

## **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

**John 8:12**

**By Andy Manning**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The United States is in a very dark place. Senseless mass shootings have become commonplace. The public schools are indoctrinating our kids with critical race theory, and with LGBT ideology. The divorce rate is at 50%. The marriage rate is at an all-time low. The birth-rate is at an all-time low. Out of wedlock births is at 41%; in the black community it is at 75% (in 1960 the illegitimacy rate was at 5%). Depression and suicide rates among America's youth is skyrocketing. Trust in government is at an all-time low, and the government is growing more powerful every year. The murder-rates in our inner cities is devastating. More people are killed in our inner cities than in the war in Afghanistan. Racial tension is at an all-time high. I could go on and on about the opioid crisis, the meth crisis, the heroin crisis, the abortion crisis, the pornography crisis, the human trafficking crisis, border crisis, etc. America is indeed in a very dark place.
2. Is there any solution to this darkness? Is there any way out? Is there any remedy? Any antidote? There is a solution. His name is Jesus.

### **II. TEXT: John 8:12**

*12 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."*

1. Jesus claimed to be the "light of the world."
2. This is the second of seven "I am" statements of Christ in the gospel of John: I am the bread of life; I am the light of the world; I am the gate for the sheep; I am the good shepherd; I am the resurrection and the life; I am the way, the truth, and the life; I am the true vine.
3. Context:
  - i. The Festival of Tabernacles lasted seven days. If you remember, every day of the festival there was a water-pouring ceremony in which the priest would pour out water on the altar to thank God for water, pray for water, and remember God's miraculous provision of water for the Israelites in the wilderness. That's when Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and drink. 38 The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him."
  - ii. There was also a nightly ceremony during the festival. Every night, in the part of the temple called the Court of Women, four huge candelabra were lit. These would light up the night sky like a searchlight. One ancient Jewish source said, "There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect their light." This served as a reminder of the pillar of fire by which God guided

Israel in the wilderness. All night long until dawn the next morning the people would dance, holding blazing torches in their hands and singing songs of praise. It was during this festival, in the very same Court of Women, that Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."

- iii. What did Jesus mean by these words? He revealed something about His person, His word, and our response.

### III. THE PERSON OF CHRIST

#### 1. God.

- i. The Jews associated the word "light" with God.
  - 1. **Psalm 27:1** "The Lord is my light and my salvation."
  - 2. **Psalm 104:2** "He wraps himself in light as if it were a robe, spreading out the sky like a canopy."
  - 3. **Isaiah 60:19** "The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your splendor."
  - 4. **Job 29:3** "I walked through the darkness by his light!"
  - 5. **Micah 7:8** "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light."
- ii. By claiming to be the "light of the world," Jesus was unmistakably claiming to be God.
- iii. Some people don't believe that Jesus is God. But some argue that Jesus never claimed to be God. When He claimed to be the light of the world, He was claiming to be God.

#### 2. Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah.

- i. By the time of Jesus, the Jews were waiting for the coming Messiah who would redeem, deliver, rescue them, and restore them, and set up an everlasting kingdom.
- ii. The Jews associated the coming Messiah with light.
- iii. The ancient rabbis declared that the name of the Messiah was "Light."
- iv. **Isaiah 49:6** "I will also make you a light for the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth."
- v. Jesus was also unmistakably claiming to be the Messiah.

### IV. THE WORK OF CHRIST

- 1. In John 8:12, Christ describes His work, His mission, with the analogy of light and darkness. He said that His mission is to rescue the world from darkness. He came to earth to rescue us from darkness. He died on the cross to rescue us from darkness. The purpose of His teachings are to rescue the world from darkness.
- 2. In the Bible, darkness symbolizes several things:
  - i. **Separation from God.**
    - 1. In several places in the Old Testament God is described as being covered in darkness.
      - a. **Psalm 97:2** "Clouds and total darkness surround him"

- b. This refers to the separation that exists between God and man. God is holy and without sin. Mankind is terribly sinful. Even though God created us for a relationship with Him, because of sin we are separated from God. There is an infinite chasm between us and God.
- c. This is terrible news because the purpose of life is to know God. To have a relationship with God. In God we find meaning, purpose, life, joy, peace, purpose, love. As Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in God." We have a God-shaped hole in our hearts that can only be filled by Him; and until we have God, there will always be a painful, irreparable emptiness inside of us.
- d. But then there was light. God sent His Son, Jesus, the light of the world, to reconcile us to God; to restore us to God; to open the way back to God.
- e. How did Jesus do this? He paid the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross in our place. God punished Christ for our sins so that we could be forgiven.
- f. **1 Peter 3:18** "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God."
- g. In the Old Testament, the temple had two rooms: The Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was the innermost room, and it contained the ark of the covenant, which held the Ten Commandments. On top of the Ark was the Mercy Seat, which represented God's dwelling place. To teach people that God was holy and unapproachable, there was a huge curtain that separated the two rooms, and no one was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies except for the High Priest, and he was only allowed once a year. But when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain ripped down the middle, from top to bottom. This was to show that now, in and through Christ, we can be reconciled to God. We can once again be intimate with God. God is no longer clouded in darkness and mystery. Now we can approach Him and know Him.

**ii. Spiritual ignorance.**

- 1. The Bible uses darkness as a symbol for spiritual ignorance.
- 2. **Psalms 82:5** "They do not know or understand; they wander in darkness."

3. Apart from Christ it is impossible to understand the world. It is impossible to make sense of the world. This is why very smart people come up with very stupid ideas. They lack that foundation of all knowledge – Jesus Christ. Consider some of the bad ideas that have been invented by very smart people:
  - a. Darwinian Evolution: Human beings descended from monkeys.
  - b. Socialism: It is wrong for you to take your neighbor's money, but it is okay for the government to take your money and give it to someone else.
  - c. Eugenics: The government should decide which people in society are undesirable (such as Jews, blacks, and the disabled), and then prevent them from reproducing.
  - d. Abortion-on-demand: A woman has the constitutional right to murder; but an unborn child does not have the inalienable right to life.
  - e. Same-sex marriage: Marriage is not the union of a man and a woman, but simply the union of two or more people who "love" each other.
  - f. Transgenderism: Gender is a social construct and is not connected to one's biology; it is not binary, but a spectrum.
  - g. Permissive Parenting: You shouldn't spank your children because it might damage their self-esteem and cause them to become violent.
  - h. Critical Race Theory: All white people are racist; all disparities between blacks and whites are the result of systemic racism; we should fight against racism with more racism.
4. Very smart people came up with these ideas. But they have horrible outcomes for humanity because they are stupid. They would have known that they were stupid if they would have looked to Jesus Christ, the light of the world.
5. Through Jesus Christ we can make sense of the world. Christ helps us to answer life's most fundamental and important questions.
  - a. Where do we come from? God created us in His image to know and glorify Him.
  - b. What went wrong with the world? Mankind rebelled against God, throwing all of creation into chaos and disorder.
  - c. How do we fix it? God sent Christ to pay for our sins, and reconciliation and restoration are found through repentance and faith in Him.

- d. What happens when we die? Believers in Christ will spend eternity in heaven with God.
- 6. When you become a Christian, a mental light comes on in; you suddenly understand; you suddenly see; so much begins to make sense.
- 7. **Colossians 2:3** “In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

**iii. Sorrow and distress.**

- 1. The Bible uses darkness to symbolize sorrow and distress.
- 2. Life is hard, especially if you are not a Christian. Without Christ life has no meaning. We don't know where we are going after death? We are nobodies in a world where nothing really matters. Right and wrong are just matters of opinion. There's no one guiding history. There's no one watching out for you. There's no higher power to turn to.
- 3. And becoming a Christian doesn't mean that all your problems will go away. But when you become a Christian, Christ helps us with our problems in several ways.
  - a. He comforts us.
    - i. **Psalm 23:4** “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me.”
    - ii. In every battle, Christ will be with you. He will give you comfort, and peace, and joy, and confidence, and courage.
  - b. He helps us.
    - i. **Psalm 107:13-14** “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and gloom and broke their chains apart.”
    - ii. When you go through hard times and call out to Jesus, He will help you and deliver you. Sometimes He will give you strength to carry on in tough situation. And sometimes He will rescue you from that tough situation all together.
  - c. He guides us.
    - i. **Romans 8:28** “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

- ii. If you have a relationship with Jesus, you can know for sure that nothing can happen to you unless He allows it, and He will use it for your good.

4. Jesus Christ lights up our darkness.

#### iv. Suffering in hell.

1. In the Bible, darkness is also a description of hell.
2. **Matthew 8:12** “But the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
3. Hell is a very real place. Jesus spoke more of hell than of heaven. He said two things about hell.
  - a. Hell will be painful. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Lk 13:28).
  - b. Hell will be eternal. It is the fire that never goes out (Mt 3:12); the eternal fire (Mt 18:8); an unquenchable fire (Mk 9:43); eternal punishment (Mt 25:46).
4. Hell is the place of eternal torment.
5. But the good news is that God doesn’t want you to go to hell. God wants you to have eternal life. So He sent Jesus Christ to save us from hell.
6. **John 3:16** “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

#### v. Sin.

1. The Bible also uses darkness to symbolize sin.
2. **Ephesians 5:11** “Don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead expose them.”
3. The Bible teaches that apart from Christ we are enslaved to sin. We are in bondage to sin. We cannot help but sin. We were created to love God and others, but because of the Fall when Adam and Eve, the first humans, disobeyed God and sinned, all human beings are born in sin. Our natural bent, and inclination, and proclivity, is to love and worship self – not God, and not others. We don’t love God. We don’t want to please God. We don’t want to serve and glorify God. We don’t care about God or the things of God.
4. And sin leads to all sorts of problems. When you choose to sin, you choose to suffer. Sin leads to destruction – self-destruction; relational destruction; financial destruction; societal destruction; eternal destruction. This is the reason for the darkness in our nation today. Sin!
5. But Christ came to deliver us from sin; not just from the penalty for sin, but from enslavement to sin.

6. When you become a Christian, Christ transforms you into a new person. **2 Corinthians 5:17** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!”
  7. He gives you a new heart with the desire and power to please Him. **Philippians 2:13** “For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”
  8. When you become a Christian, Christ gives you power to overcome destructive addictions; He gives you power to overcome alcohol and drugs; He gives you power to overcome anger, and hatred, and selfishness, and jealousy, and pride, and greed, and on and on. He radically changes you so that you can be the person God made you to be.
3. This is what Jesus means when He said, “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”
  4. So, in this verse we see the person of Christ, and the work of Christ, and we also see our response to Christ.

#### V. OUR RESPONSE TO CHRIST

1. **John 8:12** “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”
2. **Our first response to Jesus is to follow Him.**
  - i. Christ came to reconcile us to God, to give us wisdom and understanding, to help us in our times of distress, to rescue us from hell, to liberate us from sin. But we only receive these blessings if we follow Jesus.
  - ii. We must not simply look at the light; or admire the light; we must follow it.
  - iii. What does it mean to follow Jesus?
    1. Greek, *akolouthein*. It is used in five different ways in the Greek language; each usage sheds light on what it means to follow Jesus.
      - a. It is used of a soldier following his captain wherever he may lead. To follow Jesus is to go wherever He leads, no matter how dangerous.
      - b. It is used of a slave accompanying his master. To follow Jesus is to devote your life to serving Him.
      - c. It is used of accepting a wise counselor’s advice. To follow Jesus is to live your life according to His teachings.
      - d. It is used of giving obedience to the laws of the government. To follow Jesus is to obey His commands.
      - e. It is used of following a teacher’s line of argument, or the gist of someone’s speech. To follow Jesus is to understand His teachings – that He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the only Savior.

2. **William Barclay** “To be followers of Christ is to give body, soul and spirit into the obedience of the Master; and to follow him is to walk in the light. When we walk alone, we are bound to stumble and grope, for so many of life’s problems are beyond our solution. When we walk alone, we are bound to take the wrong way, because we have no secure map of life. We need the heavenly wisdom to walk the earthly way. Those who have a sure guide and an accurate map are the ones who are bound to come in safety to their journey’s end. Jesus Christ is that guide; he alone possesses the map to life. To follow him is to walk in safety through life and afterwards to enter into glory.
3. **John MacArthur** “It has the connotation of complete submission to Jesus as Lord.... Following Christ is not burdensome, as walking in the light illustrates. It is far easier than stumbling around in the dark.”
4. Following Jesus means complete submission to Him – to believe what He says, to do what He commands.

**3. Our second response to Jesus is to shine for Him.**

- i. When you decide to follow Jesus, Jesus not only lights up your life, but you become a light to others.
- ii. **Ephesians 5:8** “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”
- iii. **1 Thessalonians 5:5** “For you are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or the darkness.”
- iv. **Matthew 5:14-16** “You are the light of the world.... Let your light shine before others, so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”
- v. Now that you are a Christian, Christ wants to shine through you. This means pointing others to Jesus. Leading others to Jesus. Teaching others about Jesus. Teaching your kids and grandkids about Jesus. Inviting people to church. Serving in church.
- vi. Once you have the light, you become a light. Don’t hide your light. Let it shine.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

1. The Bible says the world started out as a dark place. Genesis 1:2 “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.” But then something amazing happened. Genesis 1:3 Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.
2. Our nation is in a very dark time; the darkest in our history. But it doesn’t have to stay that way. You may be in a very dark time right now; maybe the darkest in your life. But it doesn’t have to stay that way. Jesus is the light of the world. He came to

pierce the darkness; to dispel the darkness. He is the light our nation needs. He is the light you need. Will you follow Him? Will you follow the light?