

Jesus is ... – The Light & The I AM

Jan. 15, 2017- Pastor Randy

John 8:12-19

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." So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

How many of you have discovered that trying to do things in the dark is dangerous?! A few years ago I got up at night to use the bathroom and I decided that I did not need to turn a light on to navigate my way out of my bedroom. Our bedroom door was open only half way and I walked right into the side of the door, giving myself a black eye. Black eyes always provoke conversation. Some of the conversation takes place with the person with the black eye, but then there are other conversations ABOUT the person with the black eye. When the person with the black eye is the pastor....the conversations multiply!

The worst car accident in my life took place when I ran a stop sign and plowed into a car containing two ladies. The reason I ran the stop sign was because the sign was bent and the street light that normally illuminated both the intersection and the sign was out.

In the Gospel of John there are several places where Jesus is referred to as the light. John refers to Jesus as the light in chapters 1 and 3 and he quotes Jesus referring to Himself as the light of the world in chapters 8, 9, and 12. Of all the metaphors that are used to describe Jesus, "Light" is the most prominent.

So what did Jesus mean when he said he was the light of the world?

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In chapter 8, after Jesus declared that He is the light of the world a discussion, or more accurately a debate, ensued between Him and a crowd of people. The conversation began with Jesus interacting with some Pharisees, a sect of religious leaders. In Chapter 7 we discover that these leaders had been plotting to kill Jesus. Jesus had gone to Jerusalem for one of the three great annual Jewish festivals, the feast of tabernacles, and at the feast there was a failed attempt on the part of the Pharisees to have Jesus arrested. As we read on in chapter 8 we find Jesus addressing not only the Pharisees but the crowd at large.

Throughout this conversation Jesus contrasts His truthfulness and righteousness with the lies and sin of the Pharisees and the other Jews who opposed Him. Here are some of the key verses that draw out this contrast.

*"You are making those claims about yourself! **Such testimony is not valid.**" (8:13)*

*"**These claims are valid** even though I make them about myself." (8:14)*

*"For I say only what I have heard from the one who sent me, **and he is completely truthful.**" (8:26)*

*"That is why I said that **you will die in your sins**; for unless you believe that I am who I claim to be, you will die in your sins." (8:24)*

*"And the one who sent me is with me—he has not deserted me. **For I always do what pleases him.**" (8:29)*

*"But I do know him and **obey him.**" (8:55)*

*"Instead, **you are trying to kill me** because **I told you the truth**, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. No, you are imitating your real father." (8:40-41)*

*"For **you are the children of your father the devil**, and **you love to do the evil** things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. **He has always hated the truth**, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; **for he is a liar** and the father of lies." (8:44)*

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Those who rejected Jesus and refused to follow Jesus were rejecting the light and choosing to remain in the dark, meaning they were ignorant of the truth, deceived by the lies of the devil, and as a result they were choosing sin and evil rather than righteousness and goodness.

In the bible darkness is used as a metaphor for falsehood & ignorance and light signifies truth and understanding. Darkness is also a metaphor for sin and evil and light represents righteousness and goodness. This metaphor is just as common in our day as it was in Jesus' day. When we refer to people as "being in the dark" we mean they are ignorant of the truth. If I say that a person has a "dark heart" or "dark thoughts" you will naturally associate "dark" with evil or sinful. Light serves as a metaphor for believing truth and behaving morally, and beliefs and behavior are very closely related. Beliefs have consequences. Believing the truth leads to behaving right. On the other hand, following lies leads to sin and evil.

The greatest evils in our world have taken place as the result of truth being denied or perverted.

1. Slavery

2. Pornography and Prostitution in all of their various forms.

Both of these have flourished, and still flourish as a result of people denying the truth that every person is created in the image of God. The denial of this truth paves the way for people to be dehumanized and devalued. Once they have been dehumanized they are then turned into commodities for personal consumption. Once people have been objectified they will soon be exploited. Objects don't have feelings or rights.

Here are two more examples:

3. The Holocaust and other similar acts of genocide.

4. Abortion and infanticide

In each of the above cases, sacred human lives are stripped of their dignity and dehumanized. One group denies the humanity of another group and providing justification for eliminating them. Those who dehumanize others become desensitized to the normal human inhibitions to murder.

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On June 16, 2015, The Washington Times ran an article about disability activists petitioning for Peter Singer to be dismissed from Princeton University because he recommended that parents have the right to terminate the life of their children after birth. The article cited a quote Prof. Singer on his own faculty page: *“Newborn human babies have no sense of their own existence over time. So killing a newborn baby is never equivalent to killing a person... That doesn’t mean that it is not almost always a terrible thing to do. It is, but that is because most infants are loved and cherished by their parents, and to kill an infant is usually to do a great wrong to its parents.”*

He went on to give the following opinion regarding circumstances where a child is born with a “serious disability”.

“...if a decision is taken, by the parents and doctors, that it is better that a baby should die, I believe it should be possible to carry out that decision, not only by withholding or withdrawing life support — which can lead to the baby dying slowly from dehydration or from an infection — but also by taking active steps to end the baby’s life swiftly and humanely.” Peter Singer is a very influential philosopher and bioethicist.

Jesus, as the light of the world, is the source of truth and morality. Jesus reveals truth and exposes lies. Through Him we can distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. Without Jesus, the light of the world, people end up fulfilling Paul’s words in Romans 1: “They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself...” Paul wrote that this distorted worship resulted in the pursuit of all kinds of shameful behavior.

So you and I need Jesus so we can know the truth. We don’t have to follow lies and be deceived. You and I need Jesus so we can be free from the darkness of sin. In verse 34-36 Jesus said, “...everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin”, and he went on to say, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Jesus is the light that leads us out of ignorance into truth which sets us free from sin so that our lives will produce the good works that God created us for.

Now there is something else Jesus declared about himself in chapter 8 that is foundational to every other “I am” statement that he uttered. Many bible studies

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focus on the seven “I am” statements of Jesus. But actually, there are eight. There are seven “I am” statements that are followed by a predicate noun which describes something about Jesus nature or character. They are:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| I am the Bread of Life | I am the Resurrection & the Life |
| I am the Light of the World | I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life |
| I am the Door | I am the Vine |
| I am the Good Shepherd | |

But there is an even more important and revealing “I am” statement of Jesus. On seven occasions John quotes Jesus as referring to himself with two words: “I am”. The significance is that Jesus applied to himself the descriptive phrase that the Jews heard God repeatedly identify Himself by as they read the prophet Isaiah. They would also have heard these words as echoing back to the way God revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3. In other words, they were familiar with God referring to himself as “I am”, and now this “man” Jesus is doing the same.

Three of these seven occur in chapter eight.

“Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” (vs. 24)

So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. (vs. 28)

Jesus literally said “I am” but the word “he” would be inferred so these are not absolute definitive statements equating Jesus with God. They are more like subtle hints. But there are two others that are game changers: In verse 56-58 we read, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **before Abraham was born, I am.**”*

Now Jesus has thrown subtlety out the window. This was a startling statement that left no ambiguity in the minds of his listeners, which is evidenced by the fact that they immediately picked up stones to kill him for blasphemy.

But there is one more instance and Jesus identifying himself with God gets even clearer:

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When the Jewish authorities came to arrest Jesus we read in John 18:4, *So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and *said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He *said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. So when He said to them, "I am (He)," they drew back and fell to the ground.*

Jesus use of the words "I am" to identify himself as God were accompanied by the power of God. Its kind of like this last time Jesus refers to himself as "I am" he communicates it in such a way as to make sure they got the message!!

In the Spring of this year, the movie "The Case for Christ", will be released in theatres. The movie is based on Lee Stobel's book by the same name. Lee, a former award-winning investigative journalist with the Chicago Tribune was an atheist and his wife was an agnostic. But after his wife was led to faith in Christ by a friend, Lee decided to begin his own investigation into the credibility of Christianity, using the skills he acquired in his training as an investigative reporter. He fully expected to disprove the Christianity but after 2 years Lee went from being a confident atheist to a convinced believer in the claims of Jesus Christ. He repented and asked Christ to forgive him. And then his whole life began to change; so much so that his five-year old daughter took notice. He tells how all his daughter knew was a dad who was drunk or angry, but five or six months after he became a Christian, having seen how God changed his attitudes and actions, she went to his wife and said, "Mommy, I want God to do for me what he did for daddy." Lee is a great example of a man who walked out of the darkness into the light of Christ. The light led him into truth and the truth turned him away from his sin. When he turned his attention to Jesus, the Light of the World changed his beliefs and behavior.