

Light of the World

LET'S first consider what the Bible says about Light. Light is primal, fundamental, essential. We read in the book of Genesis that in the beginning the earth was:

...without form and void (Genesis 1:2).

That means it was in a condition of chaos. In that condition of chaos God did a fundamental thing:

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light (v3).

That was done with purpose. It was the beginning of a process which led to life. God created light, then the waters were divided, then there came life. Light, water, life.

And this pattern which we see in the creation of life itself, we also see in the process of creating spiritual life: a person receives the light of the Truth, then is baptised in water, then starts a new life. The apostle Paul shows the link between the natural and the spiritual:

God who commanded light to shine out of darkness... has shone in our hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Light and Darkness

We shall best understand the significance of light if we can understand something of the meaning of darkness. When the earth was 'without form and void', the

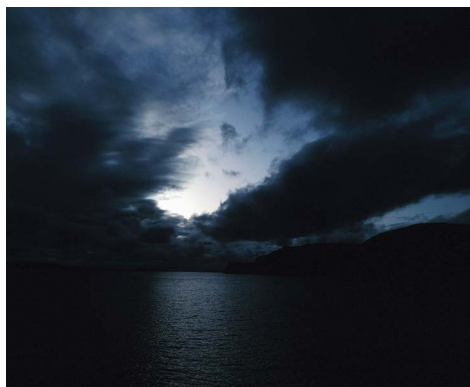
record says "*and darkness was on the face of the deep*" (Genesis 1:2). The darkness is associated with the chaos.

Darkness is used in the Bible to represent ignorance of God and His purpose. For instance, when the apostle Peter wishes to describe the transition from ignorance of God to a knowledge of the Gospel, he says that:

[God] has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9).

When darkness is used in the Bible in a moral sense, it is used to describe that which is in rebellion against God. Death and darkness express the final outcome of evil. The apostle John says of the loveless man who hates his brother, he "*is in darkness even until now*" (1 John 2:9).

In the book of Proverbs those who "*leave the paths of uprightness*" are said to "*walk in the ways of darkness*" (Proverbs 2:13). The final



destiny of the wicked is to be cast into outer darkness (Matthew 25:30). People who are in darkness are without form and void. Their lives are void – without purpose. Their eyes are blinded.

Another Creation

There is a sense in which God has looked at our world and seen a great darkness: people groping in the gloom, their concept of God distorted by human philosophy. God saw this state of darkness and knew the remedy. He knew they needed illumination of the mind. And so once again God did an elemental thing – He said, “Let there be Light” – and the word He spoke became flesh and a light came into the world. This happened at the birth of Jesus Christ. This is how John’s gospel describes it:

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... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:4–5, 14).

So Jesus came, the Light of the World, and the frontiers of darkness were flung back. He spoke of judgement on hypocrisy and men recoiled with fear. He spoke of help and salvation and they were won over by his compassion.

He felt all the agony of the widow of Nain and raised her son from the dead (Luke 7:11). He felt the paralysing pain of the

two sisters of Bethany and gave them their brother alive (John 11:43). He revitalised a man’s withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, because he was that kind of saviour (Matthew 12:10).

People heard his words and marvelled; they saw his good works and glorified God. Some slandered him but when they did it, they made themselves liars. They beheld this glory of grace and truth – so the light flashed and flamed among the streets and hills of Israel, and it cut into the darkness incisively, like a knife.

This is what light does. The apostle Paul says:

All things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light (Ephesians 5:13).

When we stand in the presence of the light we see ourselves as we really are – we are ‘made manifest’. And there is something else light does – when we stand in the presence of the light we find God is revealed. Light shows us what we are, and it shows us what God is.

The Light of the World

So it was in Israel when the light came into the world. As Jesus spoke the words of life they sensed the feeling of supremacy, of kingship, of authority. They confessed:

No man ever spoke like this man! (John 7:46).

Standing in the presence of that light they knew their own thinking and actions were wrong. One of the noblest of them said:

Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord! (Luke 5:8).

In the light, men discover themselves and God and they become responsible. This is what I mean by the light cutting incisively like a knife. The principles which underlie this are revealed most carefully by Jesus:

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears my words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day (John 12:46–48).

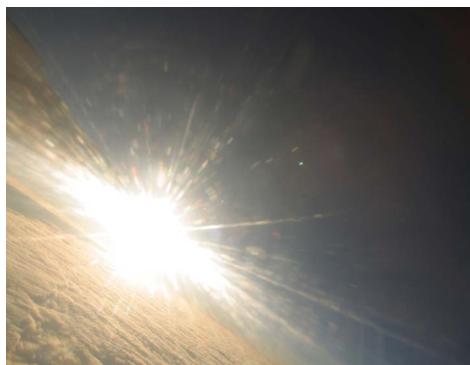
Jesus is saying that he came into the world as the force of light to dispel the darkness. He reveals that as the darkness is dispelled it brings salvation and it brings judgement.

Call to the Light

What a solemn thing the Gospel is. People choose their destiny, God does not force upon anyone what they do not desire. Those who have been called to the light and rejected it have chosen death.

Those who have accepted it have chosen life, but for them the light is still revealing. It lays bare the things they have kept in the recesses of their lives. It unmasks them.

Yet though it is searching, it is the only thing worth having. Those who choose life have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and share his victory over the darkness of this world.



Before he was crucified, Jesus said to his disciples:

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid... In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 14:27, 16:33).

These things are the centre of the Christian faith. A person may know a great deal about religious things and still lack the clarity which comes from this spiritual light. It illuminates our disobedience to God (sin), helps us begin to appreciate His glory and greatness, and shows us the way to Him through Jesus Christ.

Light has come into the world and therefore we can find strength for our weakness, wisdom for our folly, relief for our bruises and grace to help in time of need. To walk in the light is to surrender to it and obey it. That means that by the light that has come into the world, life will be interpreted, service will be guided, suffering will be transformed, the Gospel will be proclaimed and destiny will be sealed.

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