

## ***I AM the Light of the World***

Genesis 1:1-5; John 1:1-5; 8:12

The Gospel of John Sermon Series - Part II

Kenwood Baptist Church

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**TEXT:** Genesis 1:1-5; John 1:1-5; 8:12

We continue this morning in part two series on the Gospel of John. We're exploring seven breathtaking statements made by Jesus Christ. Each of these statements manifests Christ's



divinity and His union with the Father as the unique, beloved Son sent forth from the Father into the world. The I AM statements of Jesus radiate out of the revelation of God's name, the great I AM in Exodus 3. God makes Himself known to us in Scripture as the great I AM, Yahweh, the one who is, who causes to be, who is covenantally present with us, His people. It is the same God who comes to us in Jesus Christ. He offers His life, a life we need, and a life available only through

Him. Last Sunday we heard Jesus announce that He is the Bread of Life. Just as God rained down manna from heaven, bread from heaven in the wilderness, so He has sent His Son into the world to feed us with His very own Person. He said we must eat of Him in order to live, and last Sunday we had a very special celebration of communion, drawing us towards Christ.

This morning we look at John 8 where Jesus reveals Himself as the Light of the World, the radiance of God's own presence and glory dispelling darkness so that we can walk in newness of life. There are three related passages we want to look at, as each of the passages is related to the other. As we look at Jesus, the Light of the World, we see that God Himself is Light, and that Jesus claims to be God coming to us as the Light of the World, and that as that Light shines in our darkness, you and I have the opportunity to walk in real newness of life.

Let's begin with Genesis 1:1-2. This opening statement of the Scripture says:

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and*

*empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."*

The very first words spoken from the God of the Bible is a summons found in Genesis 1:3:

*"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."*

Light flashes into the cosmos, and God sees this light and makes a judgment on it in Genesis 1:4:

*"God saw that the light was good."*

It was pleasing to Him. Theologians and scholars have wondered for centuries about this light of God. The sun seems to be made later in Genesis, so what is this light? There are other lights in the cosmos, the stars, for example. We read in Scripture that God Himself is wrapped with light. In Psalm 104:1, we read:

*"Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering Yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent."*

The Bible invites us to see that the light of the universe is something that radiates out from the very presence and glory of God Himself.

Genesis Rabbah, one of our earliest commentators on Genesis, quotes this dialogue in 3:4:

*"R. Simeon ben Jehozadak asked R. Samuel bar Nahman saying: 'Since I hear that you are a master of Aggadah, tell me from where was the light was created.'*

*R. Samuel bar Nahman replied: 'God wrapped Himself in a white garment, and the radiance of His majesty illuminated the world from one end to the other.'"*

The God of Scripture is a God of glory, a God of light in Whom there is no darkness. At the ending of the Bible, in Revelation, we see that the sun and the moon become irrelevant because of the splendor of God Himself illumining the new heavens and the new earth. God is light according to Psalm 27:1:

*"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"*

Psalm 36:9 says:

*"For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light do we see light."*

I want to move beyond just the material physical universe. This text, this teaching of Jesus, presses us towards the Person and the splendor and the glory of our God. Jonathan Edwards says:

“The glory of God is fitly compared to an effulgence or emanation of light from a luminary. Light is the external expression, exhibition, and manifestation of the excellence of the luminary, of the internal glory of God.”

God in Scripture is a God of light and splendor according to many, many passages. We see this in a very concrete way in Exodus when Moses goes to meet with God, to be in His presence. In Exodus 34:27, God tells him:

*“Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”*

Moses is with God for 40 days and 40 nights, and we read in Exodus 34:29:

*“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.”*

His face was shining because he had been speaking with God. The glory and the resplendent beauty of God was shining off his face, and he didn't even realize it. The Hebrew translation of Exodus 34:29 literally says that “his skin was radiating like beams.” The verb is the same word that is used of a shooting beam, and also of a horn. The Latin Vulgate translates this to say that Moses had horns coming out. That is why Michelangelo's famous statue of Moses has horns. When you see those horns, they are actually supposed to be the beams of God's glory and splendor. Moses didn't realize it, but the people realized it, and they were in awe of the radiance of God. Moses veils his face. Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would remove this veil, and then he would come out and tell the people what God had commanded. When they saw the face of Moses, as in Exodus 34:29, the face of Moses is shining because God is a God of light and glory and splendor. The light of God's face is a gift to His people, for it is the promise of His own presence, just as the great I AM is a statement, not only of who God is and what He does, but that God is with us, for us, and shining His face upon us. God impresses upon His people the permanent dwelling of God with them with the priestly blessing that is given to God's people in Numbers 6:24-26:

*“The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”*

The imagery of light is a personal image. Jesus does not use the image of I am the Light of the World because it makes great songs; He doesn't use that image because it's an available metaphor. He uses it because it reflects the glory of the real Person of God shining upon us. The earliest piece of the Bible that we have talks about the face of God shining.

In 1979, a group of archaeologists were digging around in an ancient tomb in the southwest of Jerusalem, and a 13-year-old who was on the excavation happened to stumble onto a corner that looked like it was preserved. They cleared off the top, and underneath there was an area that was filled with objects from the time of the first Temple, about 600 BC. They found pieces of jewelry and rings and earrings, along with other things, and then, they found two 1½ inch silver pieces. They picked them up, looked at them and thought they might be important. This is a picture of one of them. It turned



out to be a rolled band of silver, and it took them three years to unroll it without destroying it. When they finally unrolled it, to the delight and amazement of everyone, it turned out to be a rolled up piece of silver with Scripture written on it. When they read it in the archaic Hebrew script, it thrilled them beyond anyone's hope, for there on this scrap of silver was written: *“The Lord bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you.”* This is the earliest piece of the Bible that we have, and it speaks of the image of God shining upon His people.

The prophets of old prophesied that the radiance in the glory of God would one day shine upon all the earth. Isaiah 60:1-2 promises:

*“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you.”*

Isaiah 60:19 says:

*“The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.”*

God promises to come with His own Person to banish the darkness with the glorious light of His own Person. The opening statement of the Scripture points it this direction, and the expectation rises throughout the Old Testament that one day God will come in the splendence of His glory, and the darkness that covers the nations of the world will be banished. So, now we open the Gospel of John, and we read these words in John 1:1-4, words

that are in clear conversation with Genesis:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”*

We discovered in John 1 that Jesus is the agent of creation, with God, in the beginning, and that He has come into the world bringing the light of the glory of God. We read in John 1:5:

*“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it.”*

Different translations render this final verb in different ways. The word *overcome* is used twice in John, here in John 1:5, and also in John 12:35 when Jesus says:

*“Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you.”*

Walk in the light, lest the darkness overtake you, or overpower you, or snuff you out. The light of the glory of God in Jesus Christ shines in the world and the darkness cannot do anything about it. Isn't that good news? Isn't it good news that that the light of the world is a Person, just like the Bread from Heaven. The Bread of Life turns out to be a Person. As Jesus then says explicitly in John 8:12 to the assembled people:

*“I am the light of the world.”*

I AM that. It is not just an image; it is not just a metaphor; but it is the very glory of God in the face of Christ. To see Jesus Christ is to see the face of God. In John 1:14, John says about this Word:

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

John was with Peter and James in Matthew 17 when Jesus allowed the full splendor of His Person to be seen. He took these three with Him, and we read in Matthew 17:2:

*“And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.”*

When you see Jesus, you see the glory of God Himself. Jesus says in John 12:45:

*“And whoever sees Me sees Him who sent Me.”*

Later, in John 14:5, Philip asked Jesus where He is going:

*“Lord, we don't know where You are going, so how can we know the way?”*

Jesus says in John 14:6:

*“I'm the way and the truth and the life.”*

A precious verse.

Jesus goes on to say to Philip in John 14:9:

*“Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.”*

This morning I want to persuade your soul that Jesus Christ is God. I want you to see that when we see Christ, we see the radiance of the glory of God. Hebrews 1:3 says of Jesus:

*“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.”*

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the great I AM; that these statements are not just available images, but they are an extension and emanation of this revelation of God in Exodus 3; that God is, causes to be, and is with us in covenant; and that this God comes to us in Jesus Christ to illumine our darkness so that we can walk in newness of life? Jesus says: “I am the Light of the World,” and this declaration has immediate consequences or implications. More positively, we could say that it carries with it a promise. In John 8:12, Jesus says:

*“I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

If you have Jesus Christ this morning, then you have God Himself, and you have a promise that you have that illuminating radiance of God's own Person, so that you will not stumble in darkness. When you try to walk in darkness, you will bang into things. That's the best case scenario. A worst-case scenario is that you fall and break a limb. You do damage to yourself and to others when you walk in darkness, and yet with the light of Christ, we walk, we can see, and, according to Jesus, then we live. You can't live for very long without bread, and you can't live

for very long without light. Jesus says: “I am the Light of the World.”



am the Light of the World”:

In the banner for this Sunday you see that the sun, as fantastic as the sun is, is just one of billions of stars. I'm glad the artist included the stars. As wonderful as the sun is, the sun has in its center the cross, because the Son is the radiance of God's splendor, breaking and shattering the darkness and providing, in the giving of Himself, a ransom for our life. Those who have the Son walk in newness of light and life. Dale Bruner says this about “I

“Jesus’ free assumption of ancient Scripture’s most unique divinity ascription ‘I AM’ is surely intended to astonish. ‘The Light of the World’ astonishes too. Not just a light in the world, but **the** Light of the World. It is an exclusive claim, since he clearly intends to preempt all other lights and to be the sole and singular light of the world. It is also an inclusive claim, since he announces his domain as no less extensive than the cosmos.”

I’m going to paraphrase that because it’s a great insight. “It’s exclusive because Jesus says ‘I am **the Light.**’ There really is no other light. That’s it. So if you want to see, if you want to live, then you must have Me. That’s the narrowing. The broadening is that He is the Light of the **World**, and that means that there is no place that you will ever go, no person that you will ever meet that is outside the scope of Jesus’ dominion. ‘I am the Light of the World,’ Jesus says, and this Light gives life, real life.”

We live right now in the cultural moment where sales pitches of all kinds are giving promises of life every day, from insurance, to clothes, to cars, to the newest technology. I got a new phone I in the last year. It was running out of power, and I didn't have my adapter with me. I couldn't even find anyone with a cable that fit in my phone. People sneered at me saying: “Eh, you have the old one. The new ones have a different plug. How old is this?” Well, I was standing in line recently, and there were two young men behind me. I had all this wonderful truth about Jesus, the Light of the World, in my mind, and it was hard to hold it in. These two young men, maybe 22 or 23 years old, were standing right behind me. They were chatting back and forth quickly, and one of them had his iPad in front of him, and he had a really expensive kind of headphones hanging around his neck. They weren't even on. The two were talking rapidly back and forth, and I was kind of smiling. But then one young man said to his friend: “I love this!” and I snapped. I couldn't hold it in. I turned around, and I said: “Can you love a thing?” He looked at me like I was really strange. I didn't tell him I was a pastor or that I was preaching on Jesus, the Light of the World. I just asked him: “Can you love a thing?” He looked at me totally bewildered. I thought I'd help him, and I said: “You may want to save that vocabulary.” He was young, unmarried. “You might want to save that until later in life. You might want to say that I love someone.” He looked at me, and he said, almost with tenderness and affection: “But it keeps me organized.” This hapless young man! I said to him: “No, you're using it to help keep yourself organized. It's not really doing anything other than what you're programming it to do. It's not a person.”

But, the Light of the glory of God is a Person. It is the Person of the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ comes into our lives and illumines the darkness, and you and I are offered life in Him. It is this great truth that Paul announces in 2 Corinthians 4:5-6:

*“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as Your*

*servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

That is what we have in Jesus' promise: "I am the Light of the World. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Would you open your heart to Christ this morning and receive Him as "Light of the World"? If you are in darkness, then let the light of the glory of Christ illumine your path so that you can walk in life and freedom.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, Light of the World, we glory in You this morning. Lord, help us not to love things or artificial lights, but help us, Lord, to hear and feel and embrace Your exclusive claim to be the Light of the World, the light of the glory of God for us. Help us, Lord, to feel the freedom of the breadth of your luminosity, that You are the Light sufficient for all the world. I pray, Father, that in light of Your glory, the things that hold onto us, that seem big and important, would get small in the light of your glory and love. Lord Jesus, we praise You, and we worship You, Light of the World.

In Jesus' name, Amen.