**Sermon Research: Christmas Eve**

**Light of the World** – Star

**Main Points:**

* It seems like the world is getting darker.
* The OT prophesies point to a great light that is coming.
* Jesus is the fulfillment of those prophesies and the one and only light of the world.

**Scriptures: The Messiah**

“2 The people walking in darkness

have seen a great light;

on those living in the land of deep darkness

a light has dawned…

6 For to us a child is born,

to us a son is given,

and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the greatness of his government and peace

there will be no end.

He will reign on David’s throne

and over his kingdom,

establishing and upholding it

with justice and righteousness

from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty

will accomplish this.” (NIV Is 9:2 and 6–7)

**Dispute Over Jesus’ Testimony**

12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

13 The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

14 Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. 15 You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. 16 But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. 17 In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. 18 I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

19 Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” 20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

**Dispute Over Who Jesus Is**

21 Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”

22 This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’?”

23 But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

25 “Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied. 26 “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

27 They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. 28 So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” 30 Even as he spoke, many believed in him. (NIV John 8:12-30)

**QUESTIONS TO FIND QUOTES ON:**

* Where was Jesus when he said I am the light of the world?
* Was there a festival going on?
* What does he mean?
* Quote pulls on that specific verse

“Moreover, these exchanges took place in the context of the overarching theme of light, which was inherent in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.” *(Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 295.)*

“TABERNACLES, FEAST OF. Heb. ḥaḡ hassukkôṯ, ‘festival of booths’ (Lv. 23:34; Dt. 16:13), or ḥaḡ hā’āsîp̱, ‘festival of ingathering’ (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). This was one of the three great pilgrimage-festivals of the Jewish year; it was kept for 7 days from the 15th to the 22nd day of the 7th month. It came at the end of the year when the labours of the field were gathered in, and was one of the three annual festivals at which every male was required to appear (Ex. 23:14–17; 34:23; Dt. 16:16). It was a time of rejoicing (Dt. 16:14). The designation ‘feast of booths (tabernacles)’ comes from the requirement for everyone born an Israelite to live in booths made of boughs of trees and branches of palm trees for the 7 days of the feast (Lv. 23:42). Sacrifices were offered on the 7 days, beginning with thirteen bullocks and other animals on the 1st day and diminishing by one bullock each day until on the 7th seven bullocks were offered. On the 8th day there was a solemn assembly when one bullock, one ram and seven lambs were offered (Nu. 29:36). This is the last day, ‘that great day of the feast’, probably alluded to in Jn. 7:37. As a feast, divinely instituted, it was never forgotten. It was observed in the time of Solomon (2 Ch. 8:13), Hezekiah (2 Ch. 31:3; cf. Dt. 16:16), and after the Exile (Ezr. 3:4; Zc. 14:16, 18–19). The ceremony of water-pouring, associated with this festival in post-exilic times and reflected in Jesus’ proclamation in Jn. 7:37f., is not prescribed in the Pentateuch. Its recognition of rain as a gift from God, necessary to produce fruitful harvests, is implied in Zc. 14:17 (cf. 1 Sa. 7:6).

This feast had a historical reference to the Exodus from Egypt and reminded the Jews of their wandering and dwelling in booths in the wilderness (Lv. 23:43). However, this is not evidence of the conversion of the agricultural festival to a historical one. Rather it points to the truth that Israel’s life rested upon redemption which in its ultimate meaning is the forgiveness of sin. This fact separates this feast from the harvest festivals of the neighbouring nations whose roots lay in the mythological activity of the gods.” *(D. Freeman, “Tabernacles, Feast Of,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., New Bible Dictionary (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1148.)*

“Jesus’ announcement, “I am the light of world,” must have caught the immediate attention of those attending the popular feast.

On the first night of Tabernacles and apparently on each night of the feast except on Sabbath, the worshipers awaited the signal of the special lighting of the festive golden lamps of Tabernacles in the court of women. The lamps were intended to remind worshipers of God’s leading the people of Israel through the wilderness at night by a pillar of fire. The lighting of lamps also p 296 signaled Israel’s recommitment to the God of light, and it was accompanied by festive music of the Levites and special dancing by chosen men of piety (m. Sukk. 5:1–4).

Jesus’ words of announcement in this context would have sounded like an outrageous claim to the ears of the Pharisees. He went beyond the usual religious assertions of enlightenment and actually claimed to be the luminary itself. Moreover, he claimed to be the light “of the world,” a role reserved for Yahweh, the Creator (cf. Gen 1:3), who was regarded as superior to all deities including the sun god of the Gentiles. But that was not all. Jesus picked up the theme of the wilderness wanderings and proclaimed for those who followed him that they would not walk in darkness but have the light of life. To anyone familiar with the exodus story and the celebration of Tabernacles, Jesus was identifying himself clearly with the God who gave Israel this Feast of Tabernacles.” *(Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 295–296.)*

“Water represented God’s provision and the light represented God’s guidance” - Abbi

“Jesus’ claims are reminiscent of the praise songs to God in the Psalter, where the Lord is epitomized as the Light of life (Ps 56:13), where light is symbolized as God’s victory over the traumas of life (Pss 37:6; 44:3), and where darkness is described as no problem for God (Ps 139:12; cf. Isa 4:6). In addition, light is patently related to concepts of salvation in the Bible (e.g., Ps 27:1; Isa 58:8; cf. John 1:5; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 4:4–6; Eph 5:14; 1 John 1:7). Moreover, the thesis of Jesus as light would immediately be understood not only by the Jews of Jesus’ context but also by Hellenistic readers of this Gospel because the theme of light was an international symbol/description for the basic reality of the good god.” *(Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 296.)*

“Jesus presented himself as the light of the world at the Feast of Tabernacles; a festival during which great candles lit up the courtyards of Jerusalem every night. However, Jesus’ claim to be the light of the world contained more than allusions to the great illuminations of the Feast of Tabernacles. It had its roots in OT prophecies, especially Isaiah 42:6; 49:6 and 51:4, which speak of the Servant of the Lord, and indeed the Lord himself, as the light to the nations (world).” *(Colin G. Kruse, John: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 201.)*

\*\*\*\* For example OT passage above

“Jesus promised, Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Those who followed him by accepting his teaching would no longer walk in the darkness of ignorance under the power of the evil one (cf. 1 John 5:19). As the apostle Paul said, ‘he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves’ (Col. 1:13). As life in the darkness culminates in death, life in the light of Christ culminates in eternal life; it is ‘the light of life’. In the Prologue the evangelist said of the Logos, ‘In him was life, and that life was the light of men’ (1:4). To come to Christ means coming to the one in whom is found the life of God, and that life is the light of men, the light of life.” *(Colin G. Kruse, John: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 201.)*

Another name for the Feast of Tabernacles is the Feast of Booths (different word for the same object)

We see that Jesus travels to Jerusalem to attend this Feast in Chapter 7:

**7 Jesus at the Feast of Booths**

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. 2 Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand. 3 So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. 4 For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” 5 For not even his brothers believed in him. 6 Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. 8 You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.” 9 After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

10 But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. 11 The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, “Where is he?” 12 And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, “He is a good man,” others said, “No, he is leading the people astray.” 13 Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

14 About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. 15 The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” 16 So Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. 17 If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. 18 The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. 19 Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?” 20 The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?” 21 Jesus answered them, “I did one work, and you all marvel at it. 22 Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23 If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well? 24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

*(The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 7:1–24.)*

There are two prevalent themes that this feast centers around: water and light. Jesus claims to be the source of both of these at this festival.

**Rivers of Living Water**

37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

*(The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 7:37–39*.)

Almost immediately after this altercation, chapter 8 says “***Again*** Jesus spoke to them,” this implies it was the same incident. This is reinforced by the fact that it doesn’t say he left the temple until the end of chapter 8: “So they picked up stones to throw at him, but ***Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.***”

So, yes. Jesus was in Jerusalem, the Temple itself be specific, and it was during the Feast of Tabernacles, and on the last and most important day no less.