

### **The Light of the World**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the earth. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

From the very beginning of Creation, the Lord God has revealed Himself as a God of light. He spoke into the void. He spoke into the darkness, and at the sound of His mighty voice, the darkness fled. His command filled the earth with brilliance, warmth, and life. Everything that lives, breathes, grows, and flourishes does so because the Lord God spoke light into existence, and He continues to sustain all of creation by the word of His power.

In the book of Exodus, God's light of protection and guidance was clearly displayed in His dealings with the sons of Israel. After the Lord God had decimated the Egyptians with ten plagues, He delivered the sons of Israel from their great affliction, bondage, and slavery. As they continued their journey through the wilderness, the Lord God protected and guided them through visible signs of His presence.

Exodus 13:21-22 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 22 The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

By day, the Lord God went on before them in a pillar of cloud. By night, He went in a pillar of fire, giving them light and a path to follow wherever He led. The pillar of cloud and fire comforted them, protected them, revealed their path, and guided their every step into the promised land.

Continuing through the rest of the Old Testament, the Lord God consistently revealed Himself as the One who illuminates, protects, and guides His people with light:

2 Samuel 22:29 For you are my lamp, O Lord, and my God lightens my darkness.

Psalms 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Micah 7:8 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to an even greater light. He looked beyond Israel's present darkness and spiritual blindness to a future day when the Lord God would Himself shine a great light upon His people.

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to a day when the people who walked in darkness and dwelt in a land of deep darkness would see a great light. This light would bring hope, joy, and victory to a people weighed down by darkness, oppression, and sin. Isaiah's prophecy pointed to a child born, a Son given, whose name would be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Centuries later, in the New Testament era, that great and promised light entered into the world. He dwelt among us, and His glory was seen. He was full of grace and truth. As a man, in the city of Jerusalem, He stepped into the Temple, stepped into the midst of the religious leaders, and made a profound, awe-inspiring declaration: "I am the light of the world."

Please turn with me to the book of John. This morning, our text is John 8:12. Let's look at it together.

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

This morning, we will begin by examining the setting of this declaration, considering the time, place, and audience to whom Jesus spoke. Next, we will explore the declaration itself: what does it mean that Jesus is the light of the world? After that, we will turn to the invitation of this declaration, as Jesus calls us to follow Him and step into the light. Finally, we will conclude with the application of this declaration, considering how this truth should transform the way we live today.

Let's first examine the setting of this declaration. It is important not only to study what Jesus said, but also the immediate context and the weight His words carried in that moment in history. In John 7–8, the Lord Jesus Christ had traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, also called the Feast of Booths or Sukkot. This was one of the three major festivals that required adult males to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. During this week, the people lived in temporary booths, recalling the Lord God's faithfulness and provision during their wilderness wanderings after their exodus from Egypt. Sukkot was one of the most lively and joy-filled festivals of the year. Jerusalem, especially the Temple, became a bright and radiant city, alive with lights, torch processions, and joyful singing. In the Court of the Women, enormous menorah-like lamps were lit, filling the Temple and the surrounding areas with brilliant light. These lights symbolized God's saving presence, the visible presence of the Lord God who tabernacled with His people, as well as the hope of the coming Messianic light. It was into this radiant, light-filled city, with the Temple brightly illuminated in all its symbolic glory, that Jesus publicly proclaimed, "I am the light of the world."

This was a bold and amazing declaration. Jesus was essentially saying, "The lights you see, the lights you are presently celebrating, the lights that shine during this festival are all pointing to Me. I am the light. I am the light your ancestors followed in the wilderness. I am the pillar of fire that comforted, protected, and guided them. I am the fulfillment of everything this feast has been celebrating. I am the true light. I am not a symbol. I am not a shadow. I am not a reflection. I am the reality. I am the fulfillment. I am the great light that shines in the darkness. I am the light of the world."

By making this declaration, Jesus was identifying Himself as the Light, the very radiance of God. Jesus was identifying Himself as the LORD God. He was applying God's covenant name, Yahweh, to Himself. In doing so, His motive was crystal clear. Jesus was declaring that He fully shares in God's infinite nature, eternal existence, and divine being.

But how do we arrive at this conclusion from the words, "I am the light of the world?" Because the phrase "I AM" carries deep theological significance. It comes from the Greek expression ἐγώ εἰμι, the very words the LORD God used to reveal Himself to Moses at the burning bush. By using this phrase, Jesus intentionally identified Himself with Yahweh, the one true and living God, the self-existent and unchanging God, the One who alone possesses immortality.

Exodus 3:13-14 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

"I AM" is the covenant name of God. So when Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world," He was not merely using a metaphor; He was taking the divine name to Himself. In doing so, He boldly affirmed His infinite, eternal, and unchangeable nature. The gospel of John records six other "I AM" declarations in which Jesus makes this same claim: I am the Bread of Life, I am the Door of the Sheep, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the Resurrection and the Life, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and I am the True Vine. This theme of Christ's divinity is not limited to His "I AM" declarations; John also opens his Gospel by grounding these claims in eternity past, presenting Jesus as the eternal Word and the true Light who shines into the darkness.

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:9-10 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

In John 1:9, the word translated "true" is the Greek word *alēthinos*, meaning true in the fullest and most genuine sense. It indicates something that is authentically what it claims to be, not a copy, not a shadow, not a symbol, but the real and ultimate reality. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of everything the Old Testament pointed toward. When John uses the word *alēthinos*, he is not simply saying "true" as opposed to "false," he is saying "the real thing," "the ultimate reality," "the genuine fulfillment," in contrast to shadows and temporary provisions.

In other words, by declaring that Jesus Christ was the true Light, John was insisting that in His name, His resemblance, and His very nature, Jesus Christ was/is the Light. He is the Light of God Himself. This truth is not new in the Scriptures. The Old Testament anticipated it:

Isaiah 60:19 The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

And the Scriptures close with this same declaration:

Revelation 21:22-23 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Thus, when Jesus claimed to be the Light of the world, He was making an unmistakable declaration of His deity. He was identifying Himself as the Shekinah glory, as Israel's Messiah, as the LORD God's own Light sent into the world. J.C. Ryle remarked,

Christ is to the souls of men what the sun is to the world. He is the center and source of all spiritual light, warmth, life, health, growth, beauty, and fertility. Like the sun, He shines for the common benefit of all mankind, for high and for low, for rich and for poor, for Jew and for Greek. Like the sun, He is free to all. All may look at Him, and drink health out of His light.

The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is “the true light which gives light to everyone” illustrates a very important truth: it reveals the world's great darkness. It reveals the ignorance and blindness of the world, for the ignorant mistake darkness for light and light for darkness, and the blind cannot see the light, cannot discern its beauty, and cannot come to it, unless the Lord God opens their eyes.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Without the true light, without the light of the world, without Jesus, there is only darkness; there is only deception, despondency, despair, and death. If this is true, then what does John mean when he says, in John 1:9, “the true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world?” This “giving light” cannot refer to salvation, because many remain in darkness, many remain blind, and many will die in their sins. So in what sense does the true light give light to everyone? In this sense, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, the true Light, is the fullest expression and revelation of the Lord God.

Hebrews 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

The Lord Jesus Christ is the radiance of God’s glory. Jesus radiates, expresses, manifests, and reveals all of God’s attributes. Jesus embodies and perfectly displays the character of God. He shows us the essence of the Lord God just as sunlight reveals the sun.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

He is the manifestation of the Lord God. He reveals and expresses the Lord God to us in a way we can comprehend. The only radiance of the glory of God that ever reaches our fallen eyes comes through the incarnate Word of God, the true Light, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord God is invisible, unseeable, and unapproachable in His essence. He cannot be fully known apart from Christ Jesus. He is the fullness of God’s revelation, for He perfectly radiates the Father’s infinite wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. To see Jesus is to see God Himself, for He is the exact imprint of His nature.

Now, it is also true that the Lord God has “enlightened” every man in the sense that He has revealed something of Himself to all of humanity. This is what we call general or natural revelation. The Lord God has revealed His eternal power and divine nature through the things that have been made. The Lord God has written His law upon the heart of every man. In this sense, every single person receives light.

Romans 1:18-21 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

So, if Christ Jesus is the true Light who gives light to everyone, and if Christ Jesus clearly reveals the Lord God, then why are human hearts still darkened? Human hearts are still darkened because the light is suppressed. Human hearts are darkened because they have suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. In other words, man refuses to honor the Lord God. Man refuses to give thanks. Man becomes futile in his thinking and exchanges the truth of God for a lie. And thus, his foolish heart is darkened. This is the tragic reality of the world we live in. Man rejects the light and chooses darkness because he loves the darkness rather than the light.

John 3:19-20 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

Man refuses to come to Christ Jesus, not because the light of Christ Jesus is dim, but because their sin is more precious to them, their sin is held most dear. Man refuses to come to Christ Jesus because he does not want his sin exposed by the light; he wants to keep it hidden, protected, and cherished. Man chooses the darkness over the light.

And yet, no matter how fiercely man clings to his sin, Jesus stepped into the darkness with a light that cannot be diminished. The Light of the world shines into every corner of the darkness and exposes its folly, its futility, and its forsakenness. But the Light's purpose was not merely to expose; it was to rescue. The Light comes with a gracious call, an invitation. This invitation to come out of the darkness goes out to every man, and with it a promise: "Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." In love, Jesus offers to break the chains of our bondage, to lift us from the grip of darkness, and to lead us into His life-giving light. But since the natural man is blind, he will never choose the Light on his own. Therefore, the Lord God in His goodness seeks after the blind man, and by His sovereign grace He enables him to see the Light and to follow Christ Jesus. By the sovereign grace of God, the natural man is able to step out of the darkness, out of the shadow of death, and into spiritual life, into the shadow of the Almighty.

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

What does it mean to follow the light? What does it mean to follow Christ Jesus? To follow Christ Jesus, to follow the Light of the world, is first to trust in Christ Jesus for salvation. This requires three things: knowledge, agreement, and faith. In order to place your faith in something, there needs to be a knowledge of that something. To become a Christian, to follow the light, and place your faith in Jesus Christ, there are certain facts about the Lord God, the Gospel, and specifically about the Lord Jesus Christ that must be known.

Romans 10:14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Knowing certain facts about God, the Gospel, and Christ Jesus must be known, but knowing these facts alone will not result in your salvation. The knowledge that God desires is not just head knowledge. He does not want us to merely know certain facts about Him. He wants us to truly and intimately know Him. Knowing about God is not the same as knowing God. You can have correct theology and still not truly know the LORD God. You can know certain facts about God, about the Gospel, or about Jesus Christ, and yet remain utterly lost in spiritual darkness. As the Puritan Stephen Charnock remarked,

A man may be theologically knowing and spiritually ignorant at the same time.

So, in addition to knowledge, something else is needed: belief. Not only must you know the facts, but you must also believe in them, you must agree with them, and acknowledge their validity and truthfulness. Intellectual agreement moves beyond a mere awareness. It is the conscious recognition that what you know about God, the Gospel, and Christ Jesus is real, certain, and trustworthy.

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Once you know the facts and agree with them, the next step is to place your trust in them. You must trust in the word of God. You must trust in the message of the gospel. You must trust in the person

and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This involves transferring your reliance from yourself for salvation to Christ alone, resting fully on Him and His finished work for your salvation, forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation. To respond in genuine faith is to say, "Lord, I give up. I can no longer depend on myself for salvation. I will not rely on my own works or my own merit. No matter how hard I try, I cannot perfectly keep your law, and I cannot make myself righteous before you. I am a sinner. I am destitute. I am spiritually bankrupt. Therefore, I place all my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. I will rely on His finished work alone, for only Christ Jesus can give me a righteous standing before the LORD God; only Christ Jesus can deliver me from the darkness. John MacArthur defined genuine faith as,

The confident, continuous confession of total dependence on and trust in Jesus Christ for the necessary requirements to enter God's kingdom.

Faith is much more than an intellectual knowledge of certain truths. Faith is knowing, believing, and trusting in total dependence upon Christ Jesus alone. True faith results in a yielding, a submission, and an absolute surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It relies confidently, continuously, and completely on His finished work for our righteousness and our salvation. Faith is the exact opposite of self-effort. It is the exact opposite of self-reliance. It is the exact opposite of dependence upon ourselves. Salvation is based on grace alone, through faith alone, because of Jesus Christ alone. This is the only way to move from darkness to light, from blindness to sight, from death into eternal life.

To follow Christ Jesus, to follow the Light of the world, is to trust in Christ Jesus for salvation, and then to live as His disciple. This means turning away from the darkness of sin and walking in the truth of His Word.

To live as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ means more than merely calling yourself His follower. It means surrendering your life, your ambitions, your comforts, your plans, and even your desires to follow Him. The cost of being a disciple of Christ Jesus is quite high. It requires great sacrifice and self-denial.

Luke 9:23-24 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

To follow Christ is to take up your cross each day and walk in step with Him. Discipleship is not a one-time choice, but rather a daily commitment. It is choosing to submit to His authority. It is choosing to obey His commands. It is choosing to seek His will above your own. Following Christ Jesus is a total reorientation of your life, in which Christ becomes the center of your thoughts, priorities, motives, and actions. Are you willing to lose your life? It is the only way to truly save it. To follow Christ Jesus is to recognize,

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Colossians 3:1-3 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Romans 6:4-6 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

As one commentator remarked:

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 him is to walk in safety through life and afterwards to enter into glory.

To follow Christ Jesus, to follow the Light of the world, is to trust in Christ Jesus for salvation; it is to live as His disciple. Lastly, to follow Christ Jesus is to imitate His life in every way, allowing His light to guide and transform every step of your daily walk.

1 John 2:4-6 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

This passage presents a very helpful and practical question: How do you know whether or not you truly know and follow the Christ Jesus? It is not enough to profess faith with words alone; your life must bear the evidence of that faith. The measure of knowing Christ Jesus is reflected in your walk, in your daily pattern of thought, speech, and action. To follow Christ Jesus is to live as He lived. True discipleship means walking in His steps, following the pattern of His life. It means reflecting His character and imitating His holiness, humility, submission to the Father, and His love for others. Our faith in Christ Jesus is not merely a profession, but a practical, daily commitment to live in a manner that mirrors the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout the Scriptures, there are many commands to imitate Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

This passage calls us to imitate God's character by walking in selfless, sacrificial love, following the ultimate example of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:1-5 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

Having the mind of Christ Jesus begins with humility. It begins with selflessness, unpretentiousness, deference, and servanthood. It actively involves seeking the good of others and counting them as more significant than yourself.

John 13:14-15 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

In John 13, Jesus models what it means to be a servant, showing us that true discipleship involves humble service to others. No act of service is beneath the follower of Christ Jesus, because the Master Himself has gone before us in humility. Thus, we must take up the towel and serve others with the same grace and tenderness with which He has served us.

1 Peter 2:21-24 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Christ's life and His suffering serve as our ultimate example. Though He was reviled and wronged, He did not retaliate or take matters into His own hands, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. Following Christ means walking through difficulty, suffering, and injustice in the very same way. Entrusting our lives, our circumstances, our reputation, our hurt, and our future to the Lord God.

To follow Christ Jesus, to follow the Light of the world, is to trust in Christ Jesus for salvation, it is to live as His disciple, and it is to imitate His life in every way. These are not abstract ideas but concrete expectations. Following Christ Jesus is a call to embody His character and reflect His example in each and every circumstance of life. And when we truly follow the Light, our lives will inevitably show it, for following the Light leads to walking in the Light.

Yet, those who refuse to follow the Light will remain in darkness. These will remain in the shadow of death, trapped and enslaved to their sins, without hope, and forever blind to the glorious truth and beauty of the Lord God. This tragedy will be the end of many, but their misery will not end with their lives. Apart from Christ, their darkness will continue forever and ever in the lake of fire, in torment, isolation, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. A life lived apart from Jesus Christ is empty, meaningless, and without hope. It is a life that could have known joy, purpose, and eternal fellowship with the Lord God, but instead remains a shadow, lost and without any hope.

Jesus is the light of the world, and whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. In Christ Jesus, there is hope. He came to seek and save the lost. Today, He invites you to step out of the darkness and into His marvelous light. The Light of the world offers comfort in sorrow, protection from enemies, guidance in confusion, strength in weakness, joy in difficulty, and eternal fellowship with the LORD God. There is no darkness too deep, no shadow too vast, no gloom too heavy; the light of Jesus Christ can reach, illuminate, and redeem your heart. So today, turn and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn and follow the Light of the world. Trust in His person. Trust in His work. Trust in His gospel. Be His disciple. Turn away from the darkness of your sin and walk in the truth of His Word. Imitate His life. Follow His ways. Let His light shine into every corner of your heart and guide you in every thought, word, and deed. And as you do, you will know the joy, the peace, and the eternal hope that come from abiding in Him, a life that begins now and will last forever. Jesus is the light of the world. If you follow Him, you will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

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