
Encounter(ing) God

Jesus

Part 3

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May 12, 2019

Review

More books have been written about Jesus than anyone else. More opinions exist about the person of Jesus than for anyone else. Jesus is simultaneously the most unifying and divisive figure in human history.

For the last two weeks we have **not** looked at what the theological experts say about Jesus, nor what historians say about Jesus, nor what the media says about Jesus, nor what pop culture says about Jesus.

We **have** considered what Jesus claimed to be true about Himself. *Because the truth is . . .*

**You will never understand who Jesus is
until you wrestle with the claims Jesus made.**

Two weeks ago we started by looking at Jesus' statement, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM**" (**John 8:58**), where Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh.

Last week we unpacked nearly all of John 6, where Jesus claimed to be the Bread of Life, the only one Who will ever satisfy the deepest longings of our soul.

Our Goal—to reveal the truth of Jesus so we can encounter Him.

The I AM Statements of Jesus

...what Jesus said about Himself

The eight *I Am* statements of Jesus are:

- **I AM**
- I am the Bread of Life
- **I am the Light of the World**
- **I am** the Door/Gate
- **I am** the Good Shepherd
- **I am** the Resurrection and the Life
- **I am** the Way, the Truth, the Life
- **I am** the Vine

*The I Am statements are found in the **Gospel of John**. John will take us on a journey to reveal Who Jesus is and what He does!*

I AM the Light of the World

John 8:12

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “**I am the light of the world.** He who **follows Me** shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

- The religious leaders had been questioning Jesus, trying to corner Him and undermine His authority because He’d been making some incredible claims.
- But the Bible says, “many of the people believed in Him” (**John 7:31**).
- This is great news because Jesus says, “...if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins” (**John 8:24**).

What we have at the end of this passage is people moving . . .

from darkness into the light;

from sorrow to joy;

from slavery in sin to freedom in Christ;

from death to life.

This is why Jesus came.

This is what Jesus did.

This is what Jesus does.

This is what Jesus will do

if you’ll place your trust in the One who is the light of the world.

THE POWER OF LIGHT

THE PERSON OF LIGHT

THE PEOPLE OF LIGHT

The Power of Light

Three Realities of Light

1. **Light brings life.** To people who don’t have much light, it brings joy, freedom, hope, and life!
2. **Light can be painful.** When you’re in darkness, sudden exposure to light is painful, repulsive, upsetting, and uncomfortable.
3. **Light exposes reality.** If you’re in the dark and you need to get your bearings, you turn on the light. Light reveals reality.

Light is both attractive and repulsive; it’s both wonderful and painful; it’s both inviting and repelling.

So is Jesus.

He is simultaneously wonderful and wildly offensive. He’s simultaneously gentle and gracious, and fierce and direct. He’s humble and powerful. He’s everything your soul has ever needed. He is also everything your soul deeply fears—because you believe that if you are fully known by anyone, you won’t be fully loved.

This is true for both religious and rebellious people.

In this passage, Jesus wasn't talking to the rebellious people. *Jesus was talking to the religious people.*

- He was confronting the Jews and the Pharisees
- He was exposing the fact that they were using religious behavior to keep other people at a distance, and also to keep God at a distance.
- **Matthew 23:25, 27–28**

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

John 8:12

... I am the light of the world ...

- Jesus brings hope to the rebellious and offense to the religious.
- The rebellious know they need the light—the religious think they already have it.
- **Jesus knows both groups are in desperate need of the light.**

Questions—

Are you using religion to look good on the outside, but inwardly you're filled with self-absorption and sin?

Do you use religion to keep God and others at bay?

Are you knowingly, openly rebelling against the God who loves you?

Do you know how to find your way back to Jesus?

Do you want to find your way back to Jesus?

Jesus already knows what's going on behind the religious mask, and He still says,

**I have mercy for you.
I know the deepest recesses of your heart.
I'm for you.
You can stop hiding.
Come and allow My light to shine in you.
Be fully known and fully loved.
This is your greatest need, and I'm here to meet it.**

The Person of Light

Historical Context:

- When Jesus said, "*... I am the light of the world ...*" (**John 8:12**), He was in Jerusalem on the last night of the Feast of Tabernacles.
- This was a seven-day feast that commemorated all the miraculous ways God provided for His people after they'd been delivered from slavery in Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.
- Every night during the feast an enormous candelabra was lit in the temple that could be seen from 60–100 miles away.
- As soon as it was lit, music cued up and people danced.
- They celebrated how God provided for them in the wilderness; how He sheltered them with a cloud by day, protecting them from the unforgiving heat of the sun, and a pillar of fire by night, providing light and warmth (**Exodus 13:21**).

- When they arrived at Mt. Sinai, the cloud, the smoke, the fire, and the thunder shook the whole mountain.
- When they built the tabernacle it descended upon the tabernacle.
- It represented the glory of God's presence with them. He came down and gave them light and warmth in a world of darkness.

On that last night of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus was teaching in the treasury in the temple (**John 8:20**), which was directly in front of the enormous candelabra that represented God's glory.

Jesus stood right in front of the candelabra and cried out to everyone gathered to celebrate, "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."

Question: *Do you hear what He's saying?*

Answer: *He's saying,*

The thing you've been celebrating for the last week—the powerful, weighty, wonderful, and wildly dangerous glory of God—stands before you right now.

The thing you longed for has arrived.

The true light has come.

I'm not like the prophets who point to the glory of God.

I'm not like the mystics who reflect on the glory of God.

I AM the glory of God. I am God come down to you.

I am the way the light of God can come into your soul and bring light to your darkness.

I am the ultimate source of life, truth, reality, and joy.

When I come near to you and you come near to Me, as the plants change and bear fruit in the sunlight, so will you flourish and change.

Genesis 1:3

Let there be light.

- In the creation story, the world was dark, formless, and void.
- God uttered four words, and the light burst forth and brought life and structure, and the world began to grow and flourish.

John 1:4–5

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Revelation 22:5

There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

- John gives us an incredible glimpse of our heavenly dwelling

Jesus was the light that burst forth into the world in the beginning of creation.

Jesus is the light that provides warmth, hope, joy, and life to your world now.

**When you come home to Heaven, you won't need the sun,
because Jesus is the brilliant light of Heaven.**

Jesus is the morning star.

Jesus is the light of the world, and you have Him.

He will be your light.

The People of Light

John 8:12

He who **follows Me** shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

- Jesus said **follows Me**; not sees Me, watches Me, looks at Me, or even likes Me.

Question—*Have you ever met someone who had the light of life in them? Someone about whom you thought, They have something so intriguing and so attractive about them, it's almost holy?*

At this point in the sermon, Pastor Rob shared a story about a woman who experienced unimaginable tragedy and suffering, but who allowed God to do a beautiful work in her life through it, and who carries the light of Jesus into a world that so desperately needs the people of God to be a people of light.

John 8:12

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

- If you have the light of life, it brings purpose to every ounce of your pain, suffering, and sorrow.
- If you have the light of life, you no longer filter tragedy, hardship, and difficulty through the lens of bitterness, resentment, and anger.
- If you have the light of life, no matter how dark the darkness gets, no matter how painful the loss, no matter how crippling the tragedy, you have an enduring strength, an everlasting joy, and a peace that passes understanding.
- If you have the light of life, you know there is a day coming when the true sun will rise! When it shines on you, you will be more glorious than you've ever dreamed. When it shines into the world, every wrong will be made right, every injustice will be dealt with, and every tear will be wiped away. The light will shine in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it (**John 1:5**), the gates of hell will not prevail, and the world will finally be as it was intended to be!
- If you have the light of life, every circumstance is filtered through a heavenly lens.

**Until that day arrives,
God is weaving every victory and every loss,
every success and every failure,
every joy and every sorrow,
every ounce of pleasure and pain
into the beautiful tapestry that is your life,
because you are His masterpiece!
Live today with expectant hope for what's coming tomorrow!**

But Jesus does not stop there.

Matthew 5:14–16

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.

- Jesus is talking about *you the individual*
- He is also talking about *us*. The “you” in this verse is plural, meaning, “you all.”
- In other words, *all of us, the church, we* are the light of the world.

- We are to be a people who bring hope and life, joy and encouragement, comfort and peace into every relationship, every interaction, every environment, every community, every workplace, every conversation, *everywhere*.

Conclusion

What if we carried the light of the world—Jesus Christ—every day as a mission?

What if every one of us became so relentlessly hopeful about what is to come that every single one of our interactions with others brings out what's beautiful, right, and good?

What if we get so serious about being the light of the world that we walk alongside, encourage, serve, sacrifice, bless, and love those who are hard to love?

**We are to be people of light,
a people bursting with hope
because the light of the world lives in us!**

If you're someone who needs hope, if you're wandering in darkness, stumbling through life trying to find your way in the middle of tragedy, addiction, hardship, or trauma, don't suffer alone. Allow someone else into your suffering, to walk alongside you and point you to Jesus, so that you can find the light, and so that one day you can be the light to someone else who needs it.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do religious people need the light as much as rebellious people do?
2. What was the significance of Jesus standing in front of the giant candelabra in the temple and proclaiming that He is the light of the world?
3. When Jesus says, "follow me" (John 8:12), what does He mean? How is following Him different from every other way we can experience Him?
4. How does Jesus' statement that you are the light of the world challenge you?
5. How can you get serious about the mission to *be* the light of the world?

NOTES