



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA
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The Gospel of John

Jesus: Light of the World

JOHN 8:12

Related Topics: “Light” in Genesis; “Light” in Exodus; “Light” in Psalms; “Light” in Isaiah; “Light” as a metaphor for the Word of God; “Light” as a metaphor for Law of God; “Light” as a metaphor for salvation; the “Light” of God’s presence necessary for living the redeemed life; “Light” exposing sin; The “Light” of God comforting us in dark times; “Light” as a metaphor for wisdom; “Light” in the book of Isaiah; “Light” speaking of the Messiah; “Light” as a metaphor for the Justice of God; “Darkness” as a metaphor for sin; “Darkness” not comprehending the “Light”; Following Jesus

This morning we continue our study through **John 8**. We’re going to grab one word — and we are going to follow that single theme/concept throughout the entire Bible from **Genesis 1** through **Revelation 22**. We especially want to set the Old Testament context so that when we read the words of Jesus in **John 8** we will have a sense of what those words meant to His listeners.

The single concept is **LIGHT**.

“LIGHT” IN GENESIS

We are introduced to the concept in the very first chapter of the very first book of the Bible — The book of Genesis (The Book of Beginnings). We are told there that God created light and he separated it from darkness.

Genesis 1:3-4 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Creation **begins** with God creating light. Then God **separates** the light from the darkness — and throughout the Scriptures this becomes a metaphor of what God does in human lives and in human history. In our computer vernacular we would say that this theme hyperlinks itself throughout the rest of the Scriptures.

As we look at the origins of life we find that **life begins with God** — and it **begins with light**. In the physical realm God creates light as a foundational element on which all life is built. Our life, the life that surrounds us on this planet, is dependent upon the light that God gives it. The same is true regarding spiritual life.

“LIGHT” IN EXODUS

The theme of LIGHT shows up in a huge way in the second book of the Bible — the **Exodus**.

Exodus 13:21-22 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²²The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

Exodus 14:19-20 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: ²⁰And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that no one came near the other all the night.

That cloud by day and **pillar of fire by night** was the manifestation of God’s presence among them — that **pillar of fire** would guide them on their journey as they came out of bondage and slavery in Egypt and began their journey into the freedom that God had for them.

LIGHT also plays a huge role at the end of the book of **Exodus**. God gave Moses detailed instructions for the building of the Tabernacle. God’s glory comes to dwell among them at the Tabernacle.

Exodus 40:38 For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

Also — within the Tabernacle was a golden lamp stand giving light within the Holy Place. And Finally — in the Holy of holies — where there were no openings

for light — there was the manifest presence of God — the *Shekinah Glory* — giving light!

“LIGHT” IN THE PSALMS

We see **this theme continued** throughout the **Book of Psalms**. Throughout the Psalms **“Light”** is used as a metaphor for the **Word** of God; the **teachings** of God, and the **commands** that He gives us that are to **govern** our conduct and our behavior and our life. And so we are told that when God speaks, He is bringing **light** into our life to **illuminate** our path.

Psalm 19:8 the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

In the **Psalms** the metaphor of LIGHT is tied salvation — that the LIGHT of God brings salvation.

Psalm 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

In the New Testament we are told that we are dead in our sins and separated from God — and then

2 Corinthians 4:6 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 *light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* is the means by which God will cleanse us, heal us, forgive us, and provide for our salvation and ultimately relationship with God.

We also see in the Psalms that LIGHT is not only a metaphor for the Word of God and Salvation — it is also necessary for living the redeemed life.

Psalm 56:13 For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

God delivers us from sin and its power and penalty so that we can walk with Him in freedom. That is the LIGHT of God at work in practical ways.

Psalm 89:15 KJV Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

The light of God is something that we are to walk in. As we **walk** through the course of our daily life — God’s LIGHT is supposed to shine on us and show us those ways in which we are to walk practically (finances, sexuality, employment, marriage, child rearing, education).

We also see in the Psalms that LIGHT addresses the issue of SIN

Psalm 90:8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

This is a dominant theme in John’s First Letter. If we are struggling with sin the real core issue lies in the fact that we are struggling with relating to the light of God that has come to illuminate the darkness in our own life.

LIGHT is also used in the Psalms to speak about God’s presence and comfort in the face of the dark moments of life

Psalm 112:4 Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

Psalm 118:27 The Lord is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us.

So if you find yourself in a difficult place in life, either because of sins that you have committed or sins that others have committed against you, or just by virtue of the fact that you’re living in a cursed world — God’s light — His very presence — will still come and illuminate your situation

The concept here is that God is light. In the Book of **1 John** he tells us that *God is light and in him there is no darkness at all*. It is like that moment after the grey wet days of winter when the sun comes out and shines on your face. You just close your eyes and you just enjoy that light that brings warmth. It almost feels as if it’s cleansing you and healing you. THAT is how God is with us — HE comes and SHINES on us!

“LIGHT” IN ECCLESIASTES

As we move forward into the **Book of Ecclesiastes** we find that LIGHT is a metaphor for WISDOM

Ecclesiastes 2:13-14 Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. ¹⁴The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in

Wisdom is the proper application of knowledge. Wisdom is a form of light that God gives.

“LIGHT” IN ISAIAH

As we move forward into the prophet **Isaiah** — we see that LIGHT related to the coming of the promised Messiah of Israel.

Isaiah 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

Matthew — writing to a Jewish audience — explains that Jesus is fulfillment of Isaiah

Matthew 4:13-15 And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵ “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles ¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”

In **Isaiah 9:2** we see LIGHT related to the Law of God and the Justice of God

Isaiah 51:4 “Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.

The law of God — that convicts us of our sin — and the justice of God that appropriates a right punishment for our sin — are referred to by God as LIGHT.

So this is a very brief glimpse at the theme of LIGHT in the Old Testament. It is related to the commands of God, the teachings of God. LIGHT provides salvation, life, and deliverance. LIGHT shows us how to walk. LIGHT exposes

our sin. LIGHT exposes our darkness. LIGHT shows us God. LIGHT gives us God's wisdom. LIGHT is God's law. LIGHT shows us God's justice. Light comes in the person of the Messiah. All of that is bound up in the concept of light.

Then a guy named John comes along — the youngest of Jesus' disciples. John uses the term LIGHT time and again in his writings — His account of the life of Jesus — his three epistles (letters) and the Book of Revelation.

In those books of Scripture we find a large number of references and inferences to LIGHT and the relationship of LIGHT and DARKNESS.

Revelation 21:23-25 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

Here in his account of the life of Jesus, John takes the Old Testament concept of light and appropriates it to Jesus.

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

HUGE — All that the Old Testament had to say about LIGHT was a foreshadowing of the light of God coming in the person of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6 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.

Jesus comes into the spiritual and moral darkness of this world and He shines in that darkness. The term darkness is a metaphor for sin, for rebellion, for lost-ness. It's a metaphor for all that is opposed to God. It is a picture of lost mankind wandering and groping aimlessly in that darkness — totally oblivious to the fact that they are completely blind.

Then all of a sudden — Jesus came into the world and He turned the light switch on. And they didn't understand it — They didn't like it! We can understand that reaction if we think of what it's like to be in the deepest part of your sleep — the room is pitch black — and someone turns a light on! What's your first reaction? Close your eyes, hide from it, put the pillow over your head, and throw anything you can in the general direction of the light switch. THAT is what it's like when

the light of Jesus is flipped on in our lost-ness! The first reaction is — *this is offensive — it's shocking — it's hurting me — it's imposing itself upon me — It needs to be snuffed out.*

Look at **John 3:19-20**

*John 3:19-20 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.
²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

REMEMBER the **contrast** between LIGHT and DARKNESS in **Genesis 1**. Jesus uses DARKNESS as a metaphor for our sin because **sin** is in total opposition to God, who is light; because people say and do things in the dark that they would never say or do in midday; because people love to operate under the cover of darkness because it reduces the opportunity of being exposed — seen and caught.

The reason that we hate the light is because it exposes our sin — literally and metaphorically. Jesus says that the whole world is filled with this darkness and that people hate Him because the light of Who He is shines into that darkness and exposes their sin.

Jesus intrudes upon this world that is comfortable in the dark — and the darkness hates that. It's like someone who is committing a crime under the cover of darkness and then a spotlight comes down. Growing up in Southern California (Orange County) we heard the sound of helicopters every night. THAT is how they catch criminals. They circle the area where the crime was committed and shine a powerful light in the neighborhood.

THAT is lost man — They're sinning and running under the cover of **the darkness of their own life** — and all of a sudden this light comes down and is looking for them — and they're running in panic trying to hide as long as they can.

HUGE QUESTION: Why do we run from that light? Why don't we just step out and say — *I'm guilty, I surrender.*

1.) Some of us fear the punishment of God. We're scared that if we get caught we'll get punished. But really, think about that! It's like saying that God doesn't know unless He catches me — or — God has to catch me to punish me. God

could drop an 18 wheeler on us if He wanted to punish us. He doesn't need to handcuff you and bring you back.

Why do we run? When God's light comes down upon the darkness of our own life and our own sin, why do we flee from that light? Why do we do that?

2.) Because it is PAINFUL! The TRUTH (remember Psalms) is painful. The delusion that I'm a fairly good person can be maintained in darkness. I can get a few dark friends, and we can live a dark life and I could compare myself to them and say — *See, I'm a pretty good guy.* Some people surround themselves with such people because there is nothing to **live up to** in that crowd — in that crowd they ARE the up. They could have a bad day and still be ahead of the curve.

It's hard for some of us to look at ourselves honestly because we think we're a pretty good person doing a pretty good job. We think that our good deeds outweigh our bad — and then suddenly Jesus shows up — turns the light on — and we're standing there with our best stuff looking like "filthy menstrual rags." Our first reaction is to be ashamed because you've been exposed.

There's another reason we flee from that LIGHT that God gives

3.) Sometimes we do hate the light. *What right does God have telling me what to do? What right does God have to just sort of poke himself into my life, tell me where I'm good, tell me where I'm bad, tell me what to do. What right does God have to do that?*

4.) Sometimes we hate the light because if we come into the light we have to relinquish the authority over our own life — we are surrendering and submitting our life to God. We hate the light because we hate the thought that we would not have ultimate, full and complete control of our lives even though we have always and only proved that when we are behind the wheel we make a complete mess of it.

There's another reason we run from the LIGHT.

5.) Fear of rejection. The fear that **IF** I go in to that LIGHT — I will be seen for how bad I truly am — and surely God will not love me — God will not forgive me — God's grace will not be present there in the midst of my need. And that's a lie.

It's a lie to think that God didn't know all of that it to begin with. God already knows. But there is a fear that somehow if I get exposed things will go south.

Here's another reason why we run from the LIGHT

6.) We are concerned about what are other people going to think. We have seen time and again in John's Gospel Jesus using the phrase — *Truly, truly — I tell you the truth*. Jesus is the TRUTH TELLER in a WORLD OF LIES. Have you ever met someone who was perfectly honest? The answer is no. We are all liars. God is the only one that tells the truth. We lie because we are worried about reputation, image and the impression that we project. It is wonderful to see a brand new Christian — they are so honest. You ask them — *How are you doing?* They say — *Bad*. But once you're in church for a while you learn to speak Christianese. Someone asks — *How are you?* You learn to say — *"I'm O.K."* That's Christianese for "lousy!" We used to construct a false perception of ourselves before Christ — But now that we're Christians we construct a "Christian" version of who we think other Christians think we should be. **Coming to the light** means that everybody's going to know that you're a sinner that needs Jesus!

Sometimes we think we're doing great until you step into the light of God and then we realize that half the things that we didn't have a problem with God does — And the half that you did have a problem with — He didn't. The LIGHT of Jesus can be uncomfortable because He turns your world upside down — actually right-side-up.

7.) Some will not come to the LIGHT because they know there are things to lose! You could lose some friends and acquaintances. Before coming to Jesus my entire social network was built around sin! For most guys, this is how their friendships are built. If it wasn't for sin most guys would have no friends — no one to hang out with and drink and curse and talk about women. I didn't know there was anything else guys could do. Some of you, when you decided to turn from the darkness you were living in and step into God's light and live by the truth — you lost people that you thought you were close to. You lost them because it was your sin that held you together. For me I lost virtually every friend except one. He is still a dear friend to this day.

Keep all of this in mind and let's turn back to **John 8**.

For those who are just joining us we'll set the context for where we pick up in **John 8:12**.

John 7 records Jesus in Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths — one of the three great feasts in the Jewish calendar. The Feast of Booths commemorated and celebrated how God delivered His people from bondage and slavery in Egypt and sustained them during their 40 year journey into the land of promise! They remembered that during that journey they lived in tents or booths and that God was with them in that pillar of fire — He was with them to LIGHT the way — to guide their journey. As they went up to the Temple they came to multiple courts within the temple. There was the Court of the Gentiles where non-Jews could go. There was the Court of the Women where a lot of the offerings were given and the women would come to worship. There was the Court of the Men where the Jewish men would go to worship. And then there was the inner portion — the Holy of Holies — the place where the great high priest could go once a year in the inner sanction.

On the evening of the first day of that feast there was a ceremony called The Illumination of the Temple.

QUOTE: William Barclay — *It took place in the Court of the Women. The court was surrounded with deep galleries, erected to hold the spectators. In the centre four great candelabra were prepared. When the dark came the four great candelabra were lit and, it was said, they sent such a blaze of light throughout Jerusalem that every courtyard was lit up with their brilliance. Then all night long, until cock-crow the next morning, the greatest and the wisest and the holiest men in Israel danced before the Lord and sang psalms of joy and praise while the people watched.*

As we pick up in **John 8:12**, the Feast of Booths is over. But that ceremony would still be fresh in the minds and hearts of His audience on the Temple Mount.

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.”

Here is Jesus — He is in the vicinity of those massive candelabras — and He says *I am the light of the world.*

Next week we will pick up here and examine HOW it is that one comes to experience the LIGHT of Jesus — and WHAT that looks like! But I want to close with this little insight to whet your appetite for next week.

QUOTE: **A Handbook on the Gospel of John** — *Whoever follows me* must be understood in the sense of *“whoever becomes my disciple.”* It is often expressed more clearly in some languages as *“if anyone becomes my adherent”* or *“... joins himself with me.”*

Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1993). *A handbook on the Gospel of John*. Helps for translators; UBS handbook series (264–265). New York: United Bible Societies.

THAT is the person who *will not walk in darkness*.

THAT is the person who will have *the light of life*.

