

Jesus the Light of the World

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[0 : 00] Okay, welcome everybody. We're looking at John's Gospel, chapter 8, verses 12 to 30, on the theme of Jesus, the light of the world.

John, chapter 8, verse 12 to verse 30. When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. The Pharisees challenged him, here you are, appearing as your own witness. Your testimony is not valid. Jesus answered, even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going.

But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards. I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are right because I am not alone. I stand with the Father who sent me.

In your own law, it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one who testifies for myself, and the other witness is the Father who sent me. Then they asked him, where is your Father?

[1 : 24] You do not know me or my Father, Jesus replied. If you knew me, you would know my Father also. He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area, near the place where the offerings were put.

Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come. Once more, Jesus said to them, I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin.

Where I go, you cannot come. This made the Jews ask, will he kill himself? Is that why he says, where I go, you cannot come?

But he continued, you are from below, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be.

You will indeed die in your sins. Who are you, they asked. Just what I have been claiming all along, Jesus replied. I have much to say in judgment of you, but he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.

[2 : 34] They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. So Jesus said, when you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be, and that I do nothing on my own, but speak just what the Father has taught me.

The one who sent me is with me, but he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him. Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.

Amen, and the Lord will bless to us the reading of his holy word. So we're in John chapter 8, verses 12 to 30, when Jesus describes himself as the light of the world.

Now there was a well-educated scholar who decided that he would take a boat trip just off the coast, and so he hired a local fisherman to take him out on his cobbles. They were out for some time, and the day began brightly, and there was a gentle breeze, and they got chatting.

And the scholar asked the fisherman, have you ever studied philosophy? No, said the fisherman. What about psychology? No, said the fisherman. What about geology?

[3 : 47] No, said the fisherman. What about archaeology? No, not that either. What about marine biology? Surely you've studied marine biology.

No, not at all, he said. Hmm, said the scholar. You must have a pretty boring life. Well, they sailed for quite a while, and they sat in quietness, and they pondered the scene and enjoyed the scene. But then the scholar noticed that the waves began to pick up, and the wind began to pick up. And before long, there were ominous gray clouds overhead, and a storm was coming in.

The scholar began to pick up, and the fisherman. The scholar began to worry. He looked nervously at the fisherman and said, are we going to be all right? The fisherman said, do you know how to swim?

No, said the scholar. Well, that's too bad, said the fisherman. Do you know God? No, I don't, said the scholar. That's even worse, said the fisherman.

[4 : 53] For you'll have no hope after death. As it began to darken, the fisherman brought out a lamp. He lit it up, lifted it high, and said to the scholar, do you believe that this lamp can save you?

And he put it in the hands of the scholar, and he told the scholar to hold it up and wave it. And shortly thereafter, a bigger ship came into view and rescued both the fisherman and the scholar. It was the light that saved them. And the point of the story, of course, it's just a story, is that all the ologies in all the world will not be able to save you in a storm.

The only one that can save you in a storm is Jesus, the light of the world. And so what we have here in this text is, first of all, an awesome claim on the part of Jesus, an awesome claim.

In John chapter 8 and verse 12, he says, I am the light of the world. I am. Now, when he used those two words, I am, ego, amy in the Greek, he knew exactly what he was saying, and he knew that they would know as well.

[6 : 12] Because in Exodus chapter 3 and verse 14, when Moses asked God, what is your name, so that the people of Israel will know that you have sent me to Egypt to bring them out of slavery, he said, tell them, I am has sent you.

I am. God can't say, I was, because that would imply there is something different about him. He can't say, I will be, because that would imply he's not yet matured into his full being.

To say, I am, is to say that he is always and ever in the present continuous tense. See, when we talk about eternity and we say God is living in eternity, we mean that he is in the here and now. He is not bound by time. He is not bound by limitations. He's not bound in any way by time and space.

He is always I am, always present with us, always there, always near. Jesus says, I am the light of the world.

[7 : 21] It was an awesome claim and a shocking claim, making himself equal with God. And the Jews knew this because it says that they would take of stones to stone him, for he, a mere man, claimed to be God.

And remember that he says this statement, I am the light of the world, at the Feast of the Tabernacles. Now, another name for the Feast of Tabernacles is Feast of Lights.

So it was like fireworks day in the autumn time. And they were lighting lights all over the temple courts.

And Jesus is here in the court of the women and he's making this announcement. And they had watched day after day the ceremonies taking place as bowls full of oil were set alight and set up high.

And the temple was illuminated by these great lights. And there was a central light called the great candlestick, the menorah, the seven-stemmed candlestick.

[8 : 23] Because seven is the number of perfection. It is God's number. And Jesus says, I am the light of the world. So this great lamp that represented the work of God's Holy Spirit, not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says Zechariah, through which the oil of God flowed, this great light, Jesus says, that is me.

I am the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament teaches about God. And I am the one who brings you light. And John, we know, likes the theme of light.

He contrasts it with darkness. And so light, next slide, is one of John's key themes. Light represents truth or revelation.

And for John, a person understands truth when the Holy Spirit illuminates the mind and helps us see and understand. Until then, it's just information.

Information comes in and it goes out. But it may not make a great deal of difference. And we have to work hard to get information. That scholar with all of his ologies would have to study long and hard in university to get all his degrees.

[9 : 41] But this light that God gives is given by the Holy Spirit. It is taught us of God. And the work of the Holy Spirit is to teach us the things of God. And it's a different kind of learning, isn't it?

When God's truth is dawning upon our hearts. Ah, we understand. We see. It's revelation from the Holy Spirit.

And you know, you are deeply privileged if you are taught by the Spirit of God. If you understand who Jesus is and why he came and why he died. And you know that that makes a difference to your

life now.

But for all eternity, you are greatly privileged to be taught of God. This is light that has dawned in the darkness of your heart. To give you the life of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, as Paul puts it.

And then there is purity. Not just revelation. Not just truth. But purity. For light is purity. Light is holiness. As opposed to darkness.

[10 : 43] Darkness. The darkness of sin contrasts with the light of holiness. And then there is the light of life. Now, the light of life is literally what a baby sees when it is born.

It's been in that world of darkness. And then it comes out of the womb into the world of light. And taking up that picture and using this as a metaphor, when a person is born again in the Spirit of God, they come into the light.

They are rescued from their darkness. And also in John, light is guidance. We walk in light. We follow Jesus, who is the light of the world.

We have seen the light, and we know the direction of travel, the way that we should walk. We follow the example of Jesus. We become like Jesus. We spend time with Jesus.

We become like Jesus. We do what He does. This is walking in the light. And for John, that's important. In his epistle, he talks about people who claim to be in the light, but walk in darkness.

[11 : 49] And he said, you can't do that. Those two things are incompatible. If you know Jesus, you will walk like Jesus walked. You will do what Jesus does. Because the only evidence that light has really dawned in a person's heart is the evidence of a transformed life.

And so this is the light that Jesus claims to have and to give when He says, I am the light of the world. It's available to us in Jesus.

So it's an awesome claim. And secondly, it's an exclusive claim. I am the light of the world. Not I am one of many lights, but I am the light of the world.

A definite article is used. And remember in chapter 4, he says, I am the water of life. I am the one who refreshes your soul. I am the one who cleans up your life.

In chapter 6, he says, I am the bread of life. I am the one who feeds you with spiritual bread and satisfies your spiritual hunger. And when he says, I am the light of the world, he says, I am as vital for your spiritual life as light is for your physical life.

[13 : 05] When God created the world, the first thing he said was what? Let there be light. That's right. Let there be light.

And the light lit up the darkness. Now, light is fundamental to the life's ecosystem. Without, with the earth's ecosystem, without light, there could be no life.

Plants would not grow. Photosynthesis would not take place. There would be no food chain. There would be no oxygen. Light is vital to life. And likewise, light is really, really important for your physical well-being.

The people who kind of keep their rooms dark and close their curtains, that's not going to do a lot of good for you, you know. Because light and darkness regulate your sleep cycle, your circadian rhythm, which is why people advise you not to have too much light just before you're going to go to sleep, not spending all your time on your phones just before you sleep, because it'll keep you awake.

The light stimulates you to be awake, and the darkness says, time for sleep. We need light to regulate our moods.

[14 : 21] Some people suffer from sad, seasonally assisted disorder, don't they? And they have this condition because in the wintertime, those long winter days, it makes them feel miserable.

It affects their mood. It causes sometimes their depression. And we all know the importance of light for vitamin D, because we're all told we should pop a vitamin D pill every day, especially if we live north of Birmingham, because we don't just get enough light, which is why we, some of us at least, look white and a bit unhealthy.

Just some of us, not you, me. So light is fundamental and vital to life and to well-being. But Jesus says, it's absolutely crucial to your spiritual well-being.

I am the light of the world. No other person can meet your spiritual needs and satisfy those needs and answer all of those questions that you have in life.

I alone am the one who can give you the light of life. An exclusive claim. He is the source of true spiritual light and the only one who can lead us out of darkness.

[15:38] Now, that's quite a claim. And of course, there are people who are going to say, ah, but what about Buddha? And what about this? And what about that? And what about the other? Yeah, what about it? Now, if you want to, you can come and have a cup of coffee with me and we can talk through the relative merits of each of those things, but I'm not going to do it now.

For Jesus made the statement, but he didn't explain himself. It takes a world of study of the scripture to see all of the various ways in which he demonstrates this truth.

He is not inviting us to quibble and argue. He is inviting us to experience. I am the light of the world. Come to me and you will find that it's true because the Spirit of God will open your eyes and your heart and you will know it to be true.

And as Francis of Assisi said, he who has received the Spirit of God is freed from opinion because he knows the truth and the truth in Jesus has set him free.

And Jesus is the light of the world to drive away our darkness. Now, darkness is useful for sleeping, but you don't want to be in darkness all of the time.

[17:01] And I really appreciated darkness when I spent time in Africa. But you know what I discovered? Although it was very dark without streetlights, it was also very light because the stars.

Man, you think you've seen stars until you've gone somewhere where there's no streetlights and you've got a clear night. And you think you know how many stars are about six of a whitby, aren't they? And then you go to Africa and there are trillions of the things.

See, everywhere you look is a star. And with the moon shining, reflecting the sun's light elsewhere, of course, you kind of think, wow, we don't really know darkness.

But the darkness that John is speaking about here is a greater darkness, the darkness of the human heart, the darkness of human sin. Now, we might look in the mirror and think we're lovely. Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest one of all? Well, obviously you. But actually, underneath that, obviously you, surface veneer of your beauty, there's a heart that is contradictory and sinful and selfish.

[18:15] And as well as being capable of doing great good, you know that you are sometimes in the right circumstances, you could be capable of doing great evil. Shakespeare said, stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires.

Just think for a moment of the things you wouldn't want people to know about you. And then you meet your darkness. You meet your darkness.

And all of us have it. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And our darkness causes our dying. This is the verdict, says John.

Light has come into the world, but men love darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

When I was a young boy, I vividly remember we had some wire fencing at the bottom of the street and we had some concrete posts. And they used to drill holes in the concrete posts and feed the wire through.

[19:25] And then we were naughty boys, so we used to break the wire. And then we just had the posts. And I discovered ants. Sorry, not ants. Earwigs.

Lived inside of these holes. And so one day, I went out with a margarine, empty margarine tub and some, I got some long grass and I poked the earwigs out into the margarine tub and then I took them to the black path, the tarmac path and I stood on them all.

My daughter is shocked. I mean, she wouldn't harm a fly. And I've often thought, why did I do that? That was wicked. It felt wicked.

I remember afterwards, I felt, I'm disgusted with myself. Why did I feel that because I was big enough, I could torture these poor little creatures? Yeah. There's a darkness.

There's a darkness. darkness. And you just watch educated people who decide that certain people are not worthy of respect and they treat them like scum or vermin and then they gas them to death, millions of them.

[20:42] History is replete with examples of human darkness. Who would ever deny the propensity of evil that lies within but it's not just the exceptional person every one of us in different circumstances are capable of darkness.

Darkness resides within. And Jesus says, I am the light of the world. I have come to get rid of your darkness, to drive it from you.

For God says, let there be light, says Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 verse 6. The God who said, let light shine out of darkness made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the glory of the knowledge of Christ, of God.

As, sorry, the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. And that's the thing when you discover Jesus, you see.

He puts his spirit within you, a holy spirit, and he gives you a desire for holiness. He gives you a desire to clean up your life. He gives you an impulse within you that says, when your darkness is manifest, that's wrong.

[21 : 57] You shouldn't do that. You shouldn't think that way. You shouldn't feel like that. You need to repent of that. He is driving out your darkness. As one famous theologian called it, Thomas Chalmers, it is the expulsive power of a new affection.

God's love is poured out in your heart by the Holy Spirit, and he drives out those things that formerly you didn't care about so much, and you didn't mind doing, and you didn't mind thinking about, and you didn't mind acting in these sinful ways, but now you are sensitive to God, and you know that this is not his will for your life.

He is driving out your darkness, for he is the light of the world. In him was life, says John, and that life was the light of men.

He is your creator, but then when you are born again, he becomes your recreator, and his life is in you, and he drives out your darkness, and you know the problem with darkness is that it is killing us. Men love darkness rather than light. Look how sophisticated the world has become, how clever it all is with all of this AI stuff and everything else. I was reading for an assessment I was doing with some head teachers, I was reading a scenario about safeguarding children online and learning what AI could do, and it's horrific even to speak about.

[23 : 30] Deep fake and all of that, you know, the kind of thing. And that's what, yet, all of that human cleverness and ingenuity and the wonderful things it can do, because it's really valuable, but the problem is once it's in the hands of people, it's what it can be made to do.

So I've told you this before, Oppenheimer, who created nuclear fusion and the nuclear bomb, it was reported of him when it was dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

I have become death, he says. I have become death. This is what I have done. He didn't go to university to kill 140,000 people, but that's what humans are capable of.

You put something precious in their hands and they can destroy it. this wonderful ability to take human medicine and use it for good and yet to use it for destruction.

Thank God they drove out that end-of-life bill. But there was the capacity to ease people's pain while they are dying or take their life.

[24 : 46] The same medicines that would have taken their life end the lives of criminals on death row in America. It's crazy. This is the world we have. A world of great potential and good, but a world of evil because you put it in the hands of those whose hearts are darkness and darkness destroys us and darkness leads to death.

And yet for the person who finds Jesus, the person who has eternal life in Christ, they don't need to be afraid of the darkness for he is the light of the world. Edith Schaeffer said this, I thought it was lovely, don't be fearful about the journey ahead.

Don't worry about where you are going or how you are going to get there. If you believe in the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, also believe in the second person of the Trinity, the one who came as the light of the world, not only to die for people, but to light the way.

This one, Jesus Christ, is himself the light and he will guide your footsteps along the way. For he came to be with you, you see. He came to be your companion on this way of life to rescue you from your darkness and to take you to a world of light where there is no sin, no darkness, no sorrow, or pain.

See, when people reach the end of their lives, very often they get weary of it. You think of all of the things that life is offering you when you're young. I listened to this yesterday, you know, a general caricature, so forgive me, but I thought it was kind of right in one sense.

[26 : 26] When you're young, said this scholar, when you're young, you tend to be driven by desire or lust. Lust sounds a bit strong, but let's say desire. You know, your needs, your drive, your ambition.

But he said, when you get older, you tend to be driven by anger, by your frustrations of how life has cheated you, how it didn't turn out the way you planned, how that marriage that was going to be wonderful was disappointing or ended, how you were betrayed and how you, the money you were going to earn and that comfort you were going to have just never kind of transpired and somebody conned you and all of that kind of thing.

And he says, the difficulty then is managing your anger as you get older, managing your disappointment and your frustration. And then he observed, he notes two type of people when they're old.

They're either lovely people to be around, you know, breath of fresh air, they make you smile and they make you laugh, they're always thankful or they're grouches and they groan and moan all of the time and they're not pleasant to be around.

Seldom he says, well, you meet somebody in the middle. But with Jesus, we can grow old gracefully. Because life doesn't end with disappointment, it ends in a better world.

[27 : 46] You can get weary of this one, but you look forward to the one that's coming and embrace your age with great joy.

You know, people will sometimes say, you know, how is it getting older? I'm 63. They'll say, how old is it getting older? I love it. I don't care. I really don't care. My best years are now and I expect my best years to still come.

I try to live life to the full for that's what Jesus brought life to be. Now, I've been healthy and well and some of you are not so healthy and well, so I understand that for some of you, it's hard.

But you don't have to go out with a sigh if you know Jesus as the light of the world. He's your companion and he'll walk with you. And I shared with you, didn't I, Johnny, saying the Lord's Prayer because we didn't know what Thursday would bring and even Johnny was kind of talking about that and his lovely way and I got him to memorize.

I've asked him to memorize over time and you saw it on there and it was just wonderful. It was great. When he got the line wrong and he said, oh, well, that's right now and he made me laugh.

[29 : 00] But he said to me at one point, he says, well, you know, if it doesn't go well, I may not be here. And I said, but you know where you're going? He says, I do. And that's what matters.

That's what matters. Sometimes when life has dealt you a hard hand and you can't be sure of what's coming, can't even be sure that you have anything coming in this world. But with Jesus, the light of life, he will be your companion and he will take you to the valley of the shadow of death and you will be in the house of the Lord forever.

Isn't that good? Isn't that good? But this, of course, was a contested claim. The Pharisees didn't like what Jesus was saying and so they get into a big argument about him.

See, your testimony is not valid because if you're going to obey the law, you've got to be able to testify to something with two or three witnesses. Jesus, no problem, I've got myself and my father, that's two.

How many more do you want? I mean, after all, if they're honest, they've also got the signs that they've seen that they acknowledged he was doing because they said, we can't deny that they're happening and many people are believing in him.

[30 : 11] They've got Nicodemus who's kind of speaking up for him. They've had loads of signs and loads of examples to show that his testimony is true, but they're quibbling because they don't want to believe, so they're making up all kinds of reasons why not.

And Jesus said, well, look, he says, I'm not here at the moment to judge you, that's not what I'm here to do. But the father is going to judge you and my job here on earth is always to do what my father asked me to do.

So I let him speak for me, I won't speak for myself. They didn't like that, so they argued with him.

And he says, the problem is you won't understand, you won't understand until I'm lifted up.

And they were making their plans to have him arrested and then have him killed. And John says, well, they couldn't do that because his hour had not yet come. You see, they thought they were in control of events.

They thought they could manage him and manage the time and they could arrange for his death at a time that suited them. Jesus says, yes, I'm going to die, but not at a time you have chosen.

[31 : 25] I'm going to be lifted up. And lifted up in John is a technical phrase which means I am going to be glorified because at the moment of my dying, sin is defeated, death is defeated.

And then when I rise from the dead, death is defeated and my glory will be revealed. And then you will know who I am but not until. The problem he says, and this is why it's a challenging claim, the problem he says is that light has come into the world but men love darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil.

Have you ever found yourself in a debate with somebody about Christianity, the emeritus of the Christian faith and they're just thinking of the next reason why not to believe, the next reason. And you get to the point where you think actually there's nothing I could say that would satisfy you because you have no intention to believe.

And that's the problem really. We seldom argue and debate with honest brokers. People have vested interest in this not being true because it challenges their lifestyle.

If you're going to believe in Jesus, you have to change and you have to surrender and our proud hearts don't like that thought. And Jesus says, the consequences of rejecting me, the light of the world, is that you will die in your sin.

[32 : 56] Now it is singular, it's not plural. Think of it like this. There is cancer and there is cancer when we hear that word, the big C word, we're terrified of it because we know that it's something associated very often with death.

There is cancer and then there are various types of cancers. Sin is like cancer and your sins are various types of sin.

Your sins are just symptoms of your sin nature and the symptoms of cancer. And the symptoms of cancer will eventually break your body down and kill you if it is left untreated.

And the symptoms of sin will break your body down and kill you if it is left untreated. Jesus says you will die in your sin. Your problem is your nature.

It's not the individual things that you do. Of course, they're problematic but they are just symptoms that tell you that there's something deeper within you, the darkness that needs to be removed.

[34 : 03] And if you die without Jesus, if you die without Jesus as the light of the world, you will die eternally in your sin. and I don't know what else to say because that's horrifying.

Jesus says, where I am going, you cannot come. And he's going to the Father's house. Many mansions, he says there, and his disciples said, we don't know where you're going, Lord.

He says, yeah, you do. I am the way, the truth, and the life. You come to the Father but by me. In fact, if I go away, I'm going to come back for you and I'm going to take you to be where I am. You can come.

Why? Because they believe in Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life. But the Pharisees, you can't come because you reject me. You will die in your sin.

Everything hinges on whether we will believe Jesus is the light of the world and whether we will receive him as our Lord and Savior.

[35 : 14] Everything hinges on him. Hopelessness is the saddest word in our language, says Duan Young.

Despair is the enemy of our souls. It can paralyze us, halt our progress, and cause us to lose our way. But hope awakens us like a light shining in darkness.

We can endure all things when our hope is centered in one who will never fail us, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world.

Jesus says, I am the light of the world. But I want to ask you, is he the light of your world? Is he your hope? Is he your companion?

Is he the one you will follow? Is he the one that you will rest in when that moment of your dying comes and you enter into that eternal world of either life or of death?

[36 : 26] Let us pray.