

# **JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

## **John 8:12**

This is why Christ's message is called "Good News" (Gospel). From the beginning of time, the contrast between light and darkness has been noted. God's first creative act upon a world clothed in darkness, was to bring light into existence (Gen. 1:1-4). While, in this passage, darkness is not called bad, it was light that God declared to be "good!" When Job cursed the day of his birth, it was his will that that day be one without joy, given over to darkness and black gloom with no light to shine upon it (Job 3:2-7).

Darkness has no power to destroy light. It is the darkness within the individual which obscures the ability to see light (John 9:1-8, 2 Cor. 4:3-4). Even the smallest light in the deepest darkness is visible from a great distance. Light travels at the speed of 186,281 miles per second. Darkness can only fill in the absence of light. As Jesus said, "A city set upon a hill cannot be hidden."

Darkness is, however, the place where evil lies. How many of us remember our fear of the dark when we were small children. It was there that monsters came out of hiding. How many of us as little children became so frightened of these monsters that we ran to climb in bed with our parents! Jesus said that evil people love the darkness because it hides their evil deeds (John 3:19-20).

Note the prominence of light in God's creative order. Material light was created on the first day. Spiritual light was created on the first day of the week when Christ was raised from the dead (Luke 24:1-8). Pentecost, the feast day on which Peter and the Apostles first presented the light of the Gospel, came on the first day of the week (Lev. 23:15ff). Later Peter speaks of the process of salvation consisting in Christ calling us out of darkness into "His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Thereafter, Christians met together on the first day of the week to worship (Acts 20:7), a day that came to be called "the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10).

Isaiah wrote that the Messiah would be a "light to the nations", and would open the eyes of the blind and deliver those who dwell in darkness (42:6-7). He also wrote that those who dwelled in darkness would "see a great light," and that those who dwelled in a dark land would have the "light shine upon them" (9:1-2). As Jesus began his

ministry, he fulfilled this prophecy by going to preach in the areas of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali (Matt. 4:12-17).

The very birth of Jesus was announced by the light of the star which guided the Magi from the East to Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-12), and the glory of the Lord which shone about the shepherds in the field (Luke 2:8-10).

Three of the four gospels feature "light" as the characteristic of Jesus' mission to the earth (Matt. 4:12-17, Luke 2:32, John 1:1-9). Only Mark does not do so. However, it is the gospel of John which most prominently relates Christ's person and ministry to light (1:1-9, 3:19-24, 8:12, 9:4-5, 12:35-36, 46). Light is also central to 1 John (1:5-7, 2:8-11).

At the death of Jesus, there was darkness from the 6<sup>th</sup> Hour (12 noon) until the 9<sup>th</sup> hour (3 PM) over the whole land (Mark 15:33). What seemed to signify the triumph of sin and of evil, was only temporary, and soon dispelled by the resurrection of Christ. Thallus, perhaps a Samaritan historian, in about AD 50, tried to explain the darkness as an eclipse, rather than a sign of the divinity of Christ. Julius Africanus, writing in the 3rd century said that Thallus' explanation of it was impossible because the phase of the moon at the time of the Passover would not have allowed it. (F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?*, Eerdmans, 1981, pp. 116-117).

Satan is the king of darkness and the enemy of light (2 Cor. 4:3-4, John 13:21-30, Luke 22:52-53)). His reward (and not only his but that of all who follow him) is to live eternally in darkness where there is no light at all (Matt. 8:11-12, 22:1-13, 25:24-30, 2 Peter 2:17, Jude 12-13).

Let us all praise God for the light that Jesus has brought into the world and into our lives. What a wonderful future we have awaiting us in that place where there is no night and where eternal light exists because of the presence of the Lord (Rev. 22:5). In the meantime let us walk in the light, and let us allow the light of Christ to shine through us for the world to see!

Carl Mitchell