

Lesson 3

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 8:12

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

I have a few questions to introduce our lesson for today:

Q: How many evolutionists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Just one but it will take a million years.

Q: How many Psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Only one, but the bulb has got to really WANT to change.

Q: How many 'Real Men' does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None: 'Real Men' aren't afraid of the dark.

Q: How many 'Real Women' does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None: A 'Real Woman' would have plenty of real men around to do it.

Q: How many jugglers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: One, but it takes at least three light bulbs.

A little boy forgot his lines in a Sunday School presentation, and his mother was in the front row to prompt him. She gestured and formed the words silently with her lips, but it did not help. Her son's memory was blank. Finally, she leaned forward and whispered the cue, "I am the light of the world." The child beamed and with great feeling and a loud clear voice said, "My mother is the light of the world!"

Well, actually Jesus tells us that He is the light of the world. What is He saying? What is He revealing about Himself that we can glean from this statement?

Before I answer those questions there are two fundamental matters pertaining to the subject that I want to deal with: (1) First, The Subject of The Statement and, (2) Second, The Setting Of The Statement.

First, The Subject of The Statement

The subject of the statement before us is “Light”. The first recorded words of God in the Bible are. “Let there be light.” The account of the original creation reads: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.” (Gen. 1:1-3)

There are many facets to the subject of light. For instance, there is:

- (a) Natural Light - The light of day, of the sun, moon and stars;
- (b) Artificial Light - The discovery of electricity provides a substitute light as do lamps.
- (c) Miraculous Light – “The children of Israel had light in their dwellings” (Ex. 10:23); also: "pillar of fire" led the Israelites escaping from Pharaoh (Ex 13:21)
- (d) Mental Light – that is enlightenment by knowledge (Job 19:8; 1 John 2:11)
- (e) Moral & Spiritual Light - The Scriptures use "light" largely in the figurative sense: Ps 119:130, "The opening of thy words gives light"; Prov. 6:23, "The law is light." Job 24:13,16 "rebel against the light"; "know not the light"; Ps. 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation.”
- (f) Then there is Holy Light – Light which is God. John 1:5 tells us, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." As Ps.36:9 says, "In thy light we see light.” And David prayed, “You are my lamp, O LORD; the LORD turns my darkness into light.” (II Samuel 22:29). Light is the symbol of God's holiness, purity, wisdom, glory and presence.

Before God created light we read “darkness was over the surface of the deep.” The absence of light is darkness. In the Bible the main use of darkness is in contrast to light. The figurative uses of “darkness” are many. It is used as a symbol of:

- (a) moral depravity;
- (b) the walk and work of the wicked (Ps 82:5; Prov 2:13; John 3:19; Rom 13:12);
- (c) the condition of the wicked – they "sit in darkness" (Ps 107:10);
- (d) the destiny of the wicked - "cast into the outer darkness." (Matt 8:12)

The darkness that shrouded the early earth was literal darkness – the absence of natural light. But a deeper darkness exists on this world and that is spiritual and moral darkness. It was for the purpose of dispelling this darkness that Jesus came and He said, “I am the light of the world.”

Light – that is what Jesus declared Himself to be when He said, “I am the light of the world.” Jesus was not simply saying that he was “a” light or that he was “another”; He

was not saying that He had the light or even that He is the way to the light. He is declaring that He is the one and only light of the world!

- Before He created the sun, moon, and stars - He was The Light;
- Before He created the heavens and the earth - He was The Light;
- Before He created the fish in the sea, the beasts of the field, the birds in the air - He was The Light;
- Before He created Adam and Eve - He was The Light.

As the song writer stated it:

*“The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,
The light of the world is Jesus;
Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in,
The light of the world is Jesus.”*

But why did Jesus make that statement when He did? The answer takes us to the setting for the statement.

Second, The Setting For The Statement

The setting for Jesus' statement was during the Feast of Tabernacles also referred to as The Feast of Booths. In John 7:2-5 we read, “Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. His brothers therefore said to Him, “Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.” For even His brothers did not believe in Him.”

Jesus went to Jerusalem where the celebration was going on and in John 7:37 we read, “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.”

The Feast of Tabernacles was the general harvest festival, and the anniversary of the beginnings of the wanderings in the wilderness. (References to the Feast of Tabernacles in the Bible are many including Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:33-36,39-43; Num 29:12-32; Deut 16:13-16; Ezra 3:4; and Zech 14:16,18-19.)

The Feast of the Tabernacles is the last of the seven annual feasts of Israel commanded by God, and one of the three feasts that all Jews were required to attend. For seven days each year the Jews celebrated the Feast of the Tabernacles. God had inaugurated this feast to help the people of Israel to remember that for forty years they had wandered in the wilderness before God finally brought them into the Promised Land.

There are two important aspects to the way the Jews celebrated the Feast Tabernacles that made it very different from any of the other annual feasts:

- (a) The first was that for those seven days the entire nation camped out. That is, every family moved outdoors into temporary shelters made of branches and leaves to remind themselves of the hardships that their ancestors had under-gone while living in tents during the 40 years in the wilderness.
- (b) The second was that on the opening night of the celebration giant Menorah or candelabras were erected in the Temple Court. Each was reported to be 75 ft. tall, with huge bowls at the top. Each bowl held 10 gallons of oil. The wicks were made from the old, no longer useable garments of the priests. Then with great pomp and ceremony the bowls were lighted.

Ancient accounts tell us that the light from these huge candelabra literally lit up the streets of Jerusalem. At the end of the feast, the lights were purposely put out. Why? because the Messiah had not yet come. Some scholars suggest that it is at this point that Jesus makes his declaration. Every Jewish person knew the significance of the menorahs. They represented the presence of God among the Israelites in the wilderness in the form of the Shekinah Glory. It was this visible presence of God in the form of a cloud by day and fire cloud by night that guided the children of Israel.

It was in this setting that Jesus made this enlightening announcement: “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

With this background of The Subject of Jesus’ Statement and the Setting of Jesus’ Statement, let us move along to focus upon the One who made the statement and its impact upon us. We will do that by examining three areas:

I. THE VERIFICATION OF HIS CLAIM TO BE LIGHT

A. His Claim Is Verified By Former Prophecies.

Consider the prophecy in Isaiah 9 -“Nevertheless the gloom will not *be* upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.” (Isaiah 9:1-2)

1. Naphtali -“The territory was bounded on the East by the Sea of Galilee and the upper reaches of the Jordan.” (ISBY)

2. Zebulun - Josephus, the Jewish historian says, Zebulun included the land which was west of the Sea of Galilee and around Mt. Carmel. Both areas were in upper Galilee. Jesus was from Galilee, (Matt.3:13 etc) Nazareth was in Zebulun.

Four verses later we read: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isa 9:6)

Isaiah prophesied additionally: “I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isa.49:6-7) Note: “You” is capitalized! This is a prophecy generally of Israel but specifically of Messiah.

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied of the coming Christ in Luke 1:78-79 – “the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Based upon these and many other promises, those living under the O.T. economy looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Light Who would illuminate their darkness .

B. His Claim Is Verified By Fulfilled Prophecies.

Matt. 4:12-16 – “Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “ The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.”

Luke 2:30-32 When Jesus was 8 days old they took Him to the Temple for circumcision and Simeon, taking the baby Jesus in his arms said, “my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

John 1:4 “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.”

II Cor. 4:5-6 “For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine

out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

These are some of the N.T. scriptures that verify that Jesus is Light. But, there is more:

C. His Claim Is Verified By Future Prophecies.

"The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light." (Rev.21:23)

Jesus' claim to be the Light of the world is verified by prophesies made in the O.T. and fulfilled in the N.T. and also by prophecies yet to be fulfilled. There can be no doubt that Jesus was and is Who He claimed to be.

A legitimate question is this: is there visible proof of His claim to being "Light"? Yes! Notice:

II. THE VISUALIZATION OF HIS CREDENTIALS OF LIGHT

A. He Was Visualized As Light On The Mountain Top.

Look at Christ's transfiguration: "He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light" (Matt.17:2).

B. He Was Visualized As Light On The Damascus Road.

Paul's conversion account reads like this: "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.' "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me." (Acts 22:6-9)

C. He Was Visualized As Light On The Island Of Patmos.

John met Jesus on Patmos, said: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.....Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair *were* white

like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.”(Rev 1:10 & 12-16)

In these scriptures we have the testimonies of credible witnesses who saw Jesus Christ, at different times and in different places, manifested as Light. We do not need these visualizations to authenticate Jesus’ words – His word is enough for us – but these visualizations recorded in Holy Scripture verify Jesus’ claim that He is indeed “The Light of the world.”

We turn now to reflect on how this truth impacts those of us who are followers of Him Who is “Light of the world.”

III. THE VALIDATION OF HIS CHURCH AS LIGHT

The Lord Jesus made a second startling statement about His being “the light of the world.” In John 9:5 He said, “as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” That is a very interesting statement.

After Jesus’ departure, is the world to be left without His light? Will it once again be plunged into despair and darkness without light to guide mankind?

No! for God does not leave Himself without a witness. God’s plan and program continues as Jesus outlined to His disciples in Matthew chapter five: “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matt 5:14-16)

This saying of Jesus – “I am the light of the world” – is the only one of the “I Am” statements that Jesus applied to His followers. Here, is the Master’s Mandate to His followers. We have: (1) Our calling; (2) Our commission and (3) Our conduct, set out for us.

A. Our Calling - “You are the light of the world.”

Notice Two Announcements: “I Am the light of the world”; “You are the light of the world.” That is an awesome privilege and responsibility. Jesus said of John the Baptist, “He was a burning and a shining light.” (John 5:35) There is no shining without burning! Are you on fire for God?

B. Our Commission. – “Let your light so shine before men.”

Notice two arena's: “a city on hill” - that's a public light and “house” - that's private light. One is more obvious, one is more obscure; one is before all of society, one before all of the family.

C. Our Conduct.–“they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Notice two activities here: Our work: “good works” and our worship: “glorify your Father.” Our work and our worship go together!

We are to be what Christ was in relation to the world of darkness. He was “The Light”, we are “Lights.” What an awesome assignment! Therefore, our calling, commission and conduct must bring glory to our heavenly Father, thereby validating who Christ says we are, light!

Our light is a derived light. It is an indirect light. The light we have isn't from ourselves, but from God. Ours is a borrowed light. It is derived from another source. Think of the sun and the moon. The moon has no light of its own; it simply reflects the radiant light of the sun. We have to remember that if anything is standing between us and God, we will not reflect His light. We should purpose in our hearts to rid ourselves of anything that stands between us and Christ, The Light.

SUMMATION

1. We have analyzed the statement and setting of the statement that Jesus made when He said, “I am the Light of the world.”
2. We have briefly examined the:
 - **THE VERIFICATION OF HIS CLAIM TO BE LIGHT**
 - **THE VISUALIZATION OF HIS CREDENTIALS OF LIGHT**
 - **THE VALIDATION OF HIS CHURCH AS LIGHT**

CONCLUSION

Do you realize there is a physical disorder caused my lack of light? It is called *Seasonal Affective Disorder Syndrome* or S.A.D.S.

It is caused by a lack of exposure to sunlight, which in turn alters a person's brain chemistry. During the fall and winter months when the hours of daylight are shorter, less

light passes through the eyes which then inhibits the release of an important brain chemical, serotonin. When serotonin is not released in sufficient quantities, symptoms of depression may occur. Melatonin, another important brain chemical which regulates our sleep cycle, is released in greater quantities, adding to the depressive state.

How is *Seasonal Affective Disorder* treated? The standard treatment for this disorder is “light” therapy. In fact, it is the primary treatment recommended by the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association, and it is also backed by extensive medical research through the prestigious National Institute of Mental Health. The principal behind light therapy is that by increasing a person’s exposure to bright light, the chemicals in a person’s brain can be brought back to normal levels and lessen or remove the symptoms of S.A.D. The world needs physical light but even more we need God’s Light, Jesus Christ. All without Him as the Light of their lives are SAD!

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