

# The Light of the World – *John 8:12*

**Introduction** – Prophecies foretold a world lost in utter darkness, in “*the shadow of death*,” all nations walking in darkness, and suddenly seeing light (Isaiah 9:2). Paul connects the light of creation with the light that now shines in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6). In the Feast of Tabernacles, the Jews would set huge lamps high up in the courts of the temple and festivities went on through night while the temple-light shone, just as the cloud and pillar of fire had in the wilderness. Just after this feast, back in the temple, Jesus says, “*I AM the light of the world*.” He Who spoke and light came into the world is the light of the world, the light that enlightens all men to the glory of the salvation of mankind through Jesus.

**Loving Darkness** – This verse comes immediately after the story of the exploitation of a woman in order to trap Jesus (vv1-11). These were not scrupulous men seeking to keep the holiness code (although they appeared to be on the outside). They were filthy, self-serving, envious men who hated the light that was shining right in front of them (Matt 23:25-28).

To understand the nature of light/life/salvation that Jesus brings, we should see what the Bible teaches us about darkness. Darkness is the province of ignorance and folly (Psalm 82:5, Mic 3:6). The world is dark in that it is lost in ignorant worldviews, superstition, and foolishness. Darkness is also the way of evil and fear (Prov 2:13, 4:19) and evil tyrants lead by keeping people in fear by keeping them away from light. Darkness is a city of injustice and bondage (Isaiah 59:9, Psalm 143:3). Darkness is the seat of judgment and wrath, the wrath of God (1 Sam 2:9, Zeph 1:15, Matt 22:13).

Darkness is a metaphor for sin and the consequences of that sin: ignorance, wickedness, bondage, misery, judgment and wrath. John opened his gospel including these words – “*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it*” (John 1:3-5). Remember, that word, “*comprehend*” can also be translated, “*overcome*.” Don’t forget.

**In the Present Darkness Comes Light** – John’s prologue takes us back to creation. God said, “*Let there be light*” and there was light, and the darkness could not stop it. There was light, but there was not yet any sun. Interestingly, that is the state of things in the consummation of the New Creation: light, but no sun (Rev 21:23), “*for the Lamb is its light*.” But again, this is not simply physical illumination any more than darkness is simply the lack of such. Rev 21:24 shows us the transformative power of this light – “*And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into (the new temple)*.” This corresponds with the second half of our verse, “*He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life*” (v12b).

**God is Light** (1 John 1:5) - God is not a light among many lights, nor is He simply a light-bearer. Even though He created light (Gen 1:3), He is Himself uncreated light. In the Nicene Creed, the church confesses Jesus Christ as “*God of God, Light of Light*.” God is light and so He visited His people in the glory-cloud, in a pillar of fire, and was symbolized in the lit lampstand of the tabernacle (Num 8:1-4). Light is connected to the bringing forth of life (the first Word-Act of Creation) and so “*The LORD is my light and my salvation*” (Psalm 27:1). This light was to go forth to all the earth: The LORD’s Servant is given “*...as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth*” (Isaiah 49:6).

**What Darkness Refuses** - In contrast, the darkness is a refusal to enter into the light, a refusal to acknowledge the truth of Jesus and His Words (John 3:19-21). And so why do men not come into the light? Men love their evil deeds and this requires that they suppress the truth – it requires that they lie to themselves about what truth is, a truth they know (Rom 1:18-23). But our text makes clear that coming to God is to come to the Light – and in Him there is no darkness, none at all. Like Gollum, we love to hold on to “*our precious*,” and we withdraw into the darkness.

**The Good News and Light** (2 Pet 1:19) - The creation could not bring forth its own light, and neither can we be light nor come to the light except God speaks the Word, “*Let there be light*” in our hearts. But when that sovereign, good and merciful God shines that light in our hearts, darkness flees (unbelief, ignorance, folly, judgment, spiritual death) and salvation is ours (2 Cor 4:5). And so we are to preach the Light-Word, “*I AM the light of the world...*”

**Walk as Children of Light** (Eph 5:8-14) – With that light in our hearts (illumination, regeneration, but also a moral compass with the Spirit leading) we are commanded to live as we are, the new humanity, the children of light. We are living out what God is putting in, remaking us to be.

***“Y’all Are the Light of the World”*** (Matt 5:14) – “Christ is still the light. He has sent the Holy Spirit to be His representative here on earth. He testifies of Christ. The Divine Paraclete occupies the place of our departed teacher. The Church, inspired by the blessed Spirit, with ten thousand tongues, proclaims the gospel of salvation” – Spurgeon. With the Spirit in us, we are true light-bearers and in this way, our good works testify of Christ (Matt 5:16). People who love one another, bear with and forgive one another, laugh and celebrate, comfort and encourage, honor and submit to one another, obey God’s commands, and do so with joyful hope, are people who testify to Christ’s words, they have “*the light of life*” in them.

The Church is the testimony of light to the world (Isaiah 60:1-3). Jesus Christ, the light of the world, is destined to shed His beams over the whole earth, where kings and nations will come to His City, the New Jerusalem (us, the church). In days of darkness, we must not forget the message of the Light which overcomes. Voltaire (a pagan) said in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that he lived in the twilight of Christianity. What he thought, and what too many Christian think today, is that this is the twilight of evening. But this is the twilight of morning. Jesus is the light of the world, not a smattering of it, which is why we have been commissioned to disciple the nations (Matt 28:18-20) and told that the gates of Hades will not prevail (Matt 16:18).

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