

The Light of the World

John 8:12-20

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Introduction: What do we need to sustain our lives? We would probably put food on the list. Groceries form a major part of every home's budget. Then there is water. In our country if you cannot get a certain amount of water to your property it is considered uninhabitable. In Congo they carry water in buckets everywhere on the compound and are just glad to have access to it. People from miles around come to the well at the church to get daily water. Like food, we tend to take decent water for granted don't we? But we have all probably experienced thirst. It gnaws at you until it is satisfied. We must have water and if the water is bad we will be sick. In the lives of the people of Jesus' day the food was simple and the drink was water. Jesus calls attention to their physical need for bread and water in order to reveal to them the spiritual side of life. The thirst and the hunger that cannot be satisfied by the physical world. The ones that gnaw at our minds and souls keeping us in a state of spiritual discontent.

Jesus is at the feast of Tabernacles. He had declined to go up to celebrate the feast because his brothers wanted him to become the star there and be made king and Messiah. Instead He went up clandestinely in the middle of the feast and suddenly appeared on the temple mount just when everyone had given up looking for Him.

This is the most festive of all the feasts of Israel. It lasted for 8 days. The first seven were all celebration and the final day was one of gathering and worship before everyone returned home until Passover 6 months later. Before going to the feast Jesus had taught the crowds following Him that He was the "Bread of Life." He explained His meaning by saying.....

John 6:27-29 ²⁷ "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which **endures** to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." ²⁸ Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

While there He had invited anyone with an inner spiritual thirst...ie "all of us," to come to Him and drink. Like the spiritual bread this water grants eternal and spiritual refreshment and life.

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

John 8:12-20 ¹² Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." ¹³ So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." ¹⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where

I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ "You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. ¹⁶ "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone *in it*, but I and the Father who sent Me. ¹⁷ "Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸ "I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." ¹⁹ So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." ²⁰ These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

This was the second of seven "I am" statements by Jesus recorded in John. Here are the other five quickly:

John 10:9 ⁹ "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

John 10:11 ¹¹ "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

John 11:25 ²⁵ "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

John 14:6 ⁶ "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

Christ is as essential to spiritual and eternal life as bread is to physical and temporal life. This eternal life is unknown and unknowable to men. It was and still is Christ's mission to reveal it to men. And this is where all religion, ritual and self-righteousness fail. They all employ physical means to meet a spiritual need. Something God says simply cannot be done.

1 Corinthians 15:50 ⁵⁰ Now I say this, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot** inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable [physical] inherit the imperishable. [spiritual]

Question: Does God have a name? If God is personal does He have a personal name? Moses wanted to know that when he first met God. Moses knew the names of dozens of Egyptian and Midianite gods. But does the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have a name?.....let's listen.....

Exodus 3:13-16 ¹³ Then Moses said to God, "Behold, **I am** going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM**"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, '**I AM** has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all

generations. ¹⁶ "Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me

God said “**I Am**” was His memorial name to all generations. I don’t know how long Jesus paused between “I am” and “the bread of life,” but He chose such explosive descriptions of Himself that the Jews could not help but know exactly what He was saying. He was claiming to be God. He was the one who spoke to Moses from the bush and encountered Joshua outside of Jericho. He was the one who appeared to Gideon and met with Abraham on the way to destroy Sodom. And now He has appeared as a human man exactly as God has always said He would. He is therefore, beyond any doubt The Messiah of Israel.

So back to the feast....Everyday of the feast there was an elaborate water ceremony in which the Levites brought pitchers of water from the Pool of Shalom and poured it out at the foot of the altar symbolizing the life giving nature of water and their gratefulness to God for the rains that made life possible in Israel. BUT on the eighth day of the festival, when the water ceremonies had all stopped

John 7:37-38Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

Each night of the festival a giant lighting ceremony also took place in the same court where Jesus is standing now as He speaks, four 75 foot high candelabras were lit. It was said that, “There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect their light.” Everyone, even officials danced around these lights holding torches and singing praise songs.

Let’s pick up this account then on the eighth day of the feast. Jesus is standing in the courtyard of the women near the offering boxes....also called the treasury. This is the exact spot of the lighting ceremony intended to remind them of how GOD...led them through the wilderness as a pillar of light and fire. This is where Jesus ...

John 8:12 ¹²spoke to them, saying, "**I am** the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

The day after the lights which commemorate God as the light giver of the world....Jesus makes the claim. The impact is palpable. The giant Menorahs are still standing.... although now...unlit.... as Jesus testifies that He is the One True God who is the light of the world. Before we see the reaction of His enemies let’s gather a little more information about the feast of booths or “tabernacles.”

The booths are intended to remind Israel of when they were homeless and living temporarily in the wilderness. That they should not depend on their wealth or standing because God alone provides for the needs of their lives. Also...this earth is not our final home. You don’t have to be Jewish this morning to appreciate what this feast was about.

The twin ceremonies are intended to remind Israel that GOD gave them life sustaining water from a rock and life giving protection from a pillar of light and fire.

The booths also were to remind them of little structures that were made in the fields during the harvest. This feast celebrated the harvest as a yearly reminder to all that even though they have worked their fields...God is the one who provides for their needs. It is such a joyous time because the farmer may finally rest from his labors. The food for the winter has been provided. And there is something else going on here....possibly the most amazing thing of all....

Jesus has already told the Jews that it is not the Scriptures that contain Eternal Life, but He is the Only One who can grant Eternal Life. The Scriptures testify, bear witness or reveal Christ who is the one and only source of Eternal Life for sinful and fallen men.

John 5:39-40 ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

So what do the Jewish rituals, sacrifices and feasts testify to? Again...to their Messiah, The Christ...The Son of the Living God. The prescriptions of the Law of Moses were casting a shadow of Messiah until He actually appeared. If I serve you a shadow of a loaf of bread and a cup of water, how well will it satisfy your hunger and thirst.

Hebrews 10:1 For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

It is easy to see Christ in the Passover. In fact, Paul comes right out and identifies Jesus as the Passover Lamb.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 For **Christ our** Passover also has been sacrificed.

Hebrews 9:9-11 Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, ¹⁰ since they *relate* only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. ¹¹ But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;

Passover is pretty easy, but what about Booths? How was God pointing to Christ with the feast of booths? We have already looked at the bread and water of life. Both big parts of this celebration. The third major spectacle of this feast was the light. These things were prescribed in the Law, about which Jesus said....

Matthew 5:17 ¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

“Abolish” means to destroy or overthrow. “Fulfill” means to fill full of meaning or bring to its final and logical conclusion. Let’s see how Jesus filled the shadow of the feast of booths with its intended reality.

I know you have heard it said that no one really knows what time of year Jesus was born. Have you heard that said? But this is not exactly true. In fact Matthew Henry, who died in 1714 said this about the Feast of Booths:

"It is supposed by many that our blessed Savior was born much about the time of this holiday; then He left his mansions of light above to tabernacle among us (John 1:14)

It is true that The Bible does not specifically say the date of Jesus' birth. We certainly know it was not during the winter months because the sheep were in the pasture (Luke 2:8). We also know that the Roman's chose and instituted a winter celebration to coincide with winter solstice. You may have noticed how our pagan culture is returning to the pagan origin of the winter holiday. But...what do we know from Scripture?

Well....do you know who God sent into the world as a fore runner for His Son? Yes...John the Baptist. And....we know the date of the conception of John the Baptist. He was conceived about Sivan 30, the eleventh week. [around the first week of June] How do we know?

Luke 1:5-9 ⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was **Elizabeth**. ⁶ They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because **Elizabeth** was barren, and they were both advanced in years. ⁸ Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the *appointed* order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

It is a known fact when the "division of Abijah" was ministering in the temple. We know when that serviced ended and we know what happened right afterward:

Luke 1:23-26 ²³ When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home. ²⁴ After these days **Elizabeth** his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, ²⁵ "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon *me*, to take away my disgrace among men." ²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,

Adding forty weeks for a normal pregnancy puts the birth of John the Baptist on or about Passover (Nisan 14). Well and good....but we are talking about the birth date of Jesus.

Luke 1:26-27 ²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Luke 1:34-37 ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. ³⁶ "And behold, even your relative **Elizabeth** has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ "For nothing will be impossible with God."

So... six months after John's conception, Mary conceived Jesus (Luke 1:26-33). There is another feast of Israel not recorded in the OT but in the NT. It is called the feast of dedication. Today it is called Hanukkah. [The Festival of what? YES...LIGHTS!] Going forward six months from the conception of John puts the conception of Jesus in the month of Kislev. Kislev 25 is Hanukkah. The "light of the world" was conceived by the Holy Spirit during the festival of lights?

Now...starting at Hanukkah, which begins on Kislev 25 and counting through the nine months of Mary's pregnancy, we arrive at the approximate time of the birth of Jesus at the Festival of Tabernacles (the early fall of the year).

John 1:14-15 ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

During the Feast of Tabernacles, God required all male Jews to come to Jerusalem. The many pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for the festivals spilled over to the surrounding towns (Bethlehem is about five miles from Jerusalem). Joseph and Mary were unable to find a room at the inn because of the influx of so many pilgrims.

They sought shelter in a stable....called a Sukkoth [or booth] in Hebrew.... because there was no room for them at any inn.

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn (**Luke 2:7**)."

Due to the difficulties during travel, it was common for the officials to declare tax time during a temple feast (Luke 2:1).

Our Savior made a temporary journey to earth in order to bring back with Him His lost sheep, His Children, His Bride. You may call us what you chose they are all blessed metaphors describing Christ's sacrificial love for us.

CONCLUSION: The Light of the world was conceived during the Festival of Lights celebrated to remember the restoration of the TRUE WORSHIP of GOD in Israel. The rededication of the temple was done by God and not by men. They were out of oil, but God provided the precious fuel that would allow men to once again worship God in His presence.

The Light of the World was then born 40 weeks later during the Feast set aside to remember that God alone saves and protects His people. That God is Light and the giver of all we need to live...both water and food. He is the God who provides and protects. He was celebrated with lights every night to remember how He led them out of Egypt.

Jesus is coming again. This too will be an awesome fulfillment of what God has orchestrated in History and Scripture. Let me close by reading it to you now:

Zechariah 14:1-9 Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. ³ Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. ⁴ In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. ⁵ You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him! ⁶ In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. ⁷ For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. ⁸ And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. ⁹ And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be *the only* one, and His name *the only* one.