

## Jesus - the light of the world<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Intro

- My favourite all time movie is the 1980 film – the Blues Brothers
  - Love the music
  - All star cast – James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Dan Akroyd, John Belushi, Carrie Fisher, John Lee Hooker
- J & E grew up in orphanage > about to close because it owes money to bank
  - J & E want to help get the money but don't know how
  - Told to go to church
  - Church > Afro-American, all singing, all dancing affair
  - James Brown the preacher is preaching up a frenzy
  - As a light streams down from the sky through a window and onto John Belushi
  - James Brown calls out "Do you see the light?"
  - Belushi has this moment of enlightenment
  - He sees clearly what they need to do to get to money to pay of the debts of the orphanage
  - He says "The band! The band Elwood!, The band!"
  - The way to raise the money would be to put the Blues Brothers Band back together
- It's a great scene where Jake sees clearly, he has a moment of enlightenment ... he sees the light
- And in our passage this morning, Jesus says that anyone who follows him has seen the light

---

<sup>1</sup> 7:53-8:11 - Carson explains why these verses are left out. In short, almost all of the earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have it in. Those that do contain it put it in different places. It is most likely that this incident did occur but that John didn't have it as part of his original Gospel. Even though not originally part of John's gospel, it sounds like and seems consistent with something Jesus would say / do

- For he is the light of the world
- He doesn't just bring enlightenment, clarity and direction to wayward Blues Brothers seeking to save their orphanage
- Jesus brings enlightenment, clarity and direction to the whole world about life, death, judgment and salvation
  - He is THE light of the world
  - And so it's a light worth paying attention to
  
- This morning look at three things
  - Jesus is the light of the world > what's it mean for Jesus to say that about himself
  - Walking in the darkness > who's walking in darkness and what's the consequences of that
  - Walking in the light > how can we walk in the light and what does that mean for us

## 2. Jesus the light of the world

- Jesus is still in Jerusalem
  - Feast of Tabernacles
    - One of three great festivals that all Jews were required to journey to Jerusalem to participate in
    - Crowds would have been huge
- Jesus is in the temple teaching the people
  - He's offering them eternal life in him
  - But as has been happening right throughout his ministry ... many of the Jews and the religious leaders are hostile to Jesus and rejecting him and his offer of salvation
  
- Ch 8 carries on Jesus teaching in the temple ... and in v12 he makes yet another bold claim

- *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
- Now to understand what this means we need to remember that Jesus is saying this during the last and greatest day of the Feast of Tabernacles
- Feast of Tabernacles
  - A feast to give thanks to God for their blessings in the harvest, but also to remember and give thanks for their blessings when the Israelites were wandering in the desert as they headed to the Promised Land
  - During that journey God revealed himself to Moses in a tabernacle (tent)
- Along the way ... God especially provided for his people
  - He gave them manna / bread from heaven to feed them
  - He gave them water from a rock to quench their thirst
  - He gave them protection and direction as he led them through the desert by a pillar of light
- And during the festival there were some significant rituals that were meant to remind the people of those things
  - There was an elaborate water pouring ceremony
  - There was also a light ceremony
    - Each night throughout the feast four large oil-filled elevated bowls were set alight
    - The light from the temple area shed its glow over Jerusalem
- In addition to this, in the OT book of Isaiah ...
  - Isaiah promises one day God will send a *'servant' who will be a 'light for the Gentiles (nations) to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison, and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness'*<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 42:6-7

- Here God's saying [700 years before Jesus] he'll send a servant who'll be a light for all nations who will set them free from the darkness
- And so the Jews were not only remembering
  - how God blessed them and provided them with light; but also
  - how God has promised to send someone to them who would be the light of the whole world and rescue them from darkness
- And it's in this context Jesus declares "I am the light of the world"
  
- **Illustration – Aslan / Narnia**
- Like in Lion, Witch & Wardrobe
  - When Lucy and Edward first venture into Narnia via the wardrobe ... Narnia is a place of darkness and evil – symbolised by dark skies and frozen landscape
  - But when the lion Aslan (who CS Lewis uses to represent Jesus) returns to Narnia ... light comes to the land of Narnia ... and the snow begins to melt and life is restored to the people of the land
  
- What's all this mean?
- Darkness throughout the Bible and particularly in John's gospel is a metaphor for the world that is in rebellion against God and therefore under his judgment
- We understand the metaphor, don't we?
  - We use the phrase 'Under the cover of darkness' to talk about secretive or dodgy deals that happen at night
  - Most of our cities crimes – shootings, drug deals, prostitution - take place at night / in the dark
  - Batman > Gotham City > city of crime and vice > city of darkness
  - Darth Vader and the Sith Lords were from the dark side
- Darkness symbolises evil, sin and rebellion against God
  - As Isaiah says ... it's like we're prisoners, languishing a dark dungeon
  - Prisoners on account of our rebellion against God

- And there's no way out
  
- And here's Jesus in the temple ... during a festival of lights and he says
  - *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
  
- And so what Jesus is saying here to those who are listening is
  - I've come to rescue you from the darkness
  - I've come to shine a light to show you the way
  - I've come to save you from the darkness of judgment that you're under
  
- Now ever since the Age of Enlightenment in C18th ... philosophy and human reason has been seen as the way to a better humanity / a more enlightened humanity
  - It's held that philosophy and reason will enable us to think and even act in more enlightened ways
  - Since then we've seen science and education put forward as the means to improve our existence and provide clarity, direction and truth
  - But while science and philosophy and education have given great advances and improvements to the human race
  - They've also been the foundation of
    - Atom bomb
    - Communism
    - Nazi-ism
    - On-line porn and paedophilia
    - Semi-automatic guns that can be used to shoot innocent victims
  
- Because the problem with philosophy, science and education ... is they don't deal with darkness of the human heart
  - For as Jesus says ... it's from within, out of the heart comes all kinds of evil deeds

- Philosophy, science and education cannot change the heart
- Philosophy, science and education can't give us the renewed humanity it tried to deliver
- The only way real enlightenment and therefore real rescue can take place is if a light comes from the outside to show the way
- **Illustration – Beaconsfield**
- On 25 April 2006 an earthquake caused a mine to collapse at Beaconsfield in Tasmania trapping Brant Webb and Todd Russell nearly a kilometre underground for 14 days
  - Even though they had their miners lights ... they were completely useless in being able to show them the way out because they were trapped
  - They needed someone to come from the outside to save them
- In order to rescue them an secondary shaft had to be blasted to where they were trapped
  - And when the rescue team finally broke through the trapped miners shouted "I can see your light!"
  - 1 ½ hrs later ... the rescue mission was complete and the men were freed from the darkness and brought up into the light
- You see, in order to be freed ... they needed someone to come to them from above
  - They needed a light from above to show them the way
- Jesus is saying ... I needed to come down to you as the light of the world and rescue you from darkness
- **3. Death to those who walk in darkness**
- The Pharisees who are there listening to Jesus show they're not walking in the light but are walking in darkness

- Despite Jesus coming into the world as the light of the world ... they reject the light and continue to remain in the dark
- And we see this throughout the remaining verses as they debate with Jesus about who he is, his authority and his origin
  
- We see in v13, how incensed they are that Jesus would make such an outrageous claim that he's the light of the world
  - "How can you say such a thing ... you don't have the authority to say that"
  - "You can't claim to that on your own testimony"
  
- To which Jesus responds ...
  - "Actually my testimony **is** valid because I come from heaven"
  - "And if you want another witness to testify about me ... then my Father in heaven who sent me validates who I am and what I say"
- You see, as the one who is from heaven and who is going back to heaven ... he has the full power and authority of heaven to be the light of the world
  
- When they ask him "Where is your father?"
- Jesus makes it clear they don't know his Father because they don't know him
  - That is, they reject Jesus as the light of the world
  - They prefer to walk in darkness rather than follow Jesus who is the light
  - And because they don't know Jesus ... they don't know the Father
  
- And because they don't know Jesus ... where he is going (heaven) ... they cannot come
  - They refuse to come out of the darkness and into the light
  - And so they will die in their sin
  - They will die because of their unbelief and their rejection of Jesus and his revelation of who he is

- Then in v24 Jesus ratchets it up a level
  - *I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."*
- Notice the NIV inserts the words '*the one I claim to be*' > hence italics
  - In the original it literally says > *Unless you believe that I AM ... you will die in your sins*
- Now this is an extraordinary claim ... here's why
- In Exodus 3 > OT > God has just called Moses to go and rescue the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and Moses says to God
  - *"Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"*
  - *God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"<sup>3</sup>*
- God's self-descriptive name is I AM
  - What's I AM mean?
  - In biblical times names were significant > they reveal something important about the person
    - Jesus = God saves
    - Abraham = father of many nations
    - Calvin = little bald one
    - Brian = maggot
- When God calls himself I AM ... he is saying his actions reveal who he is
  - Normally when we use the phrase "I am" we say "I am this / I am that"
    - "I am hungry / tall / old"
  - But God is ... there's no this or that
  - He is ... I AM

---

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 3:13-14



- He has no beginning, he has no end, he just is
- Now what's amazing here is in v 24 ... is that Jesus takes this name for himself
  - Previously he's been doing miracles that act as sign posts towards him as God
  - Now he just comes out and says it - I AM
- This is a massive claim
  - Jesus is saying something no other religious founder has said
  - All other prophets or religious leaders say
    - "I have come to help you find God"
    - "I have come to help you find enlightenment"
    - "This the way to the truth or this is the way to live"
- But Jesus is not saying
  - "I've come to show you how to find God"
- Jesus is saying
  - "I AM God who has come in the flesh to rescue you ... because without me and my light you would never find me or come to me"
- No other religious leader claimed this
  - No other philosopher or educator or motivational speaker claimed what Jesus is claiming
- But if what Jesus is saying is true ... it totally transforms how we think about him doesn't it?
  - Either he's God in the flesh who is the light of life
  - Or he's a complete megalomaniac
- And if he is God in the flesh ... then we ought to bow down and worship him
- But if he's a deluded fraud ... then we should ignore him
- But we can't be lukewarm to Jesus

- You can't just be so-so
- You can't just think "Jesus is good and he died for me and I really appreciate that ... but I'm not going to take him or my faith too seriously"
- You can't just rock up to church occasionally and pray every now and then if you're convinced Jesus Christ is I AM
- If that's you ... then you haven't understood who Jesus truly is
- If Jesus is God in the flesh, if he is the I AM ... then you and I ought to fall on our knees and give him everything and build our entire life around him
  
- But in v24 Jesus is saying those that continue to reject him as the I AM as the light of the world ... they will die in their sins
  - That is, come judgment day, when they stand before their Lord and maker and their unbelief is confirmed ... they'll face God's judgment and death
  
- Many people recoil at the thought of there being a judgment day
- They'll say ...
  - "How can Christianity be a religion of love and grace and mercy if God is going to judge people?"
  
- But even if you're not a Christian ... you ought to hope for judgment day
  - Because don't you want justice to be done in this world?
  - Don't you want to see all those who caused pain and heartache and death to others in this world ... don't you want to see justice done?
  
- Of course we want justice
  - You watch A Current Affair > 9 out of 10 stories are about justice being done to those dodgy builders, salesmen, car dealers, investment advisers who rip people off

- We don't like seeing injustice in the world ... and we especially don't like to see injustice done to us
  
- If there's a judgment day ... it will all be rectified
- If there's a judgment day ... someone greater than us will ensure justice is done and everything will be put right
- So if even if you're not a Christian ... you ought to hope for judgment day
- If there is not judgment day ... what hope is there for the world?
  
- But here's the problem
  - If there is a judgment day ... what hope is there for you and me?
  - If there is a judgment day ... isn't there going to be justice done for the darkness of your own heart and the times you have caused pain and heartache to others ... let alone the pain and heartache you brought upon God
  
- Jesus says to the Pharisees ...
  - Because of the darkness in your heart
  - Because you refuse to come to me ... you will die in your sin
- And that's the position we all are confronted with
  - It may as well be you and I in the temple listening to Jesus because the message is the same
  - Unless we're following Jesus and walking in the light ... we remain in darkness and will die in our sin
  - Judgment won't just come to everyone else ... judgment will come to us too

#### **4. Life for those who walk in the light**

- So what's the solution?
- Well the answer is there in the text

- v28 *"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know **that I am** ~~the one I claim to be~~*
- Lifting up the Son of Man in John's gospel refers to the lifting up of Jesus on the cross
  - And here Jesus is saying ... that when you lift me up on the cross
  - Then you'll know I AM
  - Then you'll know I am truly the one I claim to be
  - God in the flesh who has come down to be the light of the world and bring you out of darkness
- Now it's interesting when you read the accounts of Jesus death in the gospels they record that while Jesus was being crucified ...
  - *darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour*<sup>4</sup>
- In other words, from 12-3pm
  - during the middle of the day when the sun was meant to be at its brightest
  - while Jesus - the Son of Man, was lifted up on the cross
  - the land was covered in darkness
- You know what's going on there?
  - Jesus is facing judgment
  - He is facing the darkness
- Why?
  - He's taking the judgment for you and I
  - The darkness of your heart
  - Your rebellion against God
  - All that which means we will die in our sins
  - He's taking the judgment for you
- When he's lifted up on the cross ... and dies for you ... then you see he is I AM
  - That's when you see God's true character revealed

---

<sup>4</sup> Matt 27:45; Mar 15:33; Luke 23:44

- When he dies as a substitute for you and I ... that's when we see most clearly who God is and what he is like
- Who is I AM?
  - I AM the one who is lifted up on the cross
  - I AM the one who takes on the darkness of judgment
  - Why? So you won't have to face the darkness of judgment yourself
  - I will be the one who is plunged into darkness, so you can have the light of life
- You see ... it's substitution
  - His life for mine
  - Darkness and death for Jesus ... and light and life for you
- **Illustration – Titanic**
  - Jack and Rose develop this love relationship while on board
  - When the ship hits the iceberg and begins to sink ... Jack and Rose plunge into the sea together
  - There's that moving scene right at the end of the film as they're stranded in water where they find a piece of debris that's only big enough for one of them to climb onto
  - Because if they both got on it, they'd be too heavy and it wouldn't keep them afloat
  - So Jack lets Rose climb onto the debris while he struggles holds on in the freezing water
  - But eventually ... Jack can't hold on > he's overcome by the cold
  - And as he does so ... he let's go
  - And the last you see of Jack is he is sinking into the darkness of the Atlantic Ocean
- Out of his love for Rose, he gave up his life for hers
  - He plunged into the darkness ... so she could have life
- And that is what Jesus is doing [Leonardo not Jesus ...]

- When he was lifted up on the cross ... he was plunged into the darkness ... so you and I could walk in the light of life
- Out of love ... he gave up his life for yours
  
- Secularism says there will be no judgment day so you don't need to worry about it
- Traditional religion says there will be a judgment day so you had better be a good person
- But the gospel says there will be a judgment day but that Jesus Christ who is the I AM ... God in the flesh ... came and took the judgment
- He was lifted up on the cross so you could be lifted up to heaven
- He faced the darkness so you could come into the light
  
- Because Jesus knows he going to the cross to do that ... he can say
  - *Whoever **follows me** will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*
  - If you want life, then you need to follow the light of the world
- And this is an offer to all people
  - Not just religious people
  - Not just those born into a certain family or from a particular race or particular cultural background
  - Jesus '**Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life**'
  - As Isaiah said 700 years before Jesus – he has come to be a light for the nations ... so that they may be set free from darkness
- So it doesn't matter
  - who you are
  - where you're from
  - what life you have lived up until now ...
    - the offer is there for all people to come out of the darkness and into the light of life

- Remember when Jesus talks about life in John's gospel ... he's talking about much more than the so-called 'good life'
  - He's even talking about more than just life forever
- The life that Jesus is offering is the ultimate life
  - Life as God intended it to be
  - Life full of joy and peace and contentment and hope
- And Jesus is saying ...
  - You can have that now
  - Just come follow me
  - Come out of the darkness ... come into the light
  - And you can have that life
  
- Friends, don't you want that life?
  - Don't you feel
    - as you look at this world
    - as you watch the news
    - as you see pain, suffering, evil, injustice,
    - as you see futility of chasing after things that fail to satisfy or fail to last
  - Don't you feel that we are in the darkness ... in a world that is stumbling around looking for direction and meaning and clarity and purpose in life
  
- Jesus says ...
  - *Whoever **follows me** will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*
- Have you seen the light?
  - Friends come into the light ... and have the life that Jesus offers

## PRAY