

The “I am” sayings of Jesus. 3. “I am the Light of the World” John Chapter 8, verses 12 – 20

On several occasions I have experienced complete darkness! Locally in Exeter, a visit to the Underground Passages on Paris Street included a very short time with the lights out. Without light we lose all sense of direction. This can happen spiritually as well as physically, so the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ is vital for our well-being as Christians.

As an introduction it is worth reading the first few verses of Genesis chapter 1 along with Revelation chapter 21, verse 22 to chapter 22, verse 5. Light is created on the First Day in Genesis and is needed until the coming of the New Creation when the Lord God himself will provide light and all other things necessary for our spiritual life in the New Jerusalem.

The setting for John chapter 8, is the “Court of the Women” in the Temple where the treasury was situated:- see verse 20. This outer court was where the lighting of the candelabra took place during the Feast of the Tabernacles, a reminder of the Glory Cloud in the wilderness which those lights were intended to represent:- see Exodus chapter 40, verses 34 – 38.

The passage in this Gospel from chapter 7, verse 14, through to chapter 8, verse 59 takes place in the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles. The Lord Jesus is using the ceremonial visual aids: Water in chapter 7, verses 37 – 39 and Light here in chapter 8, to point to himself!

Verse 12 “I am the Light of the World”:- The implication behind the words of the Lord Jesus Christ is “without my light you walk in darkness”. He has already called the Pharisees “blind guides” (Matthew 15 verses 10 – 14. He does so again in Matthew 23, verses 16 – 22. Notice also that this dialogue with the Pharisees and other Jews in the Temple is followed in chapter 9, by the healing of the man born blind. (Read John, chapter 9, verses 35 – 41).

Verses 13 – 18 – The objection of the Pharisees and the answer of Jesus:- The Pharisees objected to the self-testimony of Jesus and labelled it untrue. Self-testimony can be untrue and needs support from others, in Jewish law it needed two witnesses. The witness of the Lord Jesus to himself was true, for he had absolute knowledge of his own origin and destiny. This witness was valid because Jesus had the Father as witness along with himself. The affirmation of the Father at the Baptism of Jesus (Mark chapter 1, verses 9 – 11) and the Transfiguration (Mark chapter 9, verse 7) are well known features of the first three Gospels.

Verses 19 – 20 - “Where is your Father?” In other words, if he is an absentee, we cannot profit from his witness. This was the basis of the Jewish misunderstanding and unbelief at the time. Actually, failure to perceive the true nature of Christ was a confession of ignorance of his Father. See John chapter 14, verses 7 – 11. The reply of the Lord Jesus to their question is blunt! *“You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also”*. This unbelief would lead to the death of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the ongoing persecution of the Christian Church - see John chapter 16, verses 2 – 4.

If we have committed ourselves to following Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, this has implications for the way we live our lives! Read 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9 and the words of the Lord Jesus himself in Matthew chapter 5, verses 14 – 16 (note that this teaching was to the disciples, chapter 5, verses 1 – 2 not to the crowds!). If we have come to the “Light of Christ”, then it should shine in and through us to a lost and needy world!

The whole world was lost
In the darkness of sin,
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Like sunshine at noonday,
His glory shone in.
The Light of the world is Jesus!

Chorus

Come to the light, 'tis shining for thee;
Sweetly the light has dawned upon me.
Once I was blind, but now I can see:
The Light of the world is Jesus!

Philip Bliss 1875