reminds us of His coming again and the future kingdom of joy and fullness ([Zech. 14:16-21](#)).

This immense truth that Christ is the light of the world is even more powerful when we realize that the Lord applies this truth now to US this morning in Tulsa. Where? Look at [Ephesians 5:8](#) Paul amazingly applies this metaphor to us: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (v. 8a). We are light! Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, a master of illustration, used to explain us as Christ's lights this way:

When Christ was in the world, he was like the shining sun. When the sun sets, the moon comes up. The moon is a picture of believers, the Church. The Church shines, but not with its own light. It shines with reflected light. At times the Church has been a full moon dazzling the world with an almost daytime light. Those were times of great enlightenment — for example, in the days of Paul and Luther and Wesley. At other times the Church has been only a thumbnail moon, and in those days very little light shone on the earth. But whether the Church is a full or thumbnail moon, whether waxing or waning, it reflects the light of Christ. Our light does not originate with us.

This text suggests even more than reflection — we actually *become light ourselves*: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (v. 8a). Our light is derived from him — not a ray of it comes from ourselves. But somehow our incorporation in Christ allows us to actually be light, however imperfect. We "participate in the divine nature," says Peter ([2 Peter 1:4](#)). Now hold on to your seats because there is even more. So authentic is our participation, so real is our light, that in eternity we will actually be part of the light ourselves. Jesus said in his Mystery Parables, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" ([Matthew 13:43](#)).

3rd Question. Finally, How did Jesus say we could have the benefits of Him as the Light of the World? Follow Him. We need to follow Jesus the way He asked us to in this passage and that is the 3rd key to walking in the Light.

Jesus said: "He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." *The light of life* means two things. **The[4] Greek can mean either:**

- The light which issues from the source of life or
- The light which gives life.

In this passage it means both.

- Jesus is the very light of God come among men: and
- Jesus is the light which gives men life. Just as the flower can never blossom when it never sees the sunlight, so our lives can never flower with the grace and beauty they ought to have until they are irradiated with the light of the presence of Jesus.

In this passage Jesus talks of *following* himself. We often speak of following Jesus; we often urge men to do so. What do we mean? The Greek for *to follow* is *akolouthein*; and its meanings combine to shed a flood of light on what it means *to follow* Jesus. *Akolouthein* has five different but closely connected meanings. So how do we follow Jesus as our LIGHT and stay with Him and not walk in darkness? Each of the uses of this word explains an element of walking in the light.

We follow Jesus as our captain. This word is often a military term used frequently of

a soldier following his captain. On the long route marches, into battle, in campaigns in strange lands, the soldier follows wherever the captain may lead. The Christian is the soldier whose commander is Christ. We follow Christ our Captain.

- **Hebrews 2:10** For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, **to make the captain of their salvation perfect** through sufferings. NKJV
- **2 Timothy 2:3-4** You therefore must endure hardship **as a good soldier of Jesus Christ**. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may **please him who enlisted him as a soldier**. NKJV
- **Hebrews 12:1-2** Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith**, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NKJV

We follow Jesus as our master: This word is a domestic term used frequently of a slave accompanying his master. Wherever the master goes the slave is in attendance upon him, always ready to spring to his service and to carry out the tasks he gives him to do. He is literally at his master's beck and call. The Christian is the slave whose joy it is always to serve Christ. We follow Christ our Master.

- **Matthew 11:28-30** Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." NKJV

We follow Jesus as our counselor and guide: This word is a legal term used frequently of accepting a wise counselor's opinion. When a man is in doubt he goes to the expert, and if he is wise he accepts the judgment he receives. The Christian is the man who guides his life and conduct by the counsel of Christ. We follow Christ our Wonderful Counselor and Guide

- **Isaiah 9:6** For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given: And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. NKJV

We follow Jesus as our king: This word is a civic term used frequently of giving obedience to the laws of a city or a state. If a man is to be a useful member of any society or citizen of any community, he must agree to abide by its laws. The Christian, being a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, accepts the law of the kingdom and of Christ as the law, which governs his life. We follow Christ as our KING.

- **Acts 17:7** Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus." NKJV

We follow Jesus as our teacher: This word is a discipleship term used frequently of following a teacher's line of argument, or of following the gist of someone's speech. The Christian is the man who has understood the meaning of the teaching of Christ. He has not listened in dull incomprehension or with slack inattention. He takes the message into his mind and understands, receives the words into his memory and remembers, and hides them in his heart and obeys. We follow Christ as our Teacher and want to become LIKE HIM, not just know what He teaches, but live like He lived!

- **Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. NKJV
- **Acts 4:13** Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. NKJV

A believer is one who becomes like Jesus Christ.

To be a follower of Christ is to give oneself body, soul and spirit into the obedience of the Master; and to enter upon that following is to walk in the light.

When we walk alone we are bound to stumble and grope, for so many of life's problems are beyond our solution.

When we walk alone we are bound to take the wrong way, because we have no secure map of life. We need the heavenly wisdom to walk the earthly way. The man who has a sure guide and an accurate map is the man who is bound to come in safety to his journey's end. Jesus Christ is that guide; he alone possesses the map to life. To follow Jesus is to walk in His light safely through life and afterwards to enter into glory.

The perfection of Christ our God is seen in the seven "I AM'S" in John's record of Christ's life and ministry. Christ has given His own eternal life (**John 17:2**), but He has also given them the revelation of the Father's name (**John 17:6**). The Old Testament Jew knew his God as "Jehovah," the great I AM (**Ex. 3:11-14**). Jesus took this sacred name "I AM" and made it meaningful to His disciples: "I am the Bread of Life" (**John 6:35**); "I am the Light of the world" (**John 8:12**); "I am the Good Shepherd" (**John 10:11**); etc. In other words, Jesus revealed the Father's gracious name by showing His disciples that He was everything they needed. [5] So twenty-three times in all we find our Lord's meaningful "I AM" (*ego eimi*, Gr.) in the Greek text of this gospel (4:26; 6:20,35,41,48,51; 8:12,18,24,28,58; 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1,5; 18:5,6,8). In several of these, He joins His "I AM" with seven tremendous metaphors which are expressive of His saving relationship toward the world. IN other words, the Christian life may be described in these seven declarations of Jesus. The Christian life is:

1. **I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE** (6:35) - He FEEDS OUR STARVING SOULS, but apart from Him is only unsatisfied hunger. The internal gnawing pain that hunger brings is the illustration of our condition apart from Christ. He alone feeds our soul and satisfies our

- hungers, all else is emptiness, hopelessness and empty mirages. *Jesus said I am your food that satisfies, I am the Bread you need. I have settled the longings of your soul, I can satisfy all the hungers of your life. What do you really hunger for? UNGERING FOR JESUS AS MY BREAD OF LIFE. "I AM the Bread of life" (6:35,41,48,51).*
2. **I AM THE LIGHT OF WORLD** (8:12) - He LIGHTS OUR DARKENED SOULS, but apart from Him is only impenetrable darkness. Jesus said I am the Light, I have settled the darkness of fear, the darkness of death, the darkness of dying, it is all settled by Me! **WALKING WITH JESUS WHO LIGHTS MY PATH OF LIFE. "I AM the Light of the world" (8:12).**
 3. **I AM THE DOOR OF life to my SHEEP** (10:7,9) - He INVITES us lost sheep back into God's Family, but apart from Him is only hopeless exclusion. Jesus said I am the Door of Life, all your security and access needs are settled, by Me! In the ancient world there were sheep folds built of stones or made from caves, dotting the hills and valleys of Israel. The door was made so that the shepherd himself would lay down at night and become the door so that no sheep could wander out without stumbling over him and no predator could slip in without stirring him. So Jesus says I keep you safe from harm and secure from wandering away from my salvation! **ENTERING THROUGH JESUS WHO IS MY DOOR TO LIFE. "I AM the Door of the sheep" (10:7,9).**
 4. **I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD** (10:11) - He LEADS US HOME, but apart from Him is only aimless wandering. Jesus said I am the Good Shepherd who died, I have settled the issue of the unknown. I am your companion through life and death. Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to live and how to die! **FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF MY LIFE. "I AM the Good Shepherd" (10:11,14).**
 5. **I AM THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE** (11:25) - He pours upon US endless LIFE, but apart from Him is only endless dying. Jesus says I am the Resurrection, I am the Life. I have settled the issue of Hope, you can count on me, hope in me all through life and into death! **RESTING IN JESUS WHOSE RESURRECTION GAVE ME ENDLESS LIFE. "I AM the Resurrection and the Life" (11:25).**
 6. **I AM THE WAY, TRUTH & LIFE** (14:6) - He secures us in the way of endless life, but apart from Him is only endless lostness. Jesus said I am the way, I have settled the issue of your home. I am making it, your very own room, and the minute that it is ready I am coming to get you! **FOLLOWING THE WAY OF JESUS, BELIEVING THE TRUTH OF JESUS, AND LIVING THE LIFE OF JESUS. "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (14:6).**
 7. **I AM THE TRUE VINE** (15:1) - He NURTURES us through life, apart from Him is only continual withering. Jesus says I am the Vine, your source of life and health. The state of your health is all in my hands. I will provide for you living grace, enduring declining life grace, and dying grace. Each just when you need them! If the vine speaks of all of life as one growing season, then we should get more fruit filled the older we get (ala Psalm 92), if it is many seasons then life is a succession of growing /pruning /bearing /resting and then growing/pruning... **ABIDING IN JESUS WHO IS MY SUPPLY OF ALL I EVER NEED. "I AM the true Vine" (15:1,5). Psalm 92**

[1] Drawn from MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Hebrews*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

[2] All of this material on the Tabernacle adapted and quoted from MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Hebrews*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

[3] Quoted from Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

[4] Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John - Volume 2 Chapters 8-21* (Revised Edition), (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

[5] Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

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