I Am Jesus - Part 2

# I Am the Light of The World

# (John 8:12)

I am so glad that you have joined us today. We are in the second week of our series entitled “I am Jesus” and we have been looking at “I Am” statements that Jesus made in the gospel of John. We are taking just a couple of those statements and looking at different characteristics of who Jesus is. Today we are going to look at one of the most life changing statements that Jesus ever made. It’s found in John chapter 8 if you have your Bible and we are going to look at verse 12.

What we find here is more than just a statement, it’s an invitation, an invitation to walk with Jesus, to walk in the light as he is in the light. Jesus said,

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).*

His invitation is life changing because a lot of our lives are hidden, so much is in the dark, but a little bit of light changes everything. In fact, many of you turned on a nightlight when you were younger because suddenly, the darkness was not quite as scary. This is where Jesus meets us, he says, “I am your nightlight” and he invites us to step out of the darkness and into the light and into a relationship with God.

The apostle John tells us in the introduction to his first letter:

*“This is the message we have heard from (Jesus) and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).*

And so, whoever follows Jesus will never walk in darkness, because like walking through the house at night and turning a light switch on, your life will demonstrate your fellowship with the “light of the world”. Jesus is the gateway and he invites you to step into the light and into a relationship with God the Father. This is where he become so very personal, because as we walk in his presence, Jesus is no longer just the light of the world, but he becomes the light of your world.

Today, as we embrace the depth of this statement, “I am the light of the world” my prayer is that you would begin to see yourself as God sees you, that you are the light of the world. You see, his desire is that you would reflect his light, that wherever you go you would light up the room, that you would influence the conversation, and you would change the spiritual environment. In fact, as I was thinking about influence there is an amazing illustration in Ezekiel chapter 47. The prophet Ezekiel tells us in verse one:

*“The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was flowing from the south side” (Ezekiel 47:1-2).*

Now, the first thing we need to acknowledge is that there is not a source of water in the temple, there is not a well or a spring producing an abundance of water on top of this hill, but what we are going to discover that God is the source.

## God Is the Source

In fact, Solomon after building the temple, had to have water hauled in to fill the large basin which was used for ceremonial washing. However, there is an interesting prophecy in Joel chapter 3, verse 18, where the prophet said,

*“A fountain will flow out of the Lord’s house and will water the valley” (Joel 3:18).*

And so, this water is to be understood spiritually, this water flowing from under the threshold of the temple is symbolic of the supernatural life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

The prophet Zechariah speaks of this limitless source of water flowing from the temple in chapter 14, verse eight, where he says,

*“On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter” (Zechariah 14:8).*

And so, this source of living water coming from the most unusual place is not going to dry up in the summer, it’s not going to freeze up in the winter, and it will be divided with half flowing east toward the Dead Sea and half flowing west toward the Mediterranean.

In fact, even Jesus spoke of this living water in John chapter 7, verse 37 saying,

*"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him…” (John 7:37-39).*

But these waters were just a little bit at first; the Hebrew word used by Ezekiel implied that it oozed or dripped out drop by drop, it was merely a trickle which for the most part was unseen; but as it comes out that from under the threshold of the temple it gradually begins to deepen and widen until it becomes a great river.

We see this on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the believers gathered in the upper room. It began with just a few, the Bible says,

*“In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about 120)” (Acts 1:15).*

And so, it was just a little bit, but there was a deepening of the waters and a multiplication of the kingdom of God.

The Bible tells us that when the day of Pentecost came, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Peter himself was emboldened and addressing the crowd, pleaded with them to repent and be baptized receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. There was a deepening and widening of what began as just a trickle as the Holy Spirit multiplied those believers. Acts chapter 2, verse 41 says that,

*“Those who accepted his message were baptized and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41).*

A few days later there would be another multiplication as the water is flowing from the temple, it’s bubbling, it’s moving, and it is happening right now.

The Bible tells us that the water is flowing from the temple, and the apostle Paul says,

*“We are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them…” (2 Corinthians 6:16).*

And so, the reality is that we are the Church, we are the body of Christ, we are the temple of the living God, and God is still active in the earth today. The Holy Spirit is living, moving, and flowing from the temple; and just as it was in Jesus days on earth, the greatest move of God was what was happening outside of the temple.

The Pharisees thought they had it all figured out, they worshiped what God did in the past, and they settled for who God used to be instead of being hungry for who God is right now. You and I, we can’t settle for what God did yesterday, we need to lean into what he’s doing right now, because the Holy Spirit is moving, he is flowing, he is widening and deepening. And so, we don’t want to miss a great move of God, in fact, we are a great move of God and we want to go where the Spirit is flowing.

## Going Where the Spirit Is Flowing

The imagery here in Ezekiel is so powerful as we see the Spirit flowing from the temple. Ezekiel had been examining the temple grounds, he found this water flowing and now he’s going to follow it, he is going to do a little surveying. Verse three tells us,

*“As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep” (Ezekiel 47:3).*

Ezekiel followed the stream of water for a thousand cubits, which would be 1,750 feet, but he says even then the water was only ankle-deep.

It’s only a little bit, but we need to recognize that it is flowing because the Holy Spirit is always moving and always active. The Spirit of God is like a river, he keeps moving, and he keeps flowing over and around obstacles; sometimes we see waves of the move of God in our lives and in our church and other times we don’t, but the Holy Spirit is still flowing. The Holy Spirit is eternal, he is self-existent, he doesn’t need to be plugged in, he doesn’t need to be charged up, he just keeps flowing and flowing.

That is why Moses was amazed in Exodus chapter 3 when,

*“The Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up…” (Exodus 3:2).*

You see, you and I, we get tired, we burn out, but the Holy Spirit never burns out. He is constantly moving, constantly flowing, and therefore the kingdom of God is constantly advancing. Now, I know that some churches are closing down today, but that’s not a problem with the Holy Spirit, that’s a problem with us when we shut out the flow of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is moving, he is not stopping, because there is no stopping the move of God. In fact, Jesus said it this way in Matthew chapter 11, at verse 12, he said,

*“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing…” (Matthew 11:12).*

And so, it doesn’t matter whether the President likes the Holy Spirit, it doesn’t matter whether your friends or family like the Holy Spirit, because he’s not going to stop flowing, the Holy Spirit is advancing and he is forceful.

In the first century when Nero rose up and began persecuting Christians, the Holy Spirit kept going. Stalin and Hitler and others throughout history have all tried to stop the flow, but the Holy Spirit keeps going. Prior to Jesus arrival the scribes and Pharisees, the leaders of Judaism, had experienced 400 years of silence, but the kingdom was still advancing. Jesus said in John chapter 5,

*“My Father is always at his work to this very day…” (John 5:17).*

And so, we need to tap into the source, we need to seek the living water of the Holy Spirit flowing into our lives, because it’s constantly running, it’s constantly refreshing, and it’s continually flowing and giving life.

Today if I am experiencing a season of dryness, it is not God’s fault, because he continues to flow. But maybe I have gone to the wrong source or have been seeking the wrong things and the source that I tapped into is no longer flowing. Elijah found himself in a situation like this, God had been sending birds to bring him food, he had been drinking from a brook, but after a period of time the brook dried up. God told him in first Kings, chapter 17,

*"Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food” (1 Kings 17:9).*

And so, he went there, and she did. God made sure that her jar of flour was not used up and her jug of oil did not run dry. And so, just because the brook has dried up, it doesn’t mean that the Holy Spirit has stopped flowing, and it doesn’t reflect what’s happening in God’s kingdom. This is such an encouragement to me because whenever I feel dry I just need to remind myself that I need to get down to the river, I need to get into the presence of God, and wherever God is flowing I’ve got to go deeper.

## We Have Got to Go Deeper

You see, God is never out of moves, he is constantly flowing, constantly filling, and so we have just got to go deeper. Ezekiel had walked a long way, 1,700 feet is a long distance to be so shallow, but he kept moving and in verse four it says,

*“He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep” (Ezekiel 47:4).*

The further he went the deeper it got, but it was still so shallow, and so they continued.

*“He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist” (Ezekiel 47:4).*

By now it is getting a little bit difficult to walk, he might be stumbling, but the water is moving. Things are beginning to happen now, he is trying to stand, trying to remain on his feet, it is just a little bit of water, but he’s been wading through the water for a mile now.

I wonder if there may be some of you who thought there would be more than this, maybe you’ve been wading through the water for so long, but I just want to encourage you to keep walking because God is positioning you and preparing you. This is important season, you can’t skip it, you can’t have somebody carry you through it, you can’t pray yourself deeper, but you’ve got to walk deeper. You’ve got to keep walking even when it feels like you’re still at the same level, nothing is changing and all you want is something new, something fresh.

Look what happens next, in verse five, Ezekiel says,

*“He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in — a river that no one could cross” (Ezekiel 47:5).*

Things are moving now, Ezekiel is being moved by the Holy Spirit, and the river is moving them along. It’s deep, the current has taken over, but it can be challenging to get to this point. You know, you are walking, you’re wading, your stumbling along another 1700 feet, but you’ve got to keep moving forward. You can pray about it, you can have others pray about it, but it is God who releases the grace, and you’ve got to get another 1,700 feet. You’re going to have to remain faithful, you are going to have to put in the time, you’re going to have to step out in faith until God looks at you and says,

*“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things” (Matthew 25:23).*

But it’s a journey, it’s a long way, and you’ve got to continue in the grace of God. You may find yourself thinking that you’ve gone far enough, you are ready to swim, but he may only increase it to your knees. You’ve got to go deeper, he may increase your prayer life, or he may increase it to your waist, but he’s building your strength as you are standing in the current.

After another 1,700 feet comes the point where you can no longer control it, the river controls you and the Holy Spirit is carrying you along. It’s important that you don’t attempt to skip the process, so that we can grow into it, and as the grace increases, we can flow in it and bring life to other people. Ezekiel tells us in verse six,

*“Son of man, do you see this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river” (Ezekiel 47:6-7).*

In other words, he said, look at what happened through this process, as that river overflowed, as it swelled beyond its banks reaching to the trees. As Ezekiel was standing there on the bank of the river, he received revelation of what was flowing, what was heading into the Dead Sea which would bring life to a very great multitude. This is what God was preparing to do on Pentecost, this is what he is doing in his church today, but we’ve got to keep walking, we can’t stop, we can’t get discouraged with the shallowness of what we are experiencing right now. We’ve got to keep walking, because there are times of refreshing coming, where the river flows.

## Where the River Flows

I want to encourage you to continue in the grace of God, because if you choose not to keep walking, if you choose not to move forward, things will become stagnant and you won’t be changed. But if you continue to walk forward, God will increase the grace. Ezekiel tells us in verse eight,

*“He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live” (Ezekiel 47:8-9).*

The river gets wider and deeper until finally it enters the Dead Sea. This Sea is actually the lowest body of water on the surface of Earth. The symbolism here is powerful because as the church we have been called to the lowest places, the places that no one wants to go, and the places that no one has reached. This is where the river is going and if we stay in the river, if we stay where the river is moving, God will increase his grace with time.

But if we sit back floating down the river, becoming introverted, staying inside the church building, rejoicing in what God has done, instead of what God is doing. If we begin to camp here, if we get comfortable here, we won’t see people getting saved, and see people healed. In fact, the Lord said in verse 11,

*“The swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt” (Ezekiel 47:11).*

Jesus gave us instructions that are just as fresh and powerful today as they were when they first crossed his lips. In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus said in verse 13,

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).*

Long before we began to recognize the drastic changes in America’s culture, long before we began to see the influence of progressives, socialists, or whatever, long before the terms environmentalism or big government were even thought of Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world.” And while we must acknowledge the imperfections of the church, we claim that heritage of those early Christians who influenced their culture, asserting the glory of the image of God on every human being regardless of race, religion, age or class. And like those who have gone before us, we have been called to be influencers in our culture. And yet, it is important to note that Jesus was stating that it is possible for salt to lose its saltiness. In other words, it’s possible for us to lose our saltiness, to become stuck in a swamp or a marsh and hide our lights under a bowl.

Now, when Jesus gave this teaching, he was talking to ordinary people like you and I, and he was intending that his followers would be people of influence, people of change, people who would be a godly influence for good wherever they are. I hope you can feel this, because you have no idea what one word of encouragement, one prayer or expression of love can mean to someone who needs a touch from God. When you meet someone and listen to someone who’s hurting, without judging them, and just loving them, you are representing the love of Jesus. When you post a Scripture or share a sermon, you could influence someone that you don’t even know. Just by the way that you live and worship God, by who you are and whose you are, you can be an influencer. If you know the one who said I am the light of the world, you are salt and you are light, and so I want to encourage you to stay in the river and let your salt do what it does and let your light shine for all to see. Let’s pray.

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