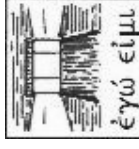
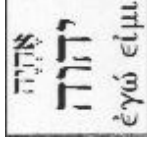


For the people of our day...

It is one thing to believe strongly that our world is in very great need of the Light of Jesus, but we know that it is going to be through our “light” that ordinary Australians will see his “Light”. What a challenge!

- How would Australians respond to the idea of Jesus as “the Light of the World”?
- What associated ideas are there in the Australian culture that would help to communicate this teaching about Jesus?



There are some people today who pay more attention to their serials than they do to their cereals! That is doubly serious. Their physical well-being suffers and their emotional and spiritual well-being suffers too!

Last week we were thinking of Jesus as “the Bread of Life”. Bread has to do with our staple diet (Jesus didn’t say “I am the ice-cream of life”). It is used to represent our basic physical nutritional needs. As we noted from Leon Morris, “‘The bread of life’ is another way of linking life in the closest fashion with Christ. He Himself is the food, the sustenance that nourishes spiritual life. It is only from this bread that men really obtain life.”

Let’s reflect again on our closing questions –

- How would Australians respond to the idea of Jesus as “the Bread of Life”?
- What associated ideas are there in the Australian culture that would help to communicate this teaching about Jesus?

Today we are thinking of our need, not just for bread, but for light.

Some time ago I read the story of a family that became lost in a cave. Their situation was made desperate because of a shortage of both food and light.

The Situation in Jesus’ Time

In John 7 we read of Jesus going to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was an important Jewish festival. It was primarily a feast of thanksgiving for God’s blessings in the harvest. But it also became a time to celebrate the blessings of God during the time of the exodus from Egypt when their ancestors wandered through the desert and lived in tents (“tabernacle” = “tent”). God was present with them and revealed himself to them through his own Tent, the Tabernacle.

The celebration of the feast was a real family affair, with families living for seven days in shelters of tree branches erected on top of their flat-topped houses. J.A. Thompson writes, “The whole nation of Israel had an annual holiday which they spent in ‘booths’ made of tree branches. This ‘Feast of

Study 3: “The Good Shepherd” Reading: John 10. 1-18

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Tabernacles' was a reminder of their tentdwelling past and of God's goodness to them as they tramped through the desert after they had fled from Egypt."

Before the destruction of the Temple, many Jews would travel to Jerusalem for this feast. Part of the celebration was a ritual pouring out of water in the Temple. It was on this last and greatest day of the Feast that Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (Jn.7.37-38).

This caused division among his hearers, some thinking, "Surely this man is the Prophet" (v.40). Others that "He is the Christ" (v.41). We are reminded of the questioning into the identity of John the Baptist in 1.19-27. Yet others were confused, while a small group were obviously convinced he was a danger to be "removed" (v.44). The Jewish authorities were obviously concerned that their own Temple guards were themselves moved by Jesus' words (vv.45-52).

(The story about the woman caught in adultery – from 7.53 to 8.11 – is not found in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts. It is clearly a true story which was in danger of being lost and, besides its traditional position, is found in some later manuscripts after v.36, or after v.44, or at the end of this Gospel, or after Luke 21.38.)

Reading: John 8.12-29; 9.4,5.

Jesus was still in the Temple "near the place where the offerings were put" (v.20). His claim, "I am the Light of the world," must have been very impressive.

Leon Morris comments, "Many draw attention to the ceremonies with lights at the Feast of Tabernacles and suggest that Jesus was consciously fulfilling the symbolism suggested by them... the brilliant candelabra were lit only at the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles. There is dispute as to the number of nights on which the illumination took place, but none as to the fact that at the close of the Feast it did not. In the absence of the lights Jesus' claim to be the Light would stand out the more impressively."

- What are some of the specific areas in which we are conscious of the "darkness" in our society and world today?

If people are to see because of the Light, they have to be going in the right direction. All of the drivers among us know what it is like when an on-coming car fails to dip its headlights. At the end of the story of the healing of the blind man in the next chapter, Jesus says in the presence of his critics,

"For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind" (9.39).

Opposing the Light will lead to blindness. Following Jesus we will have "the light of life" (8.12).

- What did Jesus mean when he called himself "the Light of the world"?
- What were the results for the people who chose to oppose Jesus? for the people who chose to follow Jesus? (Try to think of some Biblical examples).

The Pharisees challenged Jesus and validity of his testimony about himself. Normally, unsupported testimony about oneself has no legal value. At the purely human level that is reasonable comment. But who is Jesus? Their protest begs that question. If Jesus is more than mere man, then he has no need for human testimony. He does, however, have the testimony of the Father – the Father whom they do not know any better than they know Jesus, the Father from whom Jesus has come (vv. 18,19,21,23).

In the course of the conversation, Jesus says something significant that they don't immediately grasp. "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" (v. 24). I have italicised the words added by the translators to fill out the meaning of the text - the same words are added in v.28.

This claim comes to its sharpest focus in v.58, and we will be particularly looking at it in our seventh study. We can note here that the Jews had certainly got the reference by then and "picked up stones to stone him."

Applying it all to ourselves

When we think the darkness is mainly "out there", we may well think of this message as important in principle for those who are "out there". But, as always, we need first to see what the Word is saying to us who are reading it.

We are also aware that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus calls us "the light of the world" (Matthew 5.14-16).

- What does it mean to us to call Jesus "the Light of the world"?
- How does he give us "the light of life"?
- If Jesus is the "Light of the world", how can we also be the "light of the world"?