

“I Am The Light Of The World

Lesson
15
Summary

John 7; Jesus' kinsmen believe not—He teaches his Father's doctrine and proclaims His divine Sonship—Truth may be known through obedience—He offers living water to all men—Divers opinions concerning Him.

John 8; The woman taken in adultery—Christ is the light of the world—He again proclaims His Messiahship—True children of Abraham believe in Christ—'Before Abraham was I Jehovah.'

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The Great “I Am” is the “Light:” Every bit of light is a reflection of Him. That light is all around us. The teachings and traditions of light may be ways of better recognizing Him. “. . . he is . . . the light of the sun . . . the light of the moon . . . the light of the stars . . . the light which shineth . . . the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space . . .” (*Doctrine & Covenants 88:7-12*)

Sukkoth, Jewish Temple Holiday of Light: A biblical holiday connected with lights is Sukkoth. Along with Passover, it is one of the holy (and happy) times that the Children of Israel were given to remind them of being delivered from bondage. Because one of the names of the “Deliverer” is “Light,” it becomes apparent that the term “light” is a repetitive symbol of the Lord. Sukkoth with its lights is also the time to remember Solomon’s dedication of the temple, the Lord’s house. The temple became the symbol that set the people apart from others. They and their temple were to be an “ensign” to the nations. That ensign was a “light” to the world in its day and would be so again in latter-days. “The same Prophets who have contemplated and described the . . . reunion of the tribes of Israel . . . have also predicted that . . . a new dispensation should be manifested . . . "An Ensign" for the people. In short . . . a new organization . . . and government of a renovated world.” (*Parley P. Pratt, Key to Theology, Ch.9, Pg.76 - Pg.77*)

Light Spreads From Jerusalem: It was the practice to light fires on mountain tops every Sukkoth holiday. Seen by a distant village, they would light fires on their mountain tops, and in that way the lights spread throughout the diaspora of Jewish communities, mountain to mountain. Later, in 164 B.C.E. when the success of Judas the Maccabee in taking the temple out of the grasp of the Selucid occupiers was celebrated, the practice of lighting candles (eight days of Hanukkah) expanded to lighting fires on mountain tops again.

Bright Lights: “In the days of the Temple . . . Golden candlesticks, 50 cubits high, were lit with wicks made out of worn-out garments of the priests, and the light emitted was so bright that “there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the *Bet ha-Sho'evah*.” Men of piety and good deeds used to dance before the candlesticks with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises . . . countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and other musical instruments . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Lights Are Dimmed Commemorating Temple Destruction: When the temple was destroyed, a mourning holiday, Tish'ah Be-av, was instituted and on that holiday lights are diminished. “Tish'a Be-av, (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, usually falling within the first week of August) is the traditional day of mourning for the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem . . . in the year 586 B.C.E., the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar stormed the great Temple built by Solomon, turned its marbled columns and gilded rooms into a useless pile of rubble and exiled Jerusalem's inhabitants . . .” “This tragic day has therefore been set aside as a time of sadness for all Jews, who are required to fast the whole day and observe most of the mourning rites which apply in the case of a death in the family, such as not wearing shoes or sandals made of leather. At the evening service in the synagogue, all decorations are removed from the ark, the lights are dimmed, . . . the whole congregation sits on low benches or on the floor listening in hushed silence to the mournful notes of Eikhah, the Book of Lamentations written by the prophet Jeremiah, an eyewitness to the destruction of the first Temple.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Desecrating the Temple Was a Capital Crime with the Penalty of Death: Capital crimes included adultery, murder, blasphemy, and rebellion of children against their parents. “Children may not abuse their parents. According to the Bible, if a son is extremely rebellious and incorrigible and refuses to mend his ways (*ben sorer u-moreh*), his parents may agree to bring him to the town elders for judgment and punishment, which could be death by stoning. However, there is no record of such punishment ever having been carried out.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Biblical Stoning or Casting Down: A truer understanding of the process of stoning would give added insight to the New Testament account of a woman brought to Jesus. The procedure included causing death by precipitating the convicted person over a cliff (an abandoned stone quarry could be an execution site). That included the participation of one of the witnesses. The second witness threw or placed the “first stone” on the body in a process of burying the