

Sent: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 4:28 PM

Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study

Our lesson last nite, covering John 8:12-59, touches on a lot of important theological, and "practical Christian living" issues! In this "wrap-up," I want to focus on just two! First, Jesus' reference to Himself as the "I am"--thus claiming that He was God in the flesh! In theological terms, we refer to this as the Incarnation of God! And the Deity of Christ! It's basic to the Christian faith, and foundational truth for such doctrines as the "substitutionary atonement," and "redemption," and "reconciliation," and "salvation"--among other things! Second, the "light" metaphor which Jesus uses in this passage and which we see used throughout Scripture--particularly in contrast with "darkness."

Jesus is still teaching in the temple, in Jerusalem, on the last day of the Jewish Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles). The Jewish faithful are again gathered to celebrate this annual feast, which includes the traditional "lamp-lighting" ceremony, to commemorate how God, many years ago, had protected and directed the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings--by providing, among other things, a "pillar of cloud" by day and "pillar of fire" by nite (as recorded in Exodus 13-14). And so, in this setting, John tells us how Jesus "again spoke" and said: "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life!" He was referring to Himself! You can almost hear the shudder!

By using the words "I am," He was making a clear reference to Himself as being God, or at least equal with God, as the Son of God! Most of those gathered to listen--and particularly the Jewish religious leaders--couldn't have missed the connection He was making! This was actually the second time He used these words--the first being 6 or so months earlier, during His Galilean ministry, when He said "I am the "Bread of life..."--resulting in "many of His disciples withdrawing and not walking with Him anymore" (John 6:66). He will refer to Himself as the "I am" several more times in lessons to follow.

As Robert Ours brought out so well last nite in his large group presentation, the words "I am" refer back to Exodus 3, where God called Moses to stand before Pharaoh and demand that he "let My people go"--from their bondage and enslavement in Egypt. When Moses, somewhat reluctantly, followed God's command and asked who he should say it was who sent him, God responded (in 3:14) with the words "I AM WHO I AM"--and also said that He should tell the "sons of Israel" that "I AM has sent me to you!" The name "I AM," among other things, points to the pre-existence and eternity of God and is also used in Isaiah and other Old Testament writings!

Well, getting back to our text, not only did Jesus say that He was the "Light of the world," but also, in verse 24, that unless they believed that "I am He," they would "die in their sin." And, in verse 28, where He said that when they "lifted up" the Son of Man (referring to His coming crucifixion) then they would "know that I am He!" And, finally, in verse 58, as mentioned above, that "before Abraham was, I am!" This was the "final straw" that led the religious leaders to "pick up stones" to kill Him (in accordance with their understanding of Leviticus 16:14).

Well, as to the "light metaphor," included in Jesus' statement that He was the "Light of the world" and that "he who followed Him would not walk in darkness but would have the Light of life." We could start with Genesis 1 on this one, where God said, "Let there be light; and there was light." And He saw that "the light was good; and He separated the light from the darkness!" John starts off his own gospel not only by stating that Jesus ("the Word") was "with

God" and "was God," but that He was "the Light of men" and that the "Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it!" He states further that He (Jesus) was the "true Light, which coming into the world, enlightens every man and that "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not!" He even "came unto His own (speaking of the Jewish people) and His own did not receive Him!" But the good news, stated right up front in John's account, was that some did receive Him--and He writes that "...as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name!"

But there are so many other references in the Bible that use this metaphor--including its contrast with "the darkness"! Isaiah, the prophet, prophesied (as prophet tend to do!) that "the people who walk in darkness would see a great light" (Isa. 9:2) He said (in Isa. 49:6) that God would make Israel a "light to the nations." But there are many more, a few included below, that have direct application to believers--and even to us in the "church age."

Interestingly, Kostenberger, in his book, which we're using as a supplement to our study, notes that "in the end the verdict is this..." and he quotes John 3:19 (just a few verses following 3:16!): "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." But John continues in verse 21: "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Jesus said in His "sermon on the mount" that "You (we) are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5:14-16).

The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:8--"For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light."

Peter, the apostle, wrote: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (I Pet. 2:9)

I could cite more verses, but you get the point!

These lessons in John seem to fit together so well--not only with the gospel of John, but with the entire Bible--to reveal and explain God's plan and purpose for redeeming mankind! The challenge for how then we as believers should live are pretty obvious!

Next week we take up John 9:1-41 about Jesus healing a man who was born blind--and He did it on the Sabbath! If you heard Jesse' message last Sunday (which you can hear on the IBC web site, if you missed it!), it can really help in understanding the message and implications of this lesson! It's another one of the signs John included in his gospel (as he wrote in John 20:30-31) "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name!"

Well, have a great week, men!

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