

# THE LIGHT STILL SHINES

By

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**“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.”** - Isaiah 9:2

The world of the first century was described prophetically as in “gross darkness.” Rome ruled blindly, having abandoned the judgment of wise statesmen and adopted pagan gods. Violence and lustful immorality was the fashion of the day.

Even Israel, the privileged nation of God's promise and protection, 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 John introduced Jesus 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 lights every man, coming into the world” (John 1:9).

Even so, coming as “the light of the world,” Jesus made no move that might be seen by the world as of particular significance in relieving its burdens:

Jesus led no movement for political freedom.

He said nothing about freeing the slaves.

He offered no sweeping legislation.

He established neither schools nor colleges.

He offered no program on behalf of the poor.

He left no medical advice to eradicate disease.

As far as the world could observe, Jesus left it much as he found it: he entered it through a lowly stable and left it on a shameful cross.

Where was the light? The light Jesus shed is in regard to man's darkened spiritual condition and his understanding in regard to sin and his destiny. John puts it this way:

**“And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil For every one that does evil hates the light, and comes not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd. But he that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.”** (John 3:1-21)

When Jesus began preaching, his message targeted sin: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Matt.4:17).

The darkness of the world is the power of sin. The heart of the problem is that sin so darkens the mind that man is unmindful of his fatal condition.

To this the apostle Paul agreed:

**“Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened...”** (Rom. 1:21).

Darkness was not limited to the generation that nailed Jesus to the Cross. Paul's expression sounds like a commentary on man in 2003. 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 make idols of adulterous movie and TV stars and bring them into the living room for family viewing? Has not our society trampled 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 daycare centers.

In the midst of this gross darkness, where evil is called good and good is called evil, we hear the carols and expressions 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 that rebellious people still shines to reveal the way which leads either to life or death.

The light of Christ reveals the truth over against the 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, in our time, is subjective rationalism. This means that men follow trends as they appeal to their emotions. They see nothing as absolute truth. Ideas and actions are judged on the basis of how one “feels” about it, and his feelings are influenced by how popular the thing is. There is no certainty. Nothing holds man to a firm cause through adversity and conflict for he has no bedrock upon which to stand. He is carried about by every wind of doctrine.

Jesus 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.

The darkness doesn't change. It may use new devices – new techniques; new names may be given – call it sickness instead of sin – but man is still committing the sin of Adam, rejecting the law of the Creator and deciding for himself what he will call right and wrong.

Also, the wages of sin are the same: “Thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Jesus revealed that all who reject him will perish, and for this reason men hated him. “For every one that does evil hates the light.” The Jews “took counsel that they might put him to death” (John 11:53), and finally succeeded in doing so, for the inexorable and holy light could not be allowed to expose their darkness. This is the judgment upon man, that in his wickedness he cannot endure purity. This is the darkness that man loves sin rather than holiness, and is thus excluded from life with God.

Whether he realizes it or not, such is man's condition. **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** (Rom.3:23).

But, praise the name of Jesus, he gives the remedy. After having taught us and demonstrated by the contrast of his life with ours that we are sinners worthy of death, Jesus then proclaimed the fact that he came to give his life a ransom, and to bear the penalty of death in our stead. He was “made to be sin on our behalf” (2 Cor. 5:21), and suffered the punishment due to sinners.

In his death he was the light which revealed that the punishment for sin is death, not torturous life of the spirit as the pagans held.

This is a great light, indeed! Sin and its consequences are shown to be real. But so is the cure for sin. Through Jesus' death sin is blotted out for the Christian, so he may have life through a resurrection, just as did Jesus. What a great light is **“Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel”** (2 Tim. 1:10).

Without Christ men cannot know the meaning of life. In vain they seek answers to the questions:

- Where did I come from?
- What is my purpose in being?
- What is my final destiny?

But in Christ these mysteries fade away like the darkness before the morning sun. Man was created by God. He is here to do the Father's will and to be conformed to His image and glorify Him. He is finally destined to be made gloriously immortal to dwell in a new creation with God, who has already “delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His beloved son” (Col. 1:13).

When the light shines into our hearts there is first a horrible feeling of self-loathing for our guilt. Like Isaiah, one feels, “I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King...” (Isa. 6:5). The natural reaction is to recoil from the light, to flee back into the darkness where sins will be unnoticed. In the world sin is a normal way of life. But if there is a desire to LIVE and fulfill God's eternal purpose the action is a deliberate repentance, a rejection of sin, and faith in the Christ who died for sin. One is then marvelously free from the darkness; there is direction, purpose, and Divine help to live.

Then a strange thing happens. The light draws one closer and closer. He comes to the light to have his works manifest, to see if he is pleasing to God. The closer to the light he gets, the more of his own sin he sees: thoughts and feeling he never saw before, deeds that he had excused, now are recognized as wicked. At first, he thought himself to be a common sinner, but now, in the Light, he wonders that he could have ever been so evil. Then this same light bathes his mind in the truth that all such sin was laid upon Jesus, “who bore our sins upon the tree.” He basks in this light, for **“if we walk in the light, as**

**he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).**

The chief problem in the world is sin. Jesus was born to save man from sin that he might not perish under judgment, but have eternal life. For all who receive him, there is light, and these are seen “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation...as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

**“Arise; shine, for thy light is come.”**

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