Jesus – The Light

1. I AM

a. Last time we considered the first of the I AM statements that John records Jesus making. The phrase "I AM" is the covenant name of God (Yahweh, or YHWH), revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). The phrase speaks of self-sufficient existence which is an attribute only God possesses. It is also a phrase the Jews who were listening would have automatically understood as a claim to deity.

b. From here on it is clear that Jesus is claiming to be God by identifying himself as I AM. As a result, many of his followers leave him and the religious authorities set themselves against him. However, this does not deter Jesus and he goes on to make six more I AM statements:

   i I Am The Light Of The World (John 8:12)

   ii I Am The Gate For The Sheep (John 10:7)

   iii I Am The Good Shepherd (John 10:11)

   iv I Am The Resurrection And The Life (John 11:25)

   v I Am The Way The Truth And The Life (John 14:6)

   vi I Am The True Vine (John 15:1)

c. Each represents a particular relationship of Jesus to the spiritual needs of men. He desired that men should receive him, not simply for what he might give them, but for what he might be to them. Simply put, the seven I AM statements of Jesus are an incredible insight into who he really is.

d. Jesus' I AM statements were not just random adjectives that he pulled out of a hat. These were crafted statements that had a significant meaning to his listeners 2,000 years ago. And when we understand these statements in context they can be just as powerful today.

2. Light

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."*

a. The first words of John 8:12 serve to bridge what previously happened into what Jesus is about to say. Prior to this we find the religious leaders setting a trap for Jesus by bringing a woman caught in the act of adultery before him. Jesus not only avoided the trap but extended grace and truth to this woman and after this interruption he's back to teaching.

b. The theme of light is found all throughout John's Gospel starting from the very beginning.

John 1:4-5 *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* ***5*** *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

c. Here Jesus claims he is the light of life. Dr Tom Constable says, *"The light of life figure stands for what dispels the darkness of ignorance and death. Jesus was claiming that whoever believes in Him will enjoy the light that comes from God's presence and produces life."*

d. This light metaphor was common through the Israelites history. They associate light with God's presence and throughout the Old Testament God reveals himself to the Jews with

light. From creation to the burning bush and in many of the celebrations, light symbolised God's presence.

e. Jesus here is declaring that the light has come into the world - God is here. Jesus, in this claim, is pulling from their history to show that just as God was the light to their ancestors, he's their light today. He's here to light the way, to lead us from the darkness we are stuck in.

3. Light of life

a. This verse contains a glorious promise – a promise which is ours if we make the right choice. Will we follow? As we have seen this is also a recurring theme in John – we are called to follow. Not just believe but follow!

b. Following Jesus is more than tagging along behind him. It means following him for who he is. It means being so taken with him that we join ourselves to him and thus have him as our light of life.

c. What is the connection between light and life? John 1:4 gives the answer: *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."* The life gives the light. The life Jesus has and the life he shares with those who follow him gives them light. That is, we are dead and blind to the light until the life of Jesus is imparted to us by God's Spirit, and then we see.

d. The eyes of our hearts are opened, and divine light streams into our living spirits. And thus we have the light of life. The light that comes from new, spiritual, eye-opening life — the life that gives sight to the blind soul, eternal life giving eternal sight.

e. This is what I declare each time I light the Shabbat candles:

   i As I light these Shabbat candles in order to set apart and sanctify this special day may all of us be reminded that it is the light of Messiah that shines in us and in our homes. (light candles)

   ii As I cover my eyes (cover eyes with hands) may we be reminded that before Jesus opens our eyes of understanding we cannot see the glories and the joy of all that his light sheds understanding on.

f. The reality is the world around us is darkened by sin. And even if we feel like we are okay, the effects of sin and brokenness are all around us. It affects us in ways we can see, such as death, but in other ways we aren't always aware of, like damaging our most important relationships. We are surrounded by darkness.

g. But we don't have to stumble through it blindly. Just as God was the light that led the Israelites when they were lost in the wilderness, Jesus will light our way through the darkness around us. For followers of Jesus this is an incredible promise. Jesus will light our way; we don't need to go through life blindly.

h. So, what does the light of life actually do for us? Really two things. First it takes away the darkness of death. Yes, we will all still suffer a physical death. But for followers of Jesus our physical death leads to eternal life. Life without pain, suffering, grief, tears, and loss. Life the way God originally intended it to be lived.

i. The second thing the light of life does is take away the darkness of ignorance. Culture around us is never short of trying to convince us of ways we can find happiness. The problem is all those paths don't lead to where they promise. They rob us and leave us stuck

in the darkness. Jesus offers us a better way to live. A way that actually leads to love, joy, peace, kindness - the things you and I are actually after.

j. For followers of Jesus we don't have to stumble through the darkness of our world searching for peace and meaning. The light of life is offering it to us, we simply need to follow him.

4. Light of the world

a. What does "of the world" mean? The whole world is not being lightened — at least not yet. In fact, he says, "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness." Which means that if we don't follow him, we do walk in darkness. And where is that darkness? It is in the world and in our hearts. So being "the light of the world" doesn't mean removing all darkness from the world as he walks through the world.

b. Jesus's being "the light of the world" means the world has no other light than him. If there is going to be a light for the world, it will be Jesus. It is Jesus or darkness. There is no third alternative. No other light. It means, therefore, that all the world, and everyone in it needs Jesus as their light.

c. It means that the world was made for this light. This is not a foreign light; this is the light of the owner of the world. When this light comes, it not only exposes sin as foreign and ugly, but it also makes everything good in the world shine with its full and true beauty. This world was made to be illumined by this light. This light of Christ is native to the world.

d. Jesus being "the light of the world" means that one day this world will be filled with this light as the waters cover the sea, and all darkness, and all the works of darkness, and all the sons of darkness will be cast out.

Hab.2:14 *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*

e. That's why Jesus called hell "outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). In that day, all will be light. Jesus, the radiance of the Father, will fill the world, and everything will be beautiful with the light of Christ.

5. Follow him

a. In these glorious ways, Jesus is the light of the world. If we follow him now we will have him as our light in advance of that great day. True, he will reveal our sins which is a precious gift — like the fortunate early diagnosis of a deadly cancer. But even more, he will reveal all that is beautiful. He will be the light in which we see God — the light in which we see the history of redemption and the work of salvation.

b. He will be the light in which we see mountains and valleys and oceans and rivers and trees and animals and people. Nothing will be the same again when we have him as our light. Everything looks different in the light of Christ. Even earthquakes and tsunamis and suffering and death will look different in his light. Until his light fills the earth as the waters cover the sea — until it banishes sin and sickness and pain and earthquakes to the outer darkness — until then, even now, his light will help us bear the sorrows of darkness.

It will be a soft glow to comfort us in our lonely room after the devastating loss. It will be a lamp on our troubled path. It will reveal the wise and loving face of God behind every frowning providence. When we believe in Jesus as our precious light, when we follow him as our truth and our wisdom and our way and our beauty, we have his life, we are "a son of light." We are begotten into the family of

light. And this light will never go out. In the moment of death, when the world thinks "all the lights go out," for us it will be the light of heaven.

John Piper

6. Connect to the source

a. So he is our light of life, he is the light of the world. However, we also know that Jesus told his disciples that they too are the light of the world.

Matt.5:14-16 *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.* ***15*** *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.* ***16*** *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.*

b. How do we become a light of the world?

c. **Connect to the source**

i We can only be a light for our dark and broken world if we connect to the source of that light. You can put a lamp in the corner of your room but unless you plug it in and switch it on there will be no light in the room.

ii Jesus is the source of all light – in the beginning God separated the light from the darkness. In him is found light.

Gen.1:4 *And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.*

John 1:1-5 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ***2*** *He was in the beginning with God.* ***3*** *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* ***4*** *In him was life,[a] and the life was the light of men.* ***5*** *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

d. We are not the light of the world on our own - we can't even produce light. If we want to live out the promise of this verse, we need to connect to the source of life. The only way to grow our faith and live the way Jesus is calling us to is to spend time connecting with God through prayer and worship, community, and studying his word.

e. Really following Jesus is like any relationship. A relationship only grows when the two parties stay connected, when they spend time together. When a relationship is ignored it shrivels away. If we don't want to stumble in the darkness anymore we need to connect to the true sources of light. Get plugged in!

f. **Live in the light**

i It's one thing to connect to the source, it's another thing to live in the light. Unfortunately, it's becoming increasingly common for a follower of Jesus to be a follower only in title. But Jesus isn't calling us to just label ourselves Christians, but to actually take action.

ii Simply put, we need to live as Jesus says is best and not what we, or culture, says is best. This is often not easy as it requires us to go against what many others are doing. But Jesus tells us to do this not to kill our joy and fun. Rather it's because he knows that the path doesn't lead to what we hoped, it robs us. Living in the light might be difficult, but it's the only way to find the true life that Jesus promised us.

g. **Shine our light**

i Jesus doesn't just call us to live in the light, but to share the light with those around us. Like the moon we are called to reflect the light of the sun (Son) to all around us. Our lives should reflect his glory, his ways, his truth in all we do. If we have found this light, and now have the light of life, why would we hide it. We need to let it shine all around us.

ii This is what Jesus is calling us to do, reflect his light to those around us. If we have found the light that lights our way, why would we want to hide it? Instead let it shine to all those around us.

7. Conclusion

a. Jesus is the Light of the world, and all who are separate or far from Him live in darkness. Being separate, ignorant, or unaware of the dark leaves us wanting for something we cannot produce on our own. We come to the end of ourselves in frustration, hopelessness, or an aloof sense of happiness and joy, when we traverse through life in darkness. With Christ, we have the absolute fullness of life.

b. Through Christ, we have access to the Father. Our perspective brightens when touched by the Light. Illumined by the Creator, we are able to hang onto the shreds of light that permeate the darkness. Jesus shines light into the cracks of our hearts that harbour sin. Once revealed, the conviction of the Holy Spirit instructs and guides us to repent. We grow wiser as He sanctifies our hearts to reflect His light.

c. We are self-centred and self-driven without Jesus. We come to the end of ourselves and our efforts and become overwhelmed by the natural darkness in our hearts. No one has "a good heart" in a natural state. We all fall short. Jesus came so we would experience the power of the Holy Spirit. God's loving embrace through the wisdom of His word and our relationship with Him shed His light on others living in darkness.

d. When we live our lives reflecting the Light, it allows others to see His love. We are called to share the gospel, but more importantly than what we say is how we live. It's not merely what the shining people do, but why they do it and how they do it. As we do so others will be both drawn to us and unnerved by us, because the light of our humble, word-and-deed love will both warm their hearts and expose selfishness and pride.

e. Light affects everything. It permeates truth into every situation. It's true love on earth. Only He can empower us to love well the people he purposefully places in our lives and his love lights up the world.

Matt.5:16 *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.*

f. The world need the "shining people" and if we are shining with his light of life then no darkness can overcome it.

John 1:4-5 *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* ***5*** *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*