

# Jesus Christ, the light of the world

John 8:12

*Pastor Tim Melton*

It is one thing to walk in the dark, it is another thing to be blind. Both are void of light, but one is a choice or a temporary necessity, that other is a permanent state of darkness.

Can you imagine being blind all of your life, and then suddenly being introduced to yellow, to blue skies, to Picasso, to a peacock, to a sunset, to hundreds of colored fish on a coral reef, to a trillion stars in the sky on a moonlit night, or for the first time seeing your mother? How amazing would that be? God created light and sight, so that we could see the glories of His physical creation.

He did the same in the spiritual realm. He offered spiritual light that we could see beyond the darkness of the world and see the vastness of his love, the beauty of the cross, the freedom of forgiveness, the simplicity of faith, the length of eternity.

All the world struggles with spiritual blindness and living in darkness. We see it in every country, every city and in every heart. We find it even in our own lives.

The Bible describes spiritual darkness as evil, foolishness, wickedness, ignorance, and futility of thinking (Isaiah 5:20, Romans 1:21, Psalm 82:5, Ecclesiastes 2:14, Proverbs 4:19).

It is the battle between good and evil (Isaiah 5:20). Between holiness and sin. Scripture speaks of spiritual blindness that plagues all who do not know God. There is a constant spiritual darkness that can't be avoided, because the person is spiritually blind.

Some walk in blindness because they do not know God and have never been ushered into the light. 2 Corinthians 4:4, speaks in these words: ***"In their case the god of this world (Satan) 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."***

Others have put their faith in God, are now children of the light, but are drawn into moments of darkness as they respond to circumstances in a godless manner. Maybe you have found yourself in the

midst of your own personal darkness this week. Anger, hatred, depression, anxiety, pride, impatience, abuse, manipulation, lust, dishonesty, selfishness, gluttony, temptation, gossip or bitterness. Maybe you knew that you were not walking in the light, but your desires got the best of you, the darkness won the moment and you responded badly.

Maybe it was with your spouse, or with your children, or with your roommate, or the bus driver. Maybe with your purity, or pride, or your emotions, or how you dealt with your money. Regardless of our most vulnerable areas, the evil one waits for each of us, seeking to draw us into moments of darkness. For some of us it is even seasons of darkness that have plagued us for quite a while.

Ephesians 6:12 speaks about our battle between light and darkness in this way: ***"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."*** But praise be to God that we have not been left to our own resources as we seek to walk in the light.

In Acts 26:18, Jesus explains to the Apostle Paul why He is calling Him to preach the gospel: ***"To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."***

This never-ending battle between darkness and light is what we face. Like the children of Israel, who had been hopelessly enslaved by the Egyptians for hundreds of years, we, too, were hopelessly enslaved to the darkness of sin that plagues our souls. Even after we come to Christ, we still struggle with the darkness that seeks to envelope us every day.

It is into this battle that Jesus speaks 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."***

When one looks at this verse, it tells of how Jesus is the light that will drive back the darkness in our lives and in our world. That is a great verse, but there is even more here if we will take the time to step back and consider the context.

The Jews celebrated three "pilgrimage" feasts each year that commemorated their 40 year journey in the wilderness. The feasts were known as "Passover," the "Festival of Weeks" and the "Feast of Tabernacles" or *Sukkot*, which meant booths. This "Feast of Tabernacles" was taking place when Jesus said these words.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one week long. It took place five days after the Day of Atonement, in the fall, at the end of the harvest in the autumn. The Jewish people would build and live in temporary shelters to be reminded how their ancestors had lived during their time in the wilderness. The shelters were covered with cut branches and leaves, in a way where one could see the stars at night and be inconvenienced by the rain if any fell. It was a joyous celebration remembering God's protection, guidance, faithfulness and deliverance.

It was in the fall of Jesus' final year of ministry, about six months before his crucifixion. On the last day of the feast, Jesus was speaking in the part of the temple that was referred to as the treasury. It was where all of the offering boxes were located. It was in an area of the temple courts where both men and women could go. During the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles this part of the temple court was likely filled with worshippers.

In this part of the temple treasury, there stood gigantic golden candelabras which held many, many other lamps. They were lighted after the evening sacrifices and would burn all night. They were so bright that they were visible from all over Jerusalem. These lights were to remind the worshipers of the greatness of Yahweh, their Great I Am, who had delivered their forefathers by providing a column of fire to guide them at night as they passed through the wilderness. This was the same Yahweh who had turned the Nile to blood, brought frogs, locusts and darkness over Egypt, killed every Egyptian first born son, and in the process defeated every god in Egypt and broke the chains of Pharaoh so the children of Israel could be free to become the nation of Israel. This is Yahweh God who parted the Red Sea. Who gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, who provided manna and quail to eat for 40 years, who brought water out of the rock, who brought victory in battle, who brought them into the Promised Land that flowed with milk and honey. It was this Yahweh God, this great I am, that they were remembering.

It was during this joyous observance, as the lamps shown their glorious light, that Jesus proclaimed to all who could hear His voice, ***"I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."***

In those two statements Jesus was claiming divinity. He was linking Himself to every divine reference of light throughout scripture. He was declaring that He was the Yahweh of the wilderness. He is the Light of the world. Not "a" light of the world, but "the" one and only Light of the world. Not just light of one life, one home, one city, one country or one culture, but the Light of the WORLD . . . and without Him you will know nothing but darkness. The Son of God had come, taken on the form of man, and Light was now available to all who would follow Him. For those without faith, it sounds like the most preposterous claim one could ever make. But for those who believe, it is the power of God unto salvation.

Let's look again at Jesus' words in John 8:12:

***"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."***

Christ is the Light of the world. All who follow Him will walk in the light. It is not complicated. If you follow the One who is the Light, then you will benefit from His light.

Jesus was taking their minds back to the time when the people of Israel were able to traverse the darkness as long as they followed the column of fire. That was the only condition. Follow the Light and your path will be illuminated. Follow = Light. Do not follow = Darkness.

One's response to the light helps one see their spiritual condition. John 3:19-21 says this: ***"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. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."*

So, are you a follower? Are you following? Followers follow. If you are not a follower of Christ, then why not become one? Turn from the darkness of sin and believe Jesus is who He says He is. Put your faith in Jesus Christ and know the light of Christ today.

Or maybe you are a follower of Christ, but you are not following very closely. Maybe you are walking through a season of darkness and you have drifted from Christ. It could be others have brought the darkness, or maybe you brought it on yourself. Whatever the reason for the darkness, if you are a child of Light, then He awaits your return. Circumstances do not bring darkness. How we respond to the circumstances determines whether we walk in darkness or light.

If we are in Christ, we are in the new covenant that is described in Jeremiah 31:33: *"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

If we have put our faith in Christ, then we are in the Light because we are in Him. If we are in Him, then He has put His law within our hearts and we are drawn to follow Him. At times we may drift into darkness, but the long-term trajectory of our lives is to walk in the Light of Christ. It is kind of like a plant that naturally seeks out the sun. We may pass through a dark time in our spiritual life, but whether it be through conviction of sin, brokenness, or renewed faith, God will somehow turn our hearts back towards the light that is found in Christ. That is one way that we know we are followers of Christ. Regardless of what we are passing through in life, deep in our hearts we are still drawn to seek out Christ and follow once again.

Today will you believe, obey and experience the light of Christ? In closing, let us let these words of scripture minister to our hearts:

- Matthew 4:16 – *"The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."*
- Psalm 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?"*
- 1 John 1:5 – *"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."*
- John 12:46 – *"I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."*
- Romans 13:12 – *"The night is far gone, the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. "*

- **1 John 1:5-7** – *“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”*
- **1 Peter 2:9** – *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”*
- **Ephesians 5:8** – *“For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”*
- **Matthew 5:14-16** – *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

#### Discussion questions:

1. When you hear that someone has gone through “a dark time of life”, what do you usually think that means?
2. Describe the situation in the temple when Jesus said the words of John 8:12.
3. In John 8:12 Jesus says, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* How would you say that in your own words?
4. How might one know if they are a follower of Christ or not?
5. What do you think God wants you to remember from this sermon?
6. What do you think God wants you to do about that? How can we pray for you?