



June 26, 2022 - Pastor Jason Carter

I Am Series: Light of the World

As we move through this series, one of the purposes we have is to understand and explore how the New Testament and the life of Jesus connect to the Old Testament.

Background:

When God introduces a new name in scripture, He is wanting to reveal who He is to us. His nature, what He is like, how He operates.

When Moses had an encounter with "I AM" at the burning bush, God was not just saying "This is My name", he was actually saying "this is who I AM to you. This is what I am like to you. This is what I want to be to you. Whatever you need, that us what I AM to you".

God wants to reveal who He is, AND who He desires to be on our behalf.

"I will be whoever I will be to you"

God wants to introduce Moses to the nature of God. "I will be whatever you need because there is no situation outside of my power, my reach, or my care."

In this case it was for God's people under the oppression of physical slavery to be set free to know God and worship Him. The I AM statement in Exodus is revealed for the purpose of deliverance.

Today, we're looking at Jesus I AM statement in John 8.

God wants to reveal who He is, AND who He *desires* to be on our behalf.

"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 NIV)

- What is Jesus revealing by calling Himself I am the light of the world?
- Is this verse relevant to us today? Is it a one-time understanding or does Jesus continually call us to Him to remind us He is the light of the world?

The backdrop for this passage: the Jews are in the midst of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, a prominent 8-day feast.

Israel was in the practice of celebrating feasts and holidays. They celebrated to remember what God did long ago.

Fun fact: Here's a few strange holidays people celebrate today:

- National Hugging Day (January 21) *Somebody needs a hug*
- Random Acts of Kindness Day (February 17) *Just because*
- Awkward Moments Day (March 18) *A day to celebrate awkwardness*
- National No Housework Day (April 7) *Take the day off*
- World Star Wars Day (May 4)
- Repeat Day (June 3) *Pete and Repeat*
- I Forgot Day (July 2)
- Fresh Breath Day (August 6) *How about every day?*
- International Bacon Day (September 2) *Everything is better with bacon*
- International Talk Like A Pirate Day (September 19)
- International Sloth Day (October 20) *Ha... Ha... Ha.*
- Tongue Twister Day (November 8) *Say what?*
- Make Up Your Mind Day (December 31)

The Feast of Tabernacles (or Feast of Booths) is a week-long fall festival commemorating the 40-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness.

- The Feast of Tabernacles lasts one week, (September or October)
- As a historical feast, its main characteristic is the requirement of Israel's people to leave their homes and to dwell in temporary shelters or booths. The Jews built these booths (temporary shelters) to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt and their protection, provision, and care by the hand of God during their 40 years in the wilderness.

During the time of Christ, the Feast of Tabernacles had come to be known as simply 'The Feast'. It was called an "illumination" ceremony". The 'illumination of the temple' was another important ceremony during the feast. It involved the lighting of four golden oil-fed lamps. These lamps were 75 feet high menorahs and candelabras that were lit in the temple at night to remind Israel of the pillar of fire that had led them in their wilderness journey. The light was so bright that it is said to have illuminated the entire city.

They are celebrating 3 things:

- As described in the Book of Leviticus, this holiday is a time for the Jews to rejoice in God:
- Salvation in taking them out of bondage in Egypt
- providing them with a plentiful harvest (the festival coincides with the end of the harvest season).
- And a future hope of the Messiah.
- Ultimately, though, it is a celebration of trust in God and relying completely on our relationship with Him

Jesus used this festival to reveal himself as "the light of the world", which was an incredibly intentional parallel statement.

"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, NIV)

Why does this matter?

The Jews knew the time the Messiah was to be sent to the earth...they had an expectation:

- Isaiah 9:1 "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light"
- Isaiah 42:6 "a light to the Gentiles"
- Isaiah 49:6 "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."
- Luke 2:30-32 "A light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."
- They did not like the way He presented Himself. They wanted him to deliver Israel from Rome; but he came to deliver us from sin

The Jewish leaders did not like the way Jesus presented Himself. This statement causes them to want to stone Jesus:

John 8: 58-59 NIV "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Earlier in John 8:28 NIV Jesus said So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me."

They thought he was seeking a position of authority, but he was prophesying his death.

- Jews were thinking throne
- Jesus was thinking cross

Everything Jesus does is to reveal who He is and who God is. He doesn't just talk, He demonstrates.

Everything Jesus does is to *reveal* who He is and who God is. He doesn't just talk, He *demonstrates*.

This is illustrated through one of his miracles when Jesus finds a man who is born blind (Chapter 9):

- 40 yr-old man born blind (Jews believed no one born blind could be healed)
- Jesus heals him. "This man has been born blind to reveal the power of God."
- The man is brought before the religious leaders, and they question him
- The parents won't answer for fear of being kicked out of church
- The man's response: "Whether He is a sinner I do not know. But what I do know, though I was blind, now I see."
- Jewish leaders still won't believe though the miracle proof is right in front of them. They are so knowledgeable about scripture and yet still completely blind. **Jesus is proving to the Pharisees 'you have physical sight and yet remain blind'.**
- Human reason, intellect, logic should have been proof enough for them
- Spiritual awakening and spiritual awareness only happens through Jesus

Jesus is displaying that He came not only to bring physical sight, but also to live inside us and to help us see *spiritually*.

Why does this matter?

1. We have a tendency to do the same thing. There are too many Christians who can quote a verse they won't live. We must let Scripture penetrate our mind and open the eyes of our heart. We can live our whole life sitting in a pew hearing messages, but if we can't spiritually see, it will have no meaning to us.

We will not know the darkness in our hearts until we *encounter light*.

Jesus came to free us from religion - outward practices that *do not change our heart*. He came to confront the darkness in our heart and spiritually transform us.

We will not know the darkness in our hearts until we encounter light.

"One reason the darkness around us is so terrifying is that we see so much of ourselves in it - our weaknesses, our fears, our brokenness, our sin, for many of us, no darkness is more intimidating than our own."

"God is Not Afraid of the Dark"
Martin Segal

2. Jesus never stops revealing Himself to us in our context. As he speaks to us individually, he says "I am the light of the world, and I am the light of YOUR world. Personally, in every situation, every difficulty, every desire, in this moment...I AM who I AM toward you."

HE IS

- Light for guidance - to our feet and our path
- Light for freedom - that the darkness in our hearts would not oppress us
- Light for fear when we don't understand, or don't know what to do
- Light for our grief
- "I am that I am, and I will be what I will be for you."

We can live our whole life sitting in a pew hearing messages, but *if we can't spiritually see*, it will have no meaning to us.

Jesus is I AM, the One who *is* and *will be* whatever we need. And He wants to reveal this to us first. This is the constant reminder to us: HE is the light of the world.

What is your response to Jesus today?

- How are you encountering the I AM as the light in your life?
- Have you opened your heart for Him to shine His light in any dark places?
- Do you trust Him to be whatever He needs to be to and FOR you, today?

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