



The Light of the World

Message Notes, June 12, 2016

John 8:12-21

In John's gospel we have seven profound "I Am" declarations from Jesus. The second of these: "I am the Light of the world." This metaphor for Jesus is meaningful at face value, but it is even *more* meaningful when we understand the context of the Jewish "Feast of Tabernacles" that had just ended.

Feast of Tabernacles

- Post-harvest celebration at the end of the year. Celebrating their bounty and God's faithful provision.
- People gathered together and lived in make-shift "tents" for eight days to remember and celebrate the story of God's faithful deliverance in their Exodus from Egypt.
- Two focal ceremonies: 1) Pouring out of water, the context for Jesus' declaration, "I am the living water." 2) Lighting of the Menorahs – four giant 75-foot candelabras, each with seven oil-filled lamps.
- These menorahs would light up the entire city of Jerusalem for the whole eight days. At the end, they would be extinguished until the next year. (It is at this moment that Jesus proclaims, "I am the light of the world.")

In this passage, Jesus is making three emphatic statements: About himself, about his followers, about those who refuse to follow:

About Himself

- "I AM" (*Jehovah*) was the primary name for God. Jesus is clearly referencing His divinity in these seven "I am" proclamations about himself. How do we know this?
 - One could say "I am" without the pronoun, making it quite ordinary. The Hebrews always used the pronoun when referencing Jehovah; Jesus used the pronoun in his seven "I AM" proclamations.
 - We can tell by the strong reaction of religious leaders who saw these statements as blasphemous.
- Jesus is identifying (as do the feast menorahs) with the pillar of cloud and fire from the Exodus story that was a light for the Hebrews as they wandered the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22). It was:
 - Protection (a barrier against Pharaoh's attacking army, cool shade by day, warm fire by night)
 - Presence (not just a symbol of, but the very presence of, *God with them*, everywhere they went)
 - Guide (by this cloud/light God led them through the barren, *no land-marks* desert)
- Jesus is declaring, "I am the pillar of cloud, I am the pillar of fire, I AM the light of the world."

About His Followers

- "Those who follow me will never walk in darkness" – not that we will never sin, but we will not *walk* in darkness, not *live* there – we are freed from a *life* of sin. John acknowledges, in his later letter, that believers will still sin, but our new way of life is in the Light (1 John 1:5-7).
- Salvation is not simply about going to heaven after we die; it is about living in the light, here and now. Not perfection, but *transformation* (from darkness to light).
- We have "the light of life." We don't just walk in light; it is *within* us, by the Holy Spirit.



- Numbers 9:17-19 is a vivid depiction of the perpetual abiding nature of the Exodus pillar of cloud/fire. The people were fully submitted – they moved only with the cloud (the Lord); they stayed always with the cloud (the Lord). This is the Christian life – “abiding in the vine” (John 15:5).
- If we want God’s guidance in the uncertain moments of our lives, we must be faithful to walk in the clear guidance of the scriptures. We need to be obedient and submitted to His Word.

About Those Who Refuse to Follow Him

- Here Jesus is, the light of the world, “I AM” in the flesh, and the religious leaders totally miss him because of legal technicalities! The Light is right before them, and they can’t see.
- “Jesus, you haven’t met the standard (of two witnesses); you have broken the rule.” How sad is their blindness! How often do people miss Jesus because of theological or doctrinal hang-ups?
- Christianity is a faith experience. We come to God by faith, and sight follows. If we withhold our belief until we see, we will remain spiritually blind.
- Exodus 14:19-20 depicts how the same cloud “brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side.” Some believe and see; some refuse to believe.
- The religious leaders were consumed with law rather than faith. They could not see the light of the world.

Reflection

1. If you have never truly trusted in Jesus, the light, do you now hear his invitation to believe, surrender, and walk with him in the light?
2. If you have already trusted in Jesus, but have drifted from him, no longer sensing his pillar of presence, consider when the drift began. Was it a moment of sin or a gradual neglect of your spirit or a steady slide towards worldly things? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see and to lead you to repentance and renewal.
3. If you are in a *desert place*, feeling lost, needing direction – look to the light, stay under the cloud, and seek guidance in his Word.