

I Am the Light

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Introduction.

- A. There are few things that are more important to our existence than light. Even the blind man depends on light, for it is the light of the sun that nourishes the plants that directly or indirectly sustain us. As I can tell you after our failed houseplant experiments in our apartment, without light, there is no life either.
- B. Every bit as important, though, is the way that light helps us to see, both literally and metaphorically. It is primarily light that reveals our physical surroundings to us and keeps us from tripping over things all the time. Because of this, we use light to explain the process of revealing things to our understanding as well. When we don't understand something, we're in the dark about it. A skilled teacher, though, may be able to shed some light on the subject for us. Once we grasp what the teacher is saying, we have become enlightened. Just as important to us, then, as the light that shines for the body is the light that shines for the mind.
- C. It is hardly surprising, then, that even a cursory study of the Bible reveals the importance of light. The first thing that God did to give order to His formless creation was to proclaim, "Let there be light!" In the Psalms, the unfolding of the word of God is described as giving off light. The path of the righteous is said to be like the light of dawn, whereas the wicked walk in darkness and stumble over what they do not understand.
- D. Most of all, though, the Bible uses light to describe Jesus. Indeed, Jesus uses light to describe Himself. Consider His words in John 8:12. In making this declaration, Jesus claims for himself all of the ideas we have already discussed, and more besides. Indeed, when we consider this claim alongside all the rest of the Bible, Jesus is asserting for Himself a significance that existed before the beginning of time and will extend until after its end. We can't understand what Jesus means to us unless we understand this, so let's look at God's word to see just what our Lord is talking about when He says, "I am the Light."

I. The Light in Jesus.

- A. In our search for enlightenment, we must begin by looking at what it means that Jesus was the light before the world was. Scripture reveals little about the time before the foundation of the universe, but we see one of the longest passages on the subject in John 1:1-5. This is the passage that reveals to the honest heart the divine and uncreated nature of Jesus. In those first three words of Genesis 1:1, in "In the beginning," is where Jesus dwelt with God. He is the Word, the source of infinite power and creativity and understanding, and as such, He is the instrument by whom God created all things. This makes Him the life-giver for all men, both in a physical sense when they are born, and in a spiritual sense when they are saved. This hope of life is what draws men to Him. Moths come to a candle and die; we come to the Son and live. Finally, though, we see one last characteristic here of Jesus as light: His separation from darkness. Although He is present in the darkness of the sinful world, the darkness cannot see Him or comprehend Him.
- B. We learn about the extent to which Jesus is the light when we look at the way He is portrayed in prophecy. It is quite common for Jesus to be prophetically described as the light in the Old Testament, especially in the book of Isaiah. For instance, consider the prophetic statement of Isaiah 49:5-6. It was never that the early Christians were a small Jewish sect that got a great idea and did well with the Gentiles; instead, from the very beginning, God intended Christ to be a light to all the nations. He would certainly bring salvation to the Jews. He would certainly be a beacon to bring them back to God, and to restore them and raise them up, like daylight will restore a plant that's been left in a closet for a week, but Jesus would do more than that. His light would beckon even the Gentiles, those who did not know God, to come and share in His blessings.
- C. Jesus, however, was not just heralded as the light in prophecy. He was also recognized for His all-attracting, life-giving power immediately after His birth. This occurred when Jesus was just a few weeks old, and doubtless not much outwardly different from any baby of the same age. In accordance with the Law, His parents had taken Him to the temple to be circumcised, and there they encountered an old prophet named Simeon, whom God had said would not die until he had seen the Messiah. We see the story of Jesus and Simeon pick up in Luke 2:27-32. The shepherds saw the glory of the angel; the wise men saw the glory of the star, but Simeon sees the glory of Jesus Himself. He knows that Jesus is a light of revelation to the Gentiles, who will come to know God through Him, but to those who already serve, He is the appearance of salvation.
- D. Of course, the life of Jesus followed the course predicted both by His nature and by the word of prophecy. We see the work of Jesus described in terms of light in John 1:9-13. Here's what we should take from this:
 1. First of all, we see Jesus here described as the light that gives light to every man. Some translations say, "The light that enlightens every man." This is extremely significant. It doesn't mean that every man does see because of Jesus, which John himself rejects just a verse later, but it does mean that every man can see because of Jesus. No matter who we are, no matter where we come from, everyone who shares in flesh and blood has to grapple with the same issues of purpose and existence. All of us have to confront

the apparent fact that ultimately, our lives will end in death and meaninglessness. This is where Jesus gives us light: not by making the day especially sunny outside, but by brightening our outlook on existence. He reveals that in Him, we can have both purpose and eternal life.

2. Sadly, not everyone recognizes that light. Not everyone receives Jesus, but for we who do, Jesus enlightens us by telling us that we can be reborn as children of God. We're so used to saying this, but it is such a bizarre idea. Who could think that God, the omnipotent overlord of the universe, would be willing to adopt puny human beings as His children? Even if that were possible, we would naturally assume that God would want to put us through some demanding series of tests so that we could prove we deserved it. The amazing thing is, we don't have to do that at all. All that we have to do is believe in the name of Jesus, that is to say, have faith that He has the authority to make this rebirth happen.

II. The Light in Us.

- A. From this point on, we see in Scripture not just the light in Jesus, but the light of Jesus as it interacts with us and changes us. His light first appears to us in His truth. Look at the way Paul describes this idea in 2 Timothy 1:8-10. Notice both the way that Paul uses visual imagery throughout this text and the way that it ties back to what we read in John. Paul says that grace in Jesus, that is, the special favor of God that allows us to become His children, is something that had been God's plan from before time began. Before the world was created, God had planned for those who received Jesus to be spiritually reborn. The thing is, nobody knew it. The Old Testament hinted at it, but to the Jews, it was blasphemous to claim God as Father.
- B. The truth about this, though, was revealed by the appearing of Jesus. It's possible to be in a pitch-black room for hours, yet not know as much about that room as if you had spent just thirty seconds in it with a flashlight. In the same way, in the span of just a few years of teaching, Jesus enlightened mankind about a plan they had only dimly seen for millennia. Furthermore, this enlightenment continues even today. Jesus brings life and immortality to light through the gospel. The word that we have in our hands is the light of Jesus.
- C. The next place that the light of Jesus appears is in our hearts. Paul depicts both how this either can happen or not happen in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6. The first two verses of this context tell the sad story of those to whom the gospel of Christ is veiled, of people who have been exposed to the truth, yet do not understand what that truth means to them. Paul says simply that they have been blinded by the devil, whom he calls "the god of this world." This doesn't mean that Satan uses some magic power to force people to reject the word; he just uses the same old tricks and temptations that are so familiar to us. Some are blinded to the gospel by the lusts of the world that they love to pursue. Others are blinded by their jobs and their careers. Others are blinded by family members who do not believe, but the result is the same. Instead of producing the enlightenment that God intends, the gospel in people like these only results in unbelief. The light doesn't shine on them.
- D. By contrast, though, Paul also reveals what happens to those who do not allow Satan to blind them. Just as God created light in the uttermost darkness of the beginning, so too He creates light within us. All of the gloom and despair that is our lot without God, all of that is dispelled by the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. We see who God is, what He wants for our lives, and how we can come to Him by looking into the face of Christ as He is revealed in the word. This is something that is too big for us to handle with reason alone. It's something that requires more than just emotion to grasp too. Instead, this is a light that shines in our hearts, so that with all we think and feel, we are filled with the understanding of the light of Christ.
- E. Once this light begins to shine in our hearts, it begins to shine in our lives as well. We understand that being a child of God, destined for immortality, is not just something God does for us. It's something that we grow into as we try to become like God, as we see what His plan is for us. Look at what John writes in 1 John 1:5-7. God is light—perfect understanding of who He is, what He should do, and how we should be. This light draws us to Him, and if we are not guided by this vision, our claims to be His children are patently false. Instead, we have a responsibility to walk in the light as He is in the light. We have to live in the way that He reveals is best. If we do this, our sharing in the purpose of God unites us with both Him and with His other children. However, this walking in the light does not require perfection. As long as we have the overall purpose of claiming immortality as one of His children, if we sin, the blood of Jesus will cleanse us.
- F. After we have followed the light of Jesus throughout our lives, we will encounter it in one final place: in heaven. Look at what John tells us about the holy city of heaven in Revelation 21:23-24. Along with every other aspect of this physical realm, every created light, from the brightest sun to the dimmest candle, will be destroyed. Only the uncreated light of the Son of God will remain, and that will be all the light that heaven needs. In that day, Jesus will be our light in so many ways. We will be illumined ourselves, so that we will shine forth like the sun in our Father's kingdom. He will guide us into the perfect understanding and perfect love that we have sought all our lives. Finally, He shall be our light because we will receive life from His presence. Only in the light of Jesus can true immortality be found. To see how important this is, we need only understand that hell is often called "the outer darkness" in Scripture. From Alpha to Omega, Jesus is the light.

Conclusion. If you have not dedicated your life to seeking the light of Jesus, now is the time to start.