

# I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

## I. CONTEXT

### A. CONTEXT OF THE I AM SAYINGS

1. Most of the I AM sayings **define** who Christ **by himself** as a direct **equation**

- I AM = He (Jn 4)
- I AM = The Door (Jn 10)
- I AM = Good Shepherd (Jn 10)
- I AM = The Resurrection and the Life (Jn 11)
- I AM = The Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn 14)
- I AM = The True Vine (Jn 15)
- I AM = The Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1)

2. Only 2 'I AM' passages are associated with any other element

- I AM the Light *of the world*
- I AM the Bread *of life*

3. Contrast

a. The seven above focus on the **nature** of Christ Himself

- Though they point to things that He does
- Their main point is to reveal His very nature

b. The latter two descriptions focus more on what Christ **does**

- He *lights* the world
- He *brings life*

4. Common source for **light** and **life**

**Jn 1:4-5**—*In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

5. Jesus brings these two purposes together in John 8

**Jn 8:12**—*I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the **Light of life**.*

### B. CONTEXT OF THE FEASTS OF JOHN 6-8

1. There are two feasts in John 6-8—both dealing with the Exodus

- John 6—Passover Feast
- John 7-8—Feast of Tabernacles

2. Jesus describes Himself using the imagery of provision in the Exodus

a. John 6—Bread of Life = like manna in the wilderness

b. John 7—thirst-quenching water = like water from the rock at Horeb

c. John 8—Light of the World = like the pillar of fire at night

## C. CONTEXT OF CHAPTER 7—LEADING TO CHAPTER 8

1. During or just after the Feast of Tabernacles—see 7:2

- Feast of Booths—or Feast of In-gathering
- 15<sup>th</sup> of 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri)—after final fall harvest—Sept-Oct
- Last major feast (after Passover and Pentecost)
- Immediately after Day of Atonement—10<sup>th</sup> of Tishri
- So the people entered it with great joy and celebration
- Lasted 7 days—began with Sabbath (rest day) on the full moon

2. Events in John 7

a. Questions about Jesus' origin and destiny

1. Where was He from—**7:27-29**

- They knew where Jesus was from
- But did not know where Christ would come from
- So, could He be the Christ?
- Jesus said—He came from the 'true' One—who sent Him

2. Where was He going—**7:33-36**

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- He said where He was going—they could not follow
- This confused them—was He going to the Gentiles?
- Jesus did not answer them until chapter 8

b. Invitation to drink

**Jn 7:37-8**—*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.*

1. Backdrop

- Festal ceremony of priest pouring water into the laver
- Water drawn from Siloam's fountain the day before

2. Represented the future pouring out of God's spirit on the people

3. Commemorating Isaiah's promise

**Is 12:3**—*Therefore you will joyously draw water from the spring of salvation.*

c. Division among the people—7:40-52

1. Who is this man—the prophet—the Christ?

2. Chief priests and Pharisees threatened to arrest him

### 3. Nicodemus intervened

- He said the law says He has a right to be heard
- Set the stage for Jesus' defense in Chapter 8

## D. STRUCTURE OF CHAPTER 8

### 1. There are four scenes in the chapter

- a. Adulterous woman—**vv 1-11**
- b. The Light of the World—where He came from—**vv 12-20**
- c. The Light of the World—where He was going—**vv 21-30**
- d. Contrast—Light that is true (truth) and false light—**vv 31-59**

### 2. Does the first scene belong here? [7:53-8:11]

- a. Many ancient MSS do not have this text here
- b. Some older ones have it elsewhere
- c. The location fits—in the Temple here (v 2) and later (20)
- d. But the story in chapter 7 continues with verse 12

### 3. The 'I AM' statement of chapter 8

- a. The six I AM statements in Jn 8
  - Verse 12—the Light
  - Verse 18—He who testifies about Myself
  - Verse 23—from above; not of this world
  - Verse 24—you will die unless you believe I AM He
  - Verse 28—I AM He—you will know—Son of Man lifted up
  - Verse 58—before Abraham—I AM
- b. More than anywhere else in Scripture

### 4. Three references to salvation in John 8

- a. All connected to 'I AM' statements
  - 8:24—believe that I AM He
  - 8:28—crucifixion leads to salvation
  - 8:51—keep my word→8:58—I AM
- b. These allude to Isaiah's promise

**Is 43:11**—*I, even I, AM the Lord, there is no Savior besides Me.*

## E. BACKDROP FOR SECOND SCENE (vv 12-20)

### 1. Setting

#### a. Treasury of the Temple—v 20

1. Also the Court of the Women
2. West of the outer court of the Gentiles
3. First of three inner courts before entering Temple proper
4. The other inner courts were
  - Court of Israel—for the men
  - Court of the Priests—for sacrifice
5. Where Jesus saw the widow giving her mite—Mk 12:41-44

#### b. Access by four gates

1. East gate to court of Gentiles—Beautiful Gate
  - Where Peter and John healed lame beggar—Acts 3
2. West gate—Nicanor Gate—led to Court of Israel
  - Up circular steps—15 feet above Court of Women

#### c. The treasury itself—13 trumpet shaped coffers to place money

### 2. Ceremony of lights

#### a. At the end of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles

#### b. In the Court of the Women

#### c. Four golden candelabras were lit

- Each candelabra had four huge bowls
- Against them rested four ladders
- Four youths of priestly descend filled them with oil
- Wicks were made from old garments of priests
- Each bowl (16) held ten gallons of oil
- This lit the whole city of Jerusalem
- Festive occasion with music and holy dancing

#### d. Symbolized two things

1. God's leading Israel through Wilderness by pillar of fire
2. Israel's re-commitment to the God of Light

## II. EXPLANATION OF TEXT

### A. SCENE TWO—**Read 8:12-20**

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." 13 So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." 14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify 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. 15 You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone *in it*, but I and the Father who sent Me. 17 Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." 19 So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." 20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

#### 1. Jesus' three-part declaration—v 12

a. **Claim**—I am the Light of the World

b. **Charge**—whoever follows me—i.e. "Follow Me!"

1. Exactly what He said to the first disciples

#### 2. APPLICATION

- Discipleship is more than believing
- It is obeying—and following

c. **Promise**—you will have the 'light of life'

- See **Jn 1:4**—*In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

#### 2. What did this declaration mean—what does light do?

a. Light illuminates—it reveals and it separates

##### 1. Reveals

a. Shows the things around us—good, bad, helpful, dangerous

b. Reveals our sin as well as our goodness

##### 2. Separates light from darkness—no in-between

**Jn 3:19-21**—*This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been done in God.*

b. Light gives direction—like a beacon

1. To show the right way—constant and true
  - Like navigational light of celestial bodies
2. Jesus is the Guiding Light
  - He is the lighthouse—we are the harbor lights

c. Gives life and growth

1. Biological—photosynthesis
2. Thermodynamic—warmth—right temperature range
3. Jesus gives spiritual life

d. Purifies

1. Dries—prevents bacteria and mold
2. UV rays—treat psoriasis, kills germs and viruses
3. Water treatment—sunlight kills toxic substances and odors

e. Heals

- Laser surgery—cuts, cauterizes, repairs damaged tissue

f. Constancy

1. Ancient world—celestial bodies were
  - a. Constant—permanent sources of reference
  - b. Seen to be like gods
2. Jesus was proclaiming to be *the* Light
  - a. The source of *all* good in the universe
  - b. The constant—that had no variation

**Jas 1:17**—*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down for the Father of lights, with whom there is no variability, neither shadow of turning.*

3. Reaction by Pharisees

- a. An outrageous claim—to be the Light itself
  1. An identity reserved for God Himself
    - a. Who created the Light—**Gen 1:3**

- b. Who was superior to all gods—all celestial luminaries
- 2. The role God played in the Exodus
  - a. Who manifested Himself as the fiery pillar at night
  - b. Who guided the people through the darkness
  - c. Who gave them this Feast of Tabernacles
- 3. Only God was associated with Light in the OT
  - The Light of Life—Ps 56:13
  - Symbolized God's victory over life's problems—37:6
  - God defeats darkness—Ps 139:12; Is 4:7
  - Light brings salvation—Ps 27:1; Is 58:8
- b. The Pharisees' challenge
  - 1. You are giving false testimony
  - 2. Because you are testifying by yourself about yourself
- 4. Background for Pharisees' challenge
  - a. Text from the Law
 

***Dt 19:15**—A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.*
  - b. Jesus had already answered them in John 5
    - 1. He brought this up Himself—and addressed it
 

***Jn 5:31-2**—If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He give about Me is true.*
    - 2. He presented *four* witnesses on His behalf
      - John the Baptist—**5:33-35**
      - Jesus' own works—**5:36**
      - The Father Himself—**5:37**
      - Scripture testimony—**5:39**
- 5. Jesus' response—**vv 14-18**
  - a. He is the only one who can give accurate testimony—**v 14**
    - 1. The key issues are the ones not answered in chapter 7
      - His Origin—where did He come from?—7: 27-28
      - His Destiny—where was He going?—7:33-36

2. Only Jesus knows the answers—here He tells them

- vv 13-20—deal with where He came from
- vv 21-30—deal with where He was going

b. The wrong and right sense of judgment—v 15

1. The Pharisees were abusing the Law

a. “Even in your law”—v 17

1. Jesus does not disagree with the Law
2. He disagrees with their legalistic way of twisting it
3. He opposes their self-righteous attitude

b. Using the law to condemn others, when guilty themselves

1. Self-righteous attitude with the adulterous woman
2. That incident was a ‘set-up’ to put Jesus in a dilemma
3. They did not follow the law—and accuse the man too!
4. Now they used the law to condemn the innocent: Jesus

2. Jesus is the true judge—but He did not come *for this purpose*

**Jn 3:17**—*For God did not send the Son into the world to judge [i.e. condemn] the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*

c. True judgment is pronounced—vv 16-18—His deity proclaimed

1. There *are* two witnesses—He told them yet *again*

a. One witness = I AM He who testifies about Myself

v 18—He asserted His deity and equality with the Father

b. Second witness = the Father who sent Me

2. This answers the first question—Where was He from?

- The Father sent Him—spoken twice—vv 16, 18
- So He was of heavenly not worldly origin

6. Jesus answers to their second challenge—v 19

a. Their challenge: “Where is your Father?”

1. Was it sarcasm? Did they know He meant His *heavenly* Father?
2. Or ignorance? Were they dense and thought He meant Joseph?

b. Jesus’ answer



1. Either way, this is spiritual ignorance
  - You know neither me—*nor* My Father
2. This becomes one of the key themes of John's Gospel
  - The only way to know the Father is to know the Son
  - **Jn 14:6-7**—*I AM the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.*

**B. SCENE THREE—Read vv 21-30**

**21** Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." **22** So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" **23** And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. **24** 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." **25** So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you *from* the beginning? **26** I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world." **27** They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. **28** 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. **29** And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." **30** As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

1. This affirms two things about Jesus that inter-locked with each other
  - a. It tells where Jesus was going
  - b. He re-affirms His deity twice
2. Where was Jesus going? [This also affirms His deity]
  - a. Where they could not go—**v 21**
  - b. Why they could not go—**vv 23-24**
    1. He was from above—and was returning to Heaven
    2. They were from below—and bound to this world
    3. They could not go—unless they believed in Him
3. Re-affirmation of His deity

a. They must believe—I AM He—v 24

1. Reaffirms His divinity proclaimed to the Samaritan woman
2. Also shows He has the power to save—as God

b. When you lift up the Son of Man, you will know I Am He—v 28

1. I AM He—states His deity again
2. Predicts crucifixion—which brings salvation—only God can do

**Jn 3:14**—*AS Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.*

3. *Lifting up* also points to His glorification—His return to Heaven

### **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS**

The whole world was lost In the darkness of sin,  
The Light of the world is Jesus!  
Like sunshine at noonday, His glory shone in.  
The Light of the world is Jesus!

*Come to the light, 'tis shining for thee;  
Sweetly the light has dawned upon me.  
Once I was blind, but now I can see:  
The Light of the world is Jesus!*

No darkness have we Who in Jesus abide;  
The Light of the world is Jesus!  
We walk in the light When we follow our Guide!  
The Light of the world is Jesus!

No need of the sunlight In Heaven we're told;  
The Light of the world is Jesus!  
The Lamb is the Light In the city of gold,  
The Light of the world is Jesus!