

I AM
I Am the Light of the World, part 1
John 8:12-20
March 18, 2018

Big Idea – As the light of the world Jesus imparts divine life to us.

To prepare our hearts for Easter and provide opportunities to invite friends to church, we are starting a short series leading up to Easter called, I AM. The I Am statements of Jesus are life changing if you see them for what they are. We will look at three or four of these statements. Today, we will look at I am the light of the world (John 8); next week, I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14); on Easter, I am the resurrection and the life (John 11); and I maybe I am the true vine (John 15) after Easter. I AM is the name God used to describe himself to Moses (Ex 3:14). In using it, Jesus identifies himself with the God of the Old Testament. It was an outlandish claim - a Jewish teacher somehow claiming to be Yahweh, the great I AM. It is understandable for the Jewish leaders to take offense at Jesus' claim as we see today in John 8:12-20.

Jesus is in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, one of three great Jewish feasts which drew thousands of pilgrims to Jerusalem. On one night of the feast, they lit four large candelabras that were about 75 feet tall and each one had four large bowls filled with oil for a total of sixteen lamps. These lamps lit up the temple, reminding the people of the pillar of fire that had guided Israel in the wilderness during the Exodus. These were so bright that it is said to have lit up Jerusalem. It was a time of celebration with dancing and singing before the Lord as they remembered God's provision in the wilderness and looked forward to the coming Messiah, who would be a light to the nations (Isa 49:6). It is during this feast that Jesus is teaching the crowds and declares that he is the light of the world (12). He is the light Israel was hoping for but more. In him was life and the life was the light of men.¹ Jesus possesses² and gives eternal life.³

Jesus' claim to be the light of the world has four implications.⁴ First, he is the only light in our world. There is no other light(s). It is Jesus or darkness. All others claims to spiritual light are false. Second, the world, including all of us, needs Jesus as our light. Third, the world is made for this light. Jesus made and sustains the world and it was made for Jesus. And fourth, one day the world will be filled with the light of Jesus and all darkness will be removed. There will be no need for the sun and the moon because the light of his glory will be it's light (Rev 21:23; 22:5; Isa 60:19-21).

Tied to this claim to be the light of the world is the promise that whoever follows him will no longer walk in darkness but have the light of life. The foundation of his claim to be the light of the world is in verses fourteen through eighteen. First, he is from God and is going back to God (14). His relationship with the Father is so unique and intimate that he speaks from God, for God, as God (15 - 18). He has been sent by the Father, he represents the Father, and he is one with the Father.

The promise is that whoever follows Jesus will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. To follow Jesus is to turn from your sin in repentance and turn toward Christ in faith for your salvation. Following Jesus is a way of life, coming to Jesus to hear his voice in his word and responding to his voice so that you become like him. That is the goal of the Christian life, is to live in relationship to Jesus so that the life of God transforms us to love others.

The promise to those who follow is that we no longer walk in darkness. Walking in darkness is life outside the life of God. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (3:36). Humanity is under God's condemnation because of our sin. Our sin blinds us so we cannot see spiritual truth. In contrast to walking in darkness is possessing the light of life. Remember John 1:4, in Jesus was life and the life was the light of men. The life that is in Jesus, the life of God, is shared with us, giving us light. His

¹ John 1:4.

² John 1:4, 5:26.

³ John 14:6, 11:25, 3:15-16, 3:36.

⁴ John Piper sermon, *I am the Light of the World*. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-am-the-light-of-the-world>.

life brings light. We are born spiritually dead until the life of Jesus is imparted to us by the Spirit. Remember Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus? Jesus said you must be born again to see the kingdom (3:3). Salvation is the creation of foreign spiritual life in humanity, God making dead people alive, so that we see everything in a new light. This is why Paul can say the God who said let there be light caused his light to shine in our hearts (minds) so that we see the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:4-6). The language is intentional. He is using creation language to describe salvation as a new creation. This promise is secured by Jesus' death and resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. If you have never trusted Christ, never come to faith, you are in spiritual darkness. That may sound offensive but Jesus is the light of the world.

Maybe you are hiding things in your life in the darkness, keeping your sin to yourself. You may be able to hide it from others but you cannot hide anything from God, for darkness is as light with God (Ps 139:11-12). Maybe you are hiding your sin because you are embarrassed by it. You do not think Christians are supposed to struggle with sin. Maybe it is your marriage or you are bitter with someone or you have become hooked on your prescription drugs or you are contemplating an inappropriate relationship. Some of us are afraid to tell others about our sin because we fear their response, right? They may look down on us, reject us but here is the beauty of the gospel. The gospel tells us that our sin has been imputed to Christ and his righteousness has been imputed to us so that even though we are still sinful we are completely accepted because of what God has done for us in Christ. He sees us through the perfect righteousness of Christ. So, we are accepted, justified before God, though we are still sinful. Therefore, we can and should must freely accept each other in our struggle against sin because God already has.

You cannot overcome your sin alone; you need others to walk this life with you. That is why Life Groups and Discipleship Groups are so important. They are places we can confess our sins to each other and encourage each other in our fight against sin. If you ignore your sin there will be a far greater cost in your life. Life will unravel and then it will only be a bigger mess.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. Can you remember a time when you feared darkness? Describe it?
2. What is the background to Jesus saying he is I Am?
3. Can you remember the background to the Feast of Tabernacles that help us understand Jesus' claim to the light of the world?
4. What are the four implications to Jesus claim to be the light of the world?
5. What does it mean to follow Jesus?
6. Why does Jesus contrast walking in darkness and having the light of life?
7. If this promise is true, why do we still struggle with walking in darkness?
8. Why do we fear sharing our sins and struggles with others?
9. How does God's acceptance of us help us accept each other in our struggles with sin?
10. Break up into groups by gender and share your struggles with sin w