

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Jesus: The Light of the World John 8:12 Part 1**

I was listening to some comments by people who had just received Oscars this past weekend. And while I was listening to their comments, one of the actresses being interviewed said, "I am living my dream."

That is a wonderful thing for a person to be able to say. It is wonderful thing because it's not often that a person actually is able to say something like this. They are not often able to say something like this because the earthly dreams of most people are never realized.

And this is too bad. It is too bad because there is an incredible amount of joy that comes to someone who is able to say something like this. I believe that as you look into the eyes of someone whose dream has become their reality this is quite obvious. It is as if those eyes are saying, "I can't believe something so wonderful as this is happening to me! Yes, I have dreamt this dream, but I truly never thought it would become my reality."

Wouldn't it be a wonderful and joyful thing for us, as Christians, each day to wake up with a dream. Something so alive to us and so important to us that from the very first moment our feet touch the floor in the morning until we pull up our feet into bed at night, that dream would be alive to us and the fulfillment of that dream just as alive. So alive that each day we could say that we were in fact living our dream.

I believe as a Christian that such an experience is possible. But you might ask, "But how can this take place? How can we have the joy of living our dream each and every day of our lives?" We will discover the answer to this question as we continue our study of the Gospel of John. We will discover the answer to this question as we begin our examination of **John 8:12-59**.

Before we begin the examination of this passage we need to answer this question. How do these verses tie in with what has come before? This question can be answered by going all the way back to **John 7** and to John's record of Christ's attendance at the Feast of Booths.

**John 7:1-13** was the record of events associated with the beginning of the feast. **John 7:14-36** was the record of events associated with the middle of the feast. **John 7:37-53** was a record of events associated with the last day of the feast. But even though it was a record of the events associated with the last day of the feast, it was not a complete record which brings us back to the passage that we will begin to examine this weekend, which is **John 8:12-59**.

**John 8:12-59** will be a continuing record of the events associated with the last day of the feast.

You might say, "If **John 8:12-59** is a continuing record of the events associated with the last day of the feast, then why doesn't this section of Scripture immediately follow **John 7:1-53** in our Bibles?" And the answer of course, based on our study from three weeks ago, is that when the Gospel was originally written, **John 8:12-59** did in fact immediately follow **John 7:1-53**.

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John 7:1-53 and John 8:12-59, when originally written by the Apostle John, formed one seamless narrative. Or in other words, when **John 7:1-53** and **John 8:12-59** were originally written, these texts were not separated by the story of the woman caught in adultery.

Therefore all the events recorded for us in **John 7:1-53** and **John 8:12-59** took place during the Feast of Booths, and all the events recorded for us beginning in **John 7:37** through **John 8:59** took place on the last day of the feast. Within this section that records for us the events that took place on the last day of the feast, Christ gives us two major teachings.

Christ's first major teaching on the last day of the feast, recorded for us in **John 7:37-38**, used the Feast of Booths "water ceremony" as its backdrop, which I explained to you several weeks ago. Christ's second major teaching, which we will begin to look at this weekend in **John 8:12**, used the Feast of Booth's "illumination ceremony" as its backdrop.

What is the "illumination ceremony"? This ceremony required that four torches would be set up in the center of the treasury. Some accounts say that the torches were as high as the highest walls of the temple. There was a ladder for each torch, and in the evening young, healthy priests would carry oil up to the top of these ladders in order to fill up large bowls that fed the wicks that would then be ignited. The light from these torches, once they were lit, could then be seen not only in the temple area but throughout Jerusalem as well.

The light coming from these great torches celebrated the pillar of fire that accompanied the children of Israel at night during their wilderness wanderings. It celebrated God's leading and protecting presence as they journeyed toward the Promised Land, even when the light of the sun was not available to them. It is in the shadow of these torches on the last day of the feast that Christ shares **John 8:12** with them, which is the passage that the message this morning will be based on.

My hope for this weekend's message is that we will leave here this weekend knowing how we, as a follower of Christ, can have the joy of living our dream, not just for a day, but rather every day of every year of our lives. So how does this passage begin?

The passage begins with a claim by Christ that He was the *light* of the world (John 8:12). Let me read for you the first part of **John 8:12**. "**Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world.'**" What an extraordinary claim. How many people do you know would make such a claim in respect to themselves? I would assume that the answer would be none. This is exactly what Christ claimed, but what exactly did He mean by what He said?

First of all, notice the first two words of His claim: "I AM." The words "I Am" in the Greek are grammatically *emphatic* and therefore mean "I and I alone," "I and no other." Jesus in essence was saying to the Jewish multitude that He and He alone was the light of the world. Jesus in essence was saying that He and no other was the light of the world.

This all sounds rather pompous to us, but to the Jews these words would have, at the very least, bordered on blasphemous. Why?

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The Jews had been celebrating the illumination ceremony, and what did the illumination ceremony commemorate?

The light coming from the great torches during this ceremony commemorated the pillar of fire that accompanied the children of Israel at night during their wilderness wanderings. It celebrated God's leading and protecting presence as they journeyed toward the Promised Land, even when the light of the sun was not available to them.

When Christ communicated that He and He alone was the light of the world, with the illumination ceremony as a backdrop for what He said, it could have easily communicated to the Jews that He was declaring Himself to be the very cloud, the very pillar of fire, who accompanied them throughout their wilderness wanderings. This could very easily have been how they were understanding His words in light of the illumination ceremony which provided the backdrop for what He just taught them.

Therefore, in light of the illumination ceremony, Christ's declaration that He was the light of the world could have led the Jews to believe that Jesus was claiming to be *God*.

Did they understand Christ's words precisely in this way? I don't know. But I would think that His words, at the very least, would have raised this issue in their minds.

But even if they did not understand the precise meaning of the words, hopefully, we understand the precise meaning. And why is this? Let me read for you **1 John 1:5**. "**And this is the message that we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.**" If Jesus told His disciples that God was light and in Him was no darkness, then what would we have to conclude Christ was communicating by His statement to the Jewish multitude here in **John 8:12** when He declares to them that He and He alone is God? I think it is obvious He was declaring to them that He, in fact, was God, and that He, in fact, was the pillar of fire that accompanied them in their wilderness wanderings.

Though the words of Christ may have led the Jews to think that He was declaring Himself to be God, we, based on 1 John 1:5, know that He was declaring Himself to be God. So, hopefully we now know what Christ meant when He told this Jewish multitude, in **John 8:12**, that He and He alone was the light of the world.

But in what sense is Christ the light of the world? Does He shine on each and every person so that each and every person walks in the light? And the answer is absolutely not! Let us continue to read **John 8:12**. "**Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness.'**" Just because Jesus is the light of the world does not mean that everyone in this world will therefore be walking in His light. Certainly, everyone in this world could be walking in His light since He, in fact, is the light of the world, but this is something that should not be taken for granted. A choice is involved.

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And of course, this means that those who choose not to follow Christ will therefore be walking in the darkness, since there is no other light in this world but Christ.

The only people who walk in the light are those who choose to *follow* Christ, since He alone is the light of the world.

There are two groups and only two groups of people in this world. There are those who are following Christ, who are walking in the light, and there are those who are not following Christ, who are walking in the darkness.

The implication is clear. In the Old Testament, if the nation of Israel was going to have any hope of reaching the promised land, they would need to entrust themselves to the light supplied to them by God. The same thing is true for us today.

If we are going to reach our promised land, or in other words the glory of heaven, then we also must entrust ourselves to the light that God has provided. Or in other words, we must commit ourselves to Christ as our Lord and Savior, and we must commit ourselves to Him in such a way that we will not only choose to believe in Him but also as an expression of that faith choose to follow Him. Isn't this what **John 8:12** communicates to us? "**Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness.'**"

Now let me ask you a question. Why do people commit themselves to Christ as their Lord and Savior in such a way that it will produce in them a desire to follow Him? You might quickly say because they believe in Him. They believe that He is, in fact, the Christ, the Son of the living God who through His death, burial, and resurrection opened a door to heaven. And of course, each person who has chosen to follow Christ certainly believes these things, but there is something even more basic, which precedes what they believe about Christ. And what is that?

Before a person chooses to come to Christ, who is the light of the world, they must come to the place where they *hate* their sin (John 3:16-20).

Let me read for you **John 3:16-20**. "**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. (18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**"

And now listen to what follows: **(19) "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. (21) But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."** Before anyone comes to Christ and receives the gift that He is offering, they must have come to the place, by God's grace, where they hate their sin and want to turn from their sin. If this were not true then certainly they would not want to come to light, which in fact would expose their sin.

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But hopefully, this does not describe you. Hopefully, you, by an operation of God's grace, do hate your sin. Hopefully, this is the reason why you came to Christ, who is the light of this world, so that you might be set free from your sin. Set free not only from its penalty, but also from its power, and one day from its very presence.

Because a person who exercises faith in Christ exercises that faith in order to be set free from their sin, it should be expected therefore that they would seek to follow Christ. They will follow Him because He, as the light of the world, is able to expose their sin, which they hate. And as they continually remain close to Him, allowing their sin to be exposed and confessed, they will demonstrate that they, in fact, are walking in the light and not walking in the darkness.

In which group would you place yourself this weekend? Are you one of those that hate your sin so much that it drives you to follow Christ so that you might walk in His light, or do you love your sin so much that it drives you away from Christ so that you might continue to walk in the darkness? Where are you?

If you are confident this weekend that you, in fact, do hate sin and that you have come to Christ, who is the Savior of this world, to be set free from that sin, then you know in coming to Him in this way that you are not only delivered from what you have hated, but you have received something that you have come to love. And what is that?

According to **John 3:16** you have received the gift of eternal life, or in the words of **John 8:12**, you have received the light of life. Let us go back and read **John 8:12** one more time. **"Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.'"**

When we receive Christ, who is the light of this world, we are joined to the life of Christ, and He becomes within us the light of life.

Let me ask you a question. Why did **John 3:16** speak of what we receive as eternal life but here in **John 8:12** He describes what we have received as the light of life? I believe that He is seeking to emphasize the same truth that He had shared earlier with the Jews on the last day of the feast.

John 3:16, I believe, emphasizes the blessing that comes to us when we choose to believe, and John 7:37-38 and John 8:12 emphasize the blessing that can come to *others* through us.

What had Jesus taught the Jews earlier on the last day of the feast in **John 7:37-38**. **"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. (38) He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"**

And then what did Jesus teach, in **John 8:12**, later on that same day? Let me once again read this verse for you. **"Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.'"**

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When we receive Christ, who is the light of this world, we become *light* to this world through Christ (Ephesians 5:8). Let me read for you **Ephesians 5:8. "For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light."**

### CONCLUSION

If I were to ask you what is your dream, how would you answer this question? I am sure that there would be different answers to that question. Hopefully there would be certain dreams as the followers of Christ that we would share in common.

The first dream is of one day standing together face to face with Christ in the glory of heaven. There should be a second dream that we share together, not for the hereafter, but in respect to the here and now. And what is that dream? I would hope that our second dream would be that, as we follow Christ, we would bathe this world in the light of Christ.

Which do you think is the better dream? Is it winning an Oscar or being the light of Christ in this world? Hopefully you know the answer to this question. With that answer firmly fixed in your mind and heart, let me remind you of the command of Christ in **Matthew 5:16**.

"Let your *light* shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."