

**I AM the Light of the World**  
**March 9, 2008**  
**John 8:12-20**

Through the pitch-black night, the captain of ship spots a **light dead ahead** on a collision course with his vessel so he sends a warning: “Change your course ten degrees east.”

The light signals back: “Change yours, ten degrees west.”

The captain responds angrily: “I’m a CAPTAIN in the United States Navy! Change your course, Sir!”

“I’m a seaman, second class,” comes the reply, “Change your course, Sir.”

Now the captain is furious. “I’m a battleship! I’m not changing course!”

There’s one last reply: “I’m a lighthouse. It’s your call.”

**Light Background**

Please turn in your Bibles to John 8:12

*“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”*

I want you to notice that Jesus is **not saying that He is holding the light**, or that He **has** the light, or that He’s **the way to** the light. Instead, He is unequivocally stating, “He is the light.”

As we go through these “I AM” statements, it’s important to understand some background information and the situation in which these statements are made. Once we set the context, the text will make more sense. Let’s begin by looking at the **properties of light**.

1. **Light reveals.** Light enables us to see things that were there all along but because of the darkness we could not see them. Darkness conceals and light reveals. Without light we can’t see anything. It was C.S. Lewis who said, “I believe in Christ like I believe in the sun. Not only because I see it, but because by it all things are seen.”

John 3:21: *“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”*

Ephesians 4:13: *“But everything exposed by the light becomes visible.”*

By the way, that’s why some people avoid coming to church. They really don’t want Christ to shine His light on the way they’ve been living.

2. **Light gives life.** Light is necessary for life itself. It **sets our biological clocks**, triggers in our brains the sensations of color, and supplies the energy for things to grow. Speaking of Jesus, John 1:4 states:

*“In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”*

3. **Light gives warmth.** Did you know that one small candle, properly reflected, will raise the temperature of an igloo from below freezing to over 45 degrees? In the Bible, **warmth is often equated with the comfort of God.**

Isaiah 60:20: *“Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end.”*

4. **Light provides guidance.** The story is told of grandfather who took his little grandson for a walk in the woods. As they were walking along they stopped and the grandfather asked his grandson a question, **“Do you know where we are?”** The boy looked up and said, “No!” Grandpa then asked, “Do you know where we’re going?” The boy replied, “No!” The man chuckled and said, “Well, I guess you’re lost then.” The boy smiled at his grandpa and said, **“No, I’m not lost. I’m with you.”**

Psalm 43:3: *“Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me.”*

Knowing more about the properties of light can help us understand that as the light of the world, **Jesus reveals, He gives life, He gives warmth, and He provides guidance.**

### **Light in Scripture**

Let’s take a look now at how light is portrayed in Scripture. Those who heard Jesus make the startling statement that He is the light of the world, would have had these passages running through their minds.

· Genesis 1:3: *“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.”* **The first thing God created** was light in order to subdue the chaos of darkness.

**God is referred to as light** in several passages. Here are just a few.

Psalm 76:4: *“You are resplendent with light, more majestic than mountains rich with game.”*

Ezekiel 1:4: *“I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north-an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light...”*

1 John 1:5: *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”*

God’s first act recorded in Scripture was to create light. Listen to what happens when this creation ends and we enter Heaven, the new Jerusalem, that God is preparing for his people:

Revelation 21:23-24: *“The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.”*

Revelation 22:5: *“There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever.”*

**Now do you begin to get a picture of just how surprising, how radical, how earthshaking a statement Jesus was making when he declared himself “the light of the world?”**

As we learned last week, when Jesus declared Himself to be the bread of life in John 6, He did so as the people were remembering the manna that was supplied for 40 years.

In John 7, **Jesus attends the Feast of Tabernacles**. Now, since most of us are not all that familiar with the Biblical holidays that Jesus celebrated, I want to take a few minutes to explain the Feast of Tabernacles.

God gave the people of Israel this **annual feast** to help the Israelites remember that for 40 years they wandered in **the wilderness** before they were finally brought into the Promised Land. There were two distinctives about this celebration that made it different from all their other annual feasts:

- For 7 days the entire nation **camped out in booths** made of branches and leaves to remind them of the hardships their ancestors had endured in the wilderness.
- On the opening night of the celebration, **four large candelabras** were lit in the Temple and some commentators suggest that the entire city was illuminated.

This festival was to remind the Israelites of the **glory of God, dwelling** among them.

This celebration also focused on the **promise of God to send a light**, the Anointed One, the Messiah, who would release them from bondage.

Scriptures like Isaiah 9:2 were read: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

Now, it is **the last day of the festival**. As the celebration wraps up, all the lights are extinguished. The reason that all **the lights are put out** is that in their minds, God has not yet sent the Savior. The Temple has grown dark. And then Jesus stands up next to the Menorahs and declares:

*“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

Without a doubt to anyone who is listening, Jesus is declaring that He is the Messiah!

Wait. There's more. Drop down to 8:20:

*“He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put...”* Jesus is in the Temple, surrounded by people who want to get close to God, and He’s standing near **the place where offerings were made**. I think Jesus positioned Himself here on purpose because the light of the world is **about to be offered as full payment for their sins!**

#### Application

Ok. We’ve got the context. Let’s see if we can both understand and apply this verse to our lives. I see **five truths that come to light** (no pun intended).

Look again at John 8:12: *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”*

**1. Recurrence.** The first thing I notice is that “Jesus spoke again” to the people. Aren’t you thankful that **God doesn’t just give us one chance**? Jesus loves to give us chances. I know I had to hear the gospel many times before I responded. But we **don’t have unlimited opportunities**. At some point it will be too late for you. It’s no accident that you’re here today. This could be your last chance to put your faith in Christ.

**2.** As we’ve pointed out, when Jesus said, **“I am the light,”** he is claiming to be both God and Savior. He’s saying something about himself that no one else has yet said about him. This is

#### **Revelation.**

There are many things we can know about God from nature. In fact, Paul says that by nature alone, every human being can discover enough about God to condemn us.

But some things, we can only know when God chooses to reveal them to us himself. The one thing you need to know about God to be saved has to be revealed. **Jesus is God’s self-revelation.**

He has perfectly fulfilled the prophecy found in Isaiah 42:6-7: *“I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.”*

**3. Redemption.** Notice what comes next,

*“I am the light of the world. Whoever...”*

**Jesus has always been for the whole world.** The word “world” occurs only 15 times in the first three gospels and 77 times alone in the Gospel of John!

I love that phrase, “whoever.” **You don’t have to be from a certain heritage** and you don’t even need a spiritual pedigree. Anyone can come to Him. He died for the sins of everyone. No matter what you’ve done, you can be forgiven.

But, salvation is not automatic. It requires a...

4. **Response.** It doesn't work by osmosis just because you're in church today.

It's for **whoever "follows."** To follow the Lord Jesus means to **believe and receive.** Have you done that yet?

The only way to have light is to follow the light.

It's really your choice. **You can live in the light or despair in the dark.** You can **alter your life course** by accepting what Christ has done for you on the cross or you will eventually have a **collision** with Him. It's your call.

A boy once heard his Sunday School teacher say that Jesus was the light of the world. After class, he went up to his teacher and said, "If Jesus really is the light of the world, I wish He'd come hang out in my house. **It's awfully dark where I live.**"

**Is it dark where you live?** You can change that by embracing the light of life.

Have you asked Christ to be your forgiver and leader? **Are you a believer but you've been doing some things in the dark?** It's time to bring it into the light.

PRAY