

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org)

**General Idea:** Jesus gives one of His most incredible and important proclamations and revelations about Himself (about God) here, that He is the “Light of the World!” He declares that *if you follow me (Jesus Christ) you will not stumble in life or in religion; you will have eternal life and purpose here and now too. You will not be stumbling through the darkness and chaos of life, because you will have His illumination upon your path and personally know the Light that leads to true and eternal life.* This greatly disturbed the Pharisees. They claimed *you can’t say that; you can’t claim yourself as a witness to yourself.* This may be true to the Scriptures, but they did not understand the True Triune nature of God. Yes, He can say that! Jesus responded; *these claims are true; the Father is the other prime witness. Yes, I make claims about myself, because I know who I am and where I come from; you do not. Your understanding is limited by your pride and inadequate thinking. I am not judging, but if I did, it would be truthful. I stand here, but not alone. I have the Father who sent me; thus, as the law states, “when two or more witness make a statement, it is fact.” What I am saying is fact; I am one witness and my Father is the other.* Then, the Pharisees wanted to know where His father was. Jesus replied, *you do not know my Father; if you did, you would know me.* He was indicating that as religious leaders, they did not know God, whom they followed, or what they were doing.

Jesus then continued to address the crowd: *I am going away and you will look for me, but you will not find me; you will die in your sins and thus you will not have eternal life without knowing me.* The Pharisees thought He was talking about suicide, but Jesus was talking about how one gains eternal life. So, they wanted to know more. Jesus, knowing their hearts and motivations, talked circles around them. He then made mention that He was going to the cross and they refused to understand this great eternal Truth, thereby missing their greatest opportunity and what they, as the religious leaders, should have been doing, which was pointing people to the One True God, the Light of the World! However, many in the crowd did believe in Him.

### Contexts and Background:

This passage continues Jesus’ discourse during the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus is expanding on an illustration that was all around Him during His speaking engagement at the Temple, as during the last day of this feast, there was a festival of lights. There were numerous lamps lit, illuminating the Temple and surrounding courts to show that God provides. This was to honor God’s divine guidance of the pillar of light by night and cloud by day during the Exodus, as well as the rock that provided water. The lights also represented God’s sunshine upon people—His provision. (This light ceremony has transitioned into Hanukkah.) Also during this feast, there were processions with torches. Jesus took the opportunity of this theme and gave its true meaning that was fulfilled in His presence and work—that He is the True Light of the World; Jesus is the One who illuminates (Ex. 3:14; 13:21; Isa. 41:4; 43:10, 25; John 7:1-2, 37–10:21; 1 Cor. 10:4; 1 John 1:5).

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *I am.* This is a firm echo to the Name of God and His self revelation. "I AM," is the name He used to reveal who He was to Moses and the Israelites, meaning “I am GOD.” This passage is also about the “I am” statements Jesus makes about Himself (Duet. 32:39; Ex. 3:14; Isa. 41:4; 43:10-13, 25; 45:18; 52:6; Hos. 13:4; Joel 2:27; Matt. 14:27; John 6:35; 8:24, 58; 12:46; 18:5).
- *Light of the world.* This is Jesus’ bold statement that He fulfills the Law and the promise of God to bring salvation to those of faith! This also was a popular Jewish expression, referring to God’s blessing of Israel first through the Patriarchs, then through the Exodus journey, judges, kings, and as a nation. It is similar to saying to someone, *have God’s face to shine upon you,*” and it also refers to His presence and blessing because it is like sunshine on a cloudy day. It means God is the utmost of significance in the universe and thus must be so in one’s life. Jesus fulfilled this as God, the Source of light and life; now, this blessing is not just for Israel, but is offered to all of humanity (Ex. 13:21; 25:37; Lev. 24:2; Num. 6:24-26; Neh. 9:12; Psalm 19:1-11; 27:1; 80:3-19; 119:105; Isa. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; Ezek. 1:4-28; Hab. 3:3-4; John 1:1-5; 3:16-21; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46; 10:22; Eph. 5:8-14; 1 John 1:5-7).

- *Follows ...light of life.* Meaning one who pledges and commits completely, what we would call surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. It is not just an emotional or indifferent endeavor. It implies that when we follow Jesus, we reflect His light; and thus, we become His ambassadors—being the light “to” the world (Matt. 5:14; 8:18-22; 10:38-39; 2 Cor. 5:20; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 2:15; 3:1-14).
- *Walk in darkness.* This is a contrast to the light (meaning God’s blessings) and darkness that is of Satan (meaning to skirt around or fight against God and His provision and sovereignty.) Sin causes us to *stumble* like walking in a strange place without light or the ability to see, while God offers us the light and the map. Our pride says *no! I will do this on my own* and thus, we fall into hurt and ruin as sin destroys (Psalm 27:2; Isa. 59:10; Jer. 13:16; 18:15; 20:11; Mal. 2:8; John 9:4; 11:9)
- *Own witness.* Jesus is using classic Jewish logic and rhetoric to mock and challenge their presumptions on their own laws. “How much more” is citing a greater argument over theirs. “How much greater” is bringing God as the prime witness and thus showing that Jesus is qualified while they were not. The rebuttal of the Pharisees was that this argument belonged in a court of law; they were rousing the people to consider that Jesus must be arrested, tried, and convicted. But Jesus won the argument and they dared not bring any charges against Him.
- *Testimony.* The Old Testament Law required two or more witnesses to make a claim valid. This was meant to protect people from fraud and injustice. Because of the Triune Nature of God, Jesus is able to make this claim as a witness to Himself, because God is the Prime witness. The Pharisees made extended provisions on this, and they were challenging Him on their laws and using Moses as an excuse (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 17:6).
- *Judge by human standards/according to the flesh,* means to only evaluate with one’s limited thinking or non-thinking or being worldly and naïve or disinterested to the ways of God. Jesus is telling them they do not know God and they can’t make wise decisions! Pharisees, who were the most educated people in Judaism then, were responsible to uphold and teach about God and His principles. Yet they did not exercise wisdom or godly leadership. In context, this is a very harsh rebuttal; Jesus is calling them pagans and heretics, because by stating Jesus must be brought to a court to hear God’s verdict by their rules, they were saying that they did not or could not hear the voice of God because of the ear wax of pride and legalism in their ears and minds.
- *Judgment.* Here, this conveys the idea that as Jesus walked the earth, His role was not to bring judgment, but rather salvation. However, if one would not/did not receive it, then one condemned one’s self, and one day Jesus will judge (John 3:16-21; 5:22; 12:47-48).
- *I stand with the Father.* The Trinity, the unity of the Father and Son.
- *Your own Law.* This is how the Pharisees argued with those who did not have their view of how they referred to pagans; Jesus turns it back on them and states that their laws are not God’s. He told them that they were not using the Law of Moses correctly, a very ironic rebuttal to those who were supposed to honor and teach the Law.
- *You do not know me or my Father.* Another mockery from their self-righteousness and pride that foreshadowed His trial and crucifixion. This is also a challenge to their lack of belief that what the entirety of the Law and Prophets testified to was there in their midst and the consequences they would face for eternity (Heb. 10:26-31)!
- *Offerings were put/treasury.* The location is significant, where the main show and lights were during this ceremony and where the hearts of the Pharisees were because of their greed for the money. They were next to the women’s court; Jesus was making sure women could hear Him. Rabbis never did that. This demeaned the Pharisees, saying *these women are more important than you*, a very harsh criticism in those days. Additionally, Jesus used this sign to back up His argument (Mark 12:41-44).
- *Going away/where I am going* communicates the idea that Jesus’ sojourn was temporary and He would go back to the presence of the Father in Heaven. This was also a prelude to His Crucifixion.

- *Kill himself?* They knew Jesus did not mean that; this was the retort of the Pharisees, as suicide was a heinous crime and only a dirty rotten pagan would do that. They tried to out-argue Jesus with insults, not with facts and/or logic.
- *From below...from above.* This is a contrast between Heaven and the natural sinful world of earth, also between righteousness and sin and what is true and what is false. This was a powerful illustration of the need to be aware of your own sinful state and need for a Redeemer and thus to heed what He was saying or you would be judged by your own sins.
- *I am the one/I am He.* A direct claim that Jesus was the Messiah and God (Psalm 27:1; Isa. 60:19-22; Zech. 14:5-8; Mal. 4:2; John 4:10; 9:9; 11:50-51; 19:19).
- *Sins.* Sin means missing the mark that our Lord has for us. This is a violation against God and His people and we are responsible for the choices we make. This was a Greek archery term. The mark or target is God's righteousness, but because of sin, we can never hit the target. Our sin can be a direct transgression or "commission," (that is deliberately disobeying, such as in adultery) or a failure to conform to His standards, called "omission." (Gen. 3:1-24; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 2:1-11; 3:10-26; 5:12-19; Titus 1:15; James 1:12-15; 1 John 1:8-10).
- *Die in your sins.* Meaning your own choices, pride, and sins condemn you; I, Jesus, did not cause you to do that! This also means you are about to miss your final opportunity to receive God's grace, because once you die, it is too late for repentance (Ezek. 18:21-32).
- *Who are you?* One of the great philosophical questions is *who are you?* The other is *what do you want?* God asks *who are you* to see your heart; the devil asks *what do you want* to entice you away from God. The Pharisees were again trying to entrap Him.
- *Reliable.* A legal term meaning that it is the duty of the attorney or representative to faithfully and truthfully represent his client with his full authorization. Jesus is being truthful; the Pharisees were not.
- *Did not understand.* Jesus as the Light means He is the God who cares and intervenes to save us; however, we must not only repent but also put our faith in Him.
- *Lifted up* refers to what is ahead for Jesus—His crucifixion for our redemption. Just as the image of the snake was lifted, Christ will also be the payment for redemption by His sacrifice, the resurrection that makes atonement for us. This is the main point to God's plan after the fall of humanity. All of the Old Testament prophecy leads up to this—God's eternal plan to redeem and save us (Num. 21:1-8; Isa. 52:13-14; John 3:14; 12:32-33).
- *Son of man.* The messianic title of Christ, it refers to Christ as Lord and King! Here, it also refers to God's bringing about the opportunity for people to repent for having caused Him grief. Then, the Kingdom of Heaven will flourish (Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7). This is also a "Semitic" form as an indication for or the identification with humanity (Dan. 7:13-14; Mark 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34; 14:21, 41; Matt. 24:30-26:64; John 1:51; Heb. 2:5-11; Rev. 1:13; 14:14).
- *Pleases Him.* Jesus is demonstrating what we are to do in our lives—seek to please God and enjoy Him!
- *Put their faith/abide in him.* This means to put one's trust in, to stand up for, as who and what we follow for our life's mission and goal. Here, in context, most of these people would fall away, as this was merely an emotional response—not one of real effectual faith (John 8:33-47; 20:31).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Do you have a dimmer switch attached to your relationship and call with Christ or is His Light your full-fledged Lord and Guide? Do His precepts illuminate your mind, heart, and will or are their stipulations causing you to reprogram your dimmer with busyness, apathy, or something else, causing His Light to be dim in your life and walk?

The chief end and purpose of a child of God is to please God and enjoy Him, which Jesus demonstrates here. We too are called to holiness, not just to love and trust our Lord, but because of gratitude for His grace and patience, pursue faith, loyalty, goodness, and love to be exhibited in us with thankfulness and submission. Do not allow your life to be dim or you may slowly find yourself so far away from the Light you will be making bad choices and living in darkness and dismay without enjoyment because of your own apathy and/or pride (Psalm 73:25; 86:9; Isa. 60:21; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 5:21-23; Col. 1:27; 1 Pet. 1:5, 13-21)!

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. How is having Jesus' presence in your life a blessing like sunshine on a cloudy day?
2. What are some of the things that cause you to stumble though the darkness and chaos of life?
3. Why would so called "educated" and "disciplined" leaders seek to out-argue Jesus with insults rather than facts and logic?
4. How do you or how can you better have Jesus' illumination upon your path by the Light that leads to true and eternal life?
5. How has Jesus been your "Light of the World?" When did you first respond to "follow me" (Jesus Christ)?
6. Why would these religious leaders refuse to understand this great eternal Truth and miss their greatest opportunity for what they as the religious leaders should have been doing, which was pointing people to the One True God, the Light of the World?
7. How do you feel that as a follow of Christ, you have God's face shining upon you?
8. Why do some people refuse to accept or not even try to understand real, true Truth? Why do these same people tend to spend their lives complaining and fretting when they could have it all in Christ?
9. What can you do to make sure that you will not stumble in life or in religion?
10. What does it mean to you that you could die in your sins without Jesus?
11. How does this passage motivate you to share the good news so others can have eternal life too?
12. What can you do to allow the light of His Word to shine through you so your personal Christianity is impacted, communal, and set ablaze to be a growing impact that pleases Him?