

JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

"WHO IS JESUS?" FAMILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE - Week 28, February 19

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"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

T

hree times a year God's people went to Jerusalem for a festival. Perhaps the most exciting for children was the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated how God brought them out of Egypt to live in tabernacles. It was a celebration of freedom, and because of the time of year, it was a celebration of the harvest as well.

What would be more fun than living in a tent in the big city of Jerusalem with your family for an entire week? You got to travel, build a tent, decorate it, feast

in it, and sleep in it. And the law given in Leviticus was clear: you must rejoice!

Jewish history tells us that the people added even more to the feast on top of God's commands.⁴ One part was called the water-drawing ceremony. A priest would go down to the pool of Siloam and fill a golden pitcher with water. Then with great rejoicing, he would carry it to the temple and pour it out on the altar, thanking God for the rains. The people paraded behind, playing flutes, waving palm branches, and shouting, "LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success!" (Psalm 118:25). This

happened every day of the feast, growing in intensity and celebration.

The Jews also added a light show. Four giant pillars stood in the temple courtyard, each seventy-five feet tall with four branches coming out like a lampstand. The priests used their old garments as wicks and carried gallons of oil up a ladder to light the lamps. All through the night the people would celebrate, dancing with torches and singing to the Lord. The lamps and torches lit up the whole city of Jerusalem, and the golden temple must have glowed. The people were reminded of the glory of the Lord in the pillar of fire in the wilderness, and they rejoiced.

The events of the Feast of Tabernacles were so popular and so fun, that it has been said, “Anyone who has not seen it has not seen true joy in his life!”⁵

Did you know that Jesus went to the Feast of Tabernacles in secret? Halfway through the feast he went to the temple courts and began to teach. On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them” (John 7:37–38). Whether he said this during the water ceremony or not, we don’t know, but surely it was fresh on everyone’s minds.

Some said, “He is the Messiah!” Others were skeptical. “How can the Christ come from Galilee? Isn’t he supposed to come from Bethlehem?”

Well, of course he was born in Bethlehem, but he grew up in Galilee, which was prophesied about, too. Isaiah said that Galilee would be honored when a “great light” (9:2) would dawn there.

Jesus is that light, and he told them just that! Shortly after the feast Jesus declared, “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). Jesus was greater than even the spectacular lightshow of the Feast of Tabernacles that lit up the city of Jerusalem. He was the Light of the World! He was the glory of God in human form.

Not long after this, Jesus met a blind man. He said to him, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9:5). Then he spit on the ground, made some mud, and put it on the man’s eyes. “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam,” he said (9:7).

The man obeyed and was healed. The Light of the World allowed this man to see light for the very first time.

When we come to Jesus, we get to be bearers of light. We get to be a glowing city on a hill that cannot be

hidden as we do good deeds, bringing glory to God. And one day we will get to heaven, where the Light of the World will bring light to the whole city, and streams of living water will flow from the throne. And

those days will be a forever party, greater than even the greatest day of the Feast of Tabernacles, for we will be with God.



REFLECT

1. Name the three major parts of the Feast of Tabernacles in Jesus’s day and how he fulfills all three parts.
2. What does it mean that Jesus is the Light? See Isaiah 9:2 and 1 John 1:5–7.
3. What does it mean that we are the light? See Matthew 5:14–16.
4. What does heaven not need and why? See Revelation 22:5.

BIBLE REFERENCE JOHN 7:1–15, 37–44; 8:12; 9:1–12

KEY VERSE JOHN 8:12