

LIGHT AND JUDGMENT

By

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It is not by accident that the birth of Christ is celebrated by the extensive use of lights, nor is it a coincidence that confusion and disorientation about in ratio to the loss of Christian faith.

Contrary to the aura of sentimental nostalgia Christmas lights are supposed to produce, the light of Christ shines in the world as the revelation of God's purpose and as the basis of His judgment.

To foretell Christ's advent, Isaiah exclaimed, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come" (Isa 60:1). Jesus identified Himself as "The Light" and His disciples as the children of light, in contrast to the children of darkness. The world of the first century was described prophetically as in "gross darkness". Rome ruled blindly, having abandoned the judgment of statesmen and just men, while bureaucrats lived luxuriously as they taxed the middle class out of existence. Violence was in the streets and lustful immorality was the fashion of the day.

Even Israel, the privileged nation of God's revelation and law, had exchanged God's doctrine for the tradition of men (Mark 7:8), and that tradition was none other than the corrupt and often obscene Talmud.

Under these conditions Christ was introduced by John as the "light of men" and the light that "shines in the darkness" (John 1:4-5). "There was the true light, even the light which lighted every man, coming into the world" (John 1:9). "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12).

His coming was "like a refiner's fire" for He Himself is the very touchstone of judgment.

John the Forerunner announced Him to the Pharisees with the challenge, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?...even now the axe lies at the root of the trees..." (Matt. 3:7-10). In the light of Jesus, Israel stood condemned. Their negative response to Christ's claims and commands was to be the judgment and downfall of the nation. Jesus pronounce the bitterest woes upon the Jews and finally declared, "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). The light became the Judgment.

OUR ENLIGHTENED GENERATION. Darkness was not limited to the generation that nailed Jesus to the cross. What of our own attitude to God and His word? Has not our generation done all within its power to thwart God's law and raise up an army of rebels in high-handed sin? Do we not laugh at the adulteries and flaunting of sex on every side and bring it into the living rooms for family viewing? Has not our society trampled almost to death the God-ordained home? But few couples take seriously the meaning of their vows, and the children, if allowed to live until birth, are seen not as blessings from God to be nourished in the bread of His word, but as burdens and hindrances to pleasure, to be farmed out to day-care centers.

Darkness is not confined to the illiterate and to the people behind the walls of communist power. What other nation so openly flaunts the command against all forms of spiritism so as to make astrology a daily feature in the newspaper, and to support eastern religious such as Yoga and Transcendental Meditation in the public schools?

In the midst of such gross darkness, where men call evil good and good evil, we hear the carols and expression of Christmas: “Joy to the world, the Lord is come.” He has come, indeed — “like a refiner’s fire” and with axe in hand. He laid it at the root of the tree of Jacob and in 70 AD that nation was destroyed. Of course, the informed know that present so-called Israel has no connection by race or religion to the Israel of the covenant. The same light that revealed the fate of a rebellious Israel still shines to reveal the way which leads either to life or death. The light of Christ reveals the truth over against the faulty guesswork and deliberate lies of men who “come not to the light lest (their) works should be reprov’d” (John 3:20). The truth of Christ openly contradicts the philosophy of man, which, at the moment, is subjective irrationalism. In everyday words this means that men follow trends as they appeal to their emotions. They see nothing absolute truth. Every new idea that is flashed across the horizon of man’s emotionally charged perspective is judged on the basis of how he “feels” about it, and his feelings are influenced by how popular the idea is with his peers. There is no certainty. Nothing holds him to a firm cause through adversity and conflict for he has no bed-rock upon which to stand. He is carried about by every wind of doctrine. Christ is popular at Christmas because everyone is playing His music and creating a good feeling about Him. But, of course, the same is true of Santa Claus.

No where is this subjective irrationalism more evident than in the churches. They compete for new “ideas” of how to appeal to the mindless masses. They must continually change the format of worship and recreation because the masses are fickle and cannot follow any fad very long. Instead of letting the Light of Christ shine forth to reveal the eternal truth, modern churches advertise the latest popular illusion. The darkness is not simply black; it comes in various popular shades.

Acceptability in such a society requires the sacrifice of religious doctrine. It is okay to be religious, but disgraceful to hold to a definite religious doctrine. Doctrine is belittled. To believe is permitted, just don’t believe anything in particular. Your doctrine is not important, but your sincerity is! But how can one be sincere if he has nothing absolute and in particular about which to be sincere? The sincerity simply amounts to a deep feeling, belief based not upon reality but upon subjective irrationalism. We call a man insane if he sincerely thinks he is Napoleon, but it is normal and highly religious for one to sincerely think he is a Christian, when he has not taken even the first step toward conversion as demanded by Christ.

LIGHT OF REALITY. Such a philosophy leads to frustration and helplessness, insecurity, and, of course, destruction in the day of judgment. Christ is the light that reveals the bed-rock of truth where one may get of the merry-go-round of irrational relativism and stand on divine revelation, the truth that is not going to change because it is the essence of Christ, who is eternal — changeless.

Christ gives the light of reality, which produces faith; not faith that is the product of feeling which may change with the weather, but faith based upon facts Christ revealed. Deep feeling of peace and joy are results of the faith, and not the cause of it.

The light reveals the reality of sin. Every person is compared to Christ in the measurement of his worth to God. Jesus is exactly what man is created to be — in God's image. Measured in this light, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Sin is real. Every transgression of His commandment is sin, no matter what one feels about it. It is judged in the light of Christ and not by our calloused and TV-conditioned feelings.

The light also reveals the cure for sin; the death of Christ. His death was real. It was an actual flesh and blood death. He shed His blood, poured out His soul unto death (Isa 53:12) and gave His body to the tomb, showing the reality of the punishment for sin. "The wages of sin is death."

His resurrection was real. He said, "Handle me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). "I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18). What of death and resurrection? How do you feel about "immortality?" Paul wrote that Christ "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). Immortality is not the continuation of some spiritual existence into eternity! Immortality is what Christ had after He came forth from death — body and spirit, a living being impervious to death and change. In such light all mystical religions stand judged as false.

Man's faith and action is judged in the light of Christ, His life, death and resurrection clearly demonstrate for all time the fundamental issues of man before God.

His life — A demonstration of what a man ought to be.

His death — A demonstration of the final judgment upon man for his sin.

Christ had no sin of his own, thus arose from death. But the sinner is to suffer eternal death.

His resurrection — A demonstration of man, cleansed from sin, raised up immortal to live in the world to come.

Jesus did not begin His ministry with a jovial "Ho-Ho," but with a solemn, "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). The Light revealed the necessity of repentance, but also revealed the possibility of relief from sin, and the blessed hope of life in fellowship with the Creator, now and forever.

The Light is without "shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17) throwing light in every direction, without regard to the whims and collective determinations of men. To those who reject the purpose of God to follow their own ambitions, it is feared and despised, to be avoided and put out if possible. In its place they raise up the substitutes of fantasy and legend: Santa Claus, Rudolph and Frosty the Snow Man, silly and shallow, intolerable to a civilized and enlightened people, except for the fact that it is even more intolerable to endure the alternative — the Light of Christ. The Light is judgment upon sin and sinner.

But to all who love God and desire His purpose to be fulfilled, the Light is a joy to behold and they draw nearer and nearer to be revealed in this light. "He that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God" (John 3:21).

There is not need to stumble in the dark, no danger of falling into the pit out of ignorance, no horrible question of what may lie at the end of the road; it is all revealed by the light.

"Arise, shine, for thy light is come."

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