

## INTRODUCTION

A dad looked into the bedroom of his young son one night and the boy was on his knees by his bed. The dad said, "What are you doing?" His son said, "I'm just talking to Howard." His dad said, "Who's Howard?" His son looked at him with that all-adults-are-dumb gaze and said, "Howard is God's name, dad. Don't you listen when we pray at church? 'Our Father who art in Heaven Howard be your name.'"

God has a name, but it's not Howard. In fact, there are many names for God in the Bible. But one of the most powerful names of God is "I am." God told Moses in Exodus 3 that His name is "I am." That name literally means, "I exist and I will always exist." But from the time of that burning bush, the name "I am" has been connected with the God of the Bible. And Jesus claimed to be "I am" 45 times in John's Gospel.

Of these 45 uses, there are seven instances where Jesus said, "I am something or someone." In chapter 6 we looked at the first one where Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life." Let's look at the second I am statement here.

John 8:12-20 (CSB). Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."

So the Pharisees said to him, "You are testifying about yourself. Your testimony is not valid." "Even if I testify about myself," Jesus replied, "My testimony is true, because I know where I came from and where I'm going. But you don't know where I come from or where I'm going. You judge by human standards. I judge no one. And if I do judge, my judgment is true, because it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. Even in your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am the one who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me testifies about me." Then they asked him, "Where is your Father?" "You know neither me nor my Father," Jesus answered. "If you knew me, you would also know my Father." He spoke these words by the treasury, while teaching in the temple. But no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come."

This passage speaks about light and life. Light and life are connected. Where there is light there is life. God arranged our days in a way so there are hours of sunlight to wake and live and then He turns off the light by rotating the earth so we are in the shadow of the sun. He gave us night as a gift so we can sleep and recharge our batteries. Think about it, for many thousands of years people had to rely on torches, lanterns, and candles to provide light during the night. It's only over the past 100 years that electricity has spread to every part of the planet.

And you can tell where people live by looking at the concentration of electric lights at night. Here's a satellite picture of the United States taken at night. It's interesting to see that where there is light, there are people living. From this picture, you can easily pick out Dallas and Houston, and the major U.S. cities like Atlanta and Chicago. And you can see from the dark spots where there isn't much population density.

I don't know if you've ever seen it before, but when you look at a satellite picture of Korea, the difference between South Korea and North Korea is amazing. And there is a spiritual lesson there. Some of the largest churches in the world are in South Korea. But the darkest place spiritually—and electrically—in the world, is North Korea. There is a direct connection between light and life. In this message, I want to share with you how Jesus give us light and how He gives us life.

## **I. JESUS GIVES US LIGHT TO OVERCOME DARKNESS. (8:12-20)**

In the beginning of creation, there was no light, only chaos and darkness. The first recorded words of God in the Bible are "let there be light." (Genesis 1:3) And when God said it, it happened. And on the fourth day, God put the sun and moon in the sky. When He was finished, an angel might have asked, "Are we finished for now?" And God could have said, "Yes, let's call it a day."

Genesis 1 and John 1 read almost exactly the same. Genesis 1 begins with "In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth." John 1 begins with, "In the beginning was the Word." Then we see that Jesus is the source of light and life. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:4-5) I want us to think about three ways that Jesus is like light for us.

### **A. His light illuminates.**

Jesus was still in Jerusalem after the Feast of Tabernacles. He was standing in the Temple Courts near the treasury. Every evening during Tabernacles the Jews celebrated a ritual called the Temple Illumination. There were four tall poles, each 70-feet tall, and each pole had four huge oil lamps that contained five gallons of olive oil. These huge lamps used priests' worn-out garments for wicks. Each night young priests would climb each 70-foot ladder and set fire to the lamps. Eye witnesses reported that the light was so bright that much of the city of Jerusalem was illuminated. Jesus was standing below one of these huge lamps when He said, "I am the Light of the World anyone who follows me will not walk in darkness." Like those four giant oil lamps, Jesus can illuminate our lives.

Through the years, my wife and I have eaten at restaurants where the light was so low you couldn't read the menu. I think they didn't want you see the prices. I have a theory that the higher the price of the food, the lower the lights. Thankfully now, I have a smart device in my pocket. It has a built-in flashlight! When I turn that on, the words are illuminated and I can read the menu. By the way, that device is pretty smart. I can email and text on it. I can get driving directions, check the weather and the news. And the other day I discovered something amazing about my device. You probably didn't know this—but it's a phone, too. I mean you can call and talk to people on it. Pretty neat.

Just as we need a good light to read, we need the illumination of Jesus to empower us to understand the Word of God. Before a person comes to Christ, their understanding is darkened. But as they begin to truly seek the Lord, He begins to illuminate their minds. The

light comes on. I've had them use those very words before. "Pastor, I had been reading the Bible for years and I couldn't understand it, and one day it was as if someone turned on the light – and suddenly it started to make sense." My friend, that is the illuminating power of Jesus. When you read the Bible be sure to ask God to give you the light of understanding.

## **B. His light exposes.**

The light of Jesus exposes sin in our lives. We think our deeds in darkness are hidden to everyone else, but God sees and knows. And His light shines into our hearts to reveal our sin. Jesus said, "There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be brought to light." (Mark 4:22)

My dentist uses high-powered binocular loupes that have a high intensity light. He does that so the light can expose the problem. You don't want your dentist filling the wrong tooth! You want him to have plenty of light to expose where there is a problem. That's the way God uses the convicting light of the Holy Spirit.

I've heard people say, "You can fool others, but you can't fool yourself." That's not true. James 1:22 speaks about the reality of self-deception. Self-deception happens when you think nobody knows about your secret sin. You think you've gotten away with it. The truth is you can fool others; and you can fool yourself, but you can't fool God.

Sometimes we start getting arrogant and we think that we are pretty good people. At least we think everyone else thinks we are pretty good people and we are good at one thing—hiding our faults.

So here's a game we could play. How would you react if we could put on the big screens a movie of all of your words and thoughts over the past week? Let's just take the last 48 hours. Every thought, every harsh word, every lust, every secret loathing of a person...it is on the screen. We all get to watch it. How would you react? First, I don't think you'd stay around to watch it, and second if you did, you'd lose some of your spiritual swagger. We're not going to show the movie, but remember there is nothing hidden from God. I just love you enough to say you aren't getting away with anything.

## **C. His light guides.**

Here's a little television trivia. What is the longest-running television drama in history? This point gives you a hint. It was "Guiding Light," a soap opera that ran non-stop for 57 years on television. If you include the time it started on radio, "Guiding Light" ran for 72 years. It was cancelled in August 2009 just ten years ago this month.

God's guiding light has been in existence for thousands and thousands of years; It's still active today and it will never be cancelled.

The reason the Jews lit the huge oil lamps during the Feast of Tabernacles was to commemorate that time that God used a fiery pillar to guide them through the wilderness. The Bible says in Exodus 13:12: "He guided them by day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire."

Whenever the pillar of cloud and fire stopped, they stopped. When it moved, they packed up and followed it. Wouldn't it be easy if God gave us something as reliable as a pillar of fire to guide us? Well, He has given us something more reliable than a pillar of fire. He has given us His Word to guide us. The Psalmist sings in Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path."

The Bible isn't some magical book of incantations that you can just open and point your finger at a verse to get directions. Some people treat it like that and when they point to a verse that is totally unrelated to what they need, they give up and think the Bible is unreliable. But if you get into God's Word every day, and ask His Spirit to illuminate your mind, you'll discover that God will give you all the guidance you'll ever need.

Let's continue the scripture to find the next spiritual truth.

John 8:21-30. Then he said to them again, "I'm going away; you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come."

So the Jews said again, "He won't kill himself, will he, since he says, 'Where I'm going, you cannot come?'"

"You are from below," he told them, "I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins." "Who are you?" they questioned.

"Exactly what I've been telling you from the very beginning," Jesus told them. "I have many things to say and to judge about you, but the one who sent me is true, and what I have heard from him—these things I tell the world." They did not know he was speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own. But just as the Father taught me, I say these things. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

## **II. JESUS GIVES US LIFE TO CONQUER DEATH. (8:21-29)**

In His ongoing conversation with the Jewish leaders, Jesus continued to anger them by what He said. He claimed His Father was in Heaven who sent Him and told Him what to say and do. But these scribes and Pharisees couldn't understand what He was saying because they had already made up their minds that Jesus was simply a religious imposter.

Jesus shared two powerful truths in these verses:

### **A. We are drawn to the cross to receive life.**

Jesus knew that He was going to the cross, then to a grave, then be raised from the dead, and then return to Heaven. That's why He told these religious leaders they couldn't come where He was going.

In John, there are three occasions where Jesus predicted He would be "lifted up." In John 3 Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up."

Here in John 8 Jesus said that when He was lifted up, then they would know who He was. But we don't have to wonder what Jesus meant when He spoke of being lifted up. His words in John 12 make that clear. Jesus said, "As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself." He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die." (John 12:32-33)

In hindsight, it seems almost absurd that a Jewish rabbi would predict He would be crucified and as a result of that execution, He would use that as a means to draw people to Himself. But if you know the Lord and love the Lord, you have experienced the miraculous magnetism of the cross. Like iron filings are drawn to a magnet, the cross draws people to Jesus.

I mentioned last week how sad it was that there are so many beautiful churches in Italy, that have many more tourists than worshippers. But you can worship even as a tourist. A little over a week ago, Cindy and I were in a church in Florence that had beautiful sculptures and artwork on the inside. I just sat quietly for a few moments and mediated on a painting of Jesus on the cross. I am always moved when I focus on the cross. Someone once told me that in order to serve the Lord you don't have to cross the sea; you only have to see the cross. And it's good to focus on what Jesus did on the cross.

Jesus was the light of the world. But for a short period of time, that light of deity was extinguished. Hanging there suspended between Heaven and Earth there was a point in time when Jesus became sin for us. And the Bible says in that time there was darkness across all the land. Hell is real. It is a place where those who reject God's gift spend eternity. It is a place of pain, weeping and utter darkness, and alienation from God. For those few dark hours on the cross, Jesus was experiencing our pain, our darkness, and our alienation.

And once you realize that, you are drawn to Jesus, and you will find life.

### **B. We will either die in our sin; or die in the Lord.**

We all realize that if the Lord tarries we're going to die. Have you ever wondered HOW you will die? Most of us would like to go to sleep one night in our bed and wake up in Heaven. And some people die that way. But there are many physical ways people die.

But I want to look at death from a spiritual perspective. In that case there are only TWO ways a person can die. They will either die in their sin or die in the Lord.

Jesus told these religious leaders three times that they would die in their sins. Verse 21 "you will die in your sin." Verse 24, "You will die in your sin." Again, in verse 24, "If you do not believe in me you will die in your sin." Bang. Bang. Bang. You will die in your sin.

When Jesus repeats something three times in a row, we should seek to understand what He was talking about. A person dies in their sin if they do not believe that Jesus came from Heaven and is the Son of God. Actually, that is everyone's default condition so you don't have to do anything to die in your sin...except sin. Which is pretty easy.

Years ago someone shared a Gospel tract with me. On the cover it said, "What to do to go to Hell." When you opened it up there was nothing written there. It was blank. To go to hell, you just do nothing.

But there is another way to die: You can die in the Lord. And there's really nothing to do for that either, it's already been done on the cross. All you have to do is believe and receive the free gift of eternal life and you will be saved. There is a tremendous blessing ahead for those who die in the Lord. We read about it in the last book of the Bible.

Revelation 14:13 says, "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so they will rest from their labors, since their works follow them.'" Your good works will never send you to Heaven, but they will follow you to Heaven!

So I can't predict how you'll die in terms of where you'll be and what will happen. But I can predict that you will either die in your sin, or you will die in the Lord. Will you place your trust in Jesus today, so that you will one day die in the Lord?

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." But He also said to His followers, "You are the light of the world." When I was a young student of the Bible, I wondered, "Jesus is the light of the world. But how can I be the light of the world?" Then I came to understand it in a way that helped me. Think of Jesus as the Sun in the sky. The Sun is a source of light. It generates light. If Jesus is the Sun, then we are the moon. The moon shines brightly at times, but it is a dead rock, how can it shine? Simple: It reflects the light of the sun.

So here is the Take-away-truth for this message: We must REFLECT the light and life of Jesus to those around us. And Jesus tells us exactly how we can reflect His light in Matthew 5:16 He said, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

We reflect the light of Jesus when we perform good deeds that point people to God. What a perfect set-up for next Sunday. A week from today we are going to launch what we're calling KINDNESS 25:40. It's based on Matthew 25:40 where Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me."

Next Sunday Michael and I will be sharing some specific, practical ways for you to point people to God through acts of kindness. Then for the rest of August, we're challenging you to perform many, many acts of kindness. These aren't random acts of kindness. These are intentional acts of kindness to reveal God's love.

It's simple and fun. You perform an act of kindness and just give them this kindness card. It says, "This act of kindness was to show you God's love in a practical way." We have about 40,000 of these to use during August. So get ready to be the light of the world by reflecting the kindness of Jesus to others.

Like the song says, "Shine Jesus shine! Fill our land with the Father's Glory; Blaze Spirit, Blaze, Set our hearts on fire!"

## OUTLINE

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- A. His light illuminates.
- B. His light exposes.
- C. His light guides.

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## TAKE-AWAY TRUTH

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas*