

The Light of the World

John 8:12

How would you describe yourself? Our attempts to describe ourselves are an attempt to define ourselves. However important that is, how much more important is how God defines himself.

The Light of Life

The people are celebrating the Feast of Booths - remembering how God had led them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. During the feast four giant beacons were lit in the Temple courts, lighting up the city, as a reminder of how God had led the people by the pillar of fire. During the nights of the feast, people partied under the light of those beacons. When Jesus said he was the light of the world, he would have been standing under those beacons.

So Jesus is talking of the light of salvation and deliverance; of guidance and protection; of God's presence that never leaves us; of a light that brings joy and singing into the night.

We all need that kind of light. The question is, where can we find it in a world of counterfeits?

The Darkness of Death

One implication of what Jesus says here is that unless we follow him, we are walking in darkness. The Bible is full of imagery of life outside of God being darkness. But our experience tells us the same: there is a darkness when life is hard, or sickness comes. But there is also a darkness of spiritual ignorance. We can be spiritually blind when we don't care about the things of God; but we can also be blind when we are steeped in religion. In all these cases there is a danger that we follow false lights: lights that don't lead us to safety, but into danger.

But Jesus says he is the light of the world – and nothing and no-one else.

Christ, the Light of the World

The pillar of fire was itself just a symbol of Christ himself. He's the one who can lead us out of slavery to sin, and into true freedom. He can lead and guide you through life to the ultimate Promised Land. It's in him that you can enjoy the nearness of God's presence. He is the light in which you can live with joy and dancing. He is that light for the whole world – which includes you, regardless of your circumstances, or background.

The reason he can be your light of salvation is that at the cross he was plunged into darkness as he bore the darkness of our sin. At the cross, the light of the sun was blotted out; so that the light of God's smile might fall upon us. When you know that, you can trust him even in the dark days.

So, is Christ your light? Is he the light of *your* world? Is he your light when life is dark? Are you prone to follow false lights?

Just as Israel had to follow the pillar of fire if they were to come safely through, we must follow Christ. He must be your light and your leader.