

Light Will Dispel Darkness

*“The LORD is my
light and my
salvation; whom
shall I fear? the
LORD is the
strength of my life;
of whom shall
I be afraid?”*
—Psalm 27:1

IN SCRIPTURE, LIGHT stands for enlightenment concerning the knowledge of God. As the psalmist suggests, this light or knowledge of God goes hand in hand with our salvation. From the New Testament, we read: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (I John 1:5) This not only suggests that God is the author and center of all true wisdom and knowledge, but also that there is no darkness associated with any thought or act on his part. What a comfort this should be to us!

As a God of light, his is not a cold, calculating wisdom and knowledge, but a wisdom and knowledge prompted and governed by love. The Apostle James tells us that God’s wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, and full of mercy and good fruits. (James 3:17) The poet has truly said, “As every lovely hue is light, so every grace is love.” We are also reminded of these words of the hymn:

“For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man’s mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.”

A LIGHT IN THE WORLD

The very early act recorded in the Genesis account of creation resulted in the appearance of light upon the earth. “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” (Gen. 1:3) This reminds us that the beginning of the selection and development of the church, the “new creation,” was also preceded by the appearance of light in the world. This included, of course, the light of truth necessary for the work which was about to begin. As Paul said, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”—II Cor. 4:6

Jesus was the centerpiece of this light which began to shine in the hearts of those who accepted him and desired to follow in his steps. The Master stated the matter clearly, “I am come a light into the world.” (John 12:46) Our Lord did not expect all men to come to the light and rejoice in it at that time, for the majority of mankind were, and still are, not ready for this blessing. As he observed, “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”—John 3:19

Looking back to Jesus’ earthly ministry, we see that only a few in Israel were ready for the message of the “great salvation” which he brought to light. (Heb. 2:3) The same thing has been true of the Gentile nations to whom the light of truth subsequently

shined forth. Only one here and one there has answered God's call, through faith and consecration, to come "out of darkness into his marvellous light." —I Pet. 2:9

The light greater than the "brightness of the sun" shining at noonday that Paul saw on the road to Damascus appropriately illustrates "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" which was so soon to come to him. (Acts 9:1-3; 26:12,13) Similarly, each called-out one, in proportion as they are ready for the message, sees a light far brighter than any of the lights of this world, and much more brilliant than can be given by human learning or philosophy.

This light comes not from any earthly source, but is a light from heaven communicated to us by God through his Word. Having received enlightenment concerning the great salvation in Christ Jesus, we are told that if we "walk in the light," we have fellowship with God and with one another, and we are cleansed from Adamic sin. (I John 1:7) We are exhorted to strive, that our thoughts and actions may be in accord with this enlightenment. In this way we become a "light in the Lord," and as we heed the admonition to "walk as children of light." (Eph. 5:8) Paul again says, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day."—I Thess. 5:5

We have been delivered from "the power of darkness" into God's marvelous light. (Col. 1:13) However, we must never forget that our continued enjoyment of the light is conditional. The psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. 119:105) We must walk in the pathway which is illuminated by God's Word, and seek to be obedient to its guidance and direction in our life.

Jesus gave solemn warnings concerning the light which has blessed us, saying that it must shine forth to others by word and by example, and not be hid from view. To hide the light will result in darkness, and “how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 5:14-16; 6:23) Later, in Jesus’ parable of the wedding feast, the king in the parable came to inspect the wedding guests, and finding one who was not properly attired, said, “Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness.” (Matt. 22:11-13) How much more unfortunate would the position of such a one be than if he had never accepted the invitation to the wedding feast. Paul instructed us, “We are not of the night, nor of darkness. ... Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”—I Thess. 5:5,8

LIGHT HAS MANY ENEMIES

We must never forget that the light of God, and the children of God illuminated by this light, have many enemies. First and foremost there is the great enemy of God and man, Satan, the ruler of the “darkness of this world,” of which we were once a part. Further, the subjects of his kingdom of darkness are far more numerous than the children of light, who have been delivered out of their former condition of darkness.

The Scriptures show how Satan is constantly attempting to deceive and mislead the children of light by making darkness appear as light, and light as darkness. “And no marvel,” Paul says, “for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” (II Cor. 11:14) Similarly, the prophet says, “Woe unto them

that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”—Isa. 5:20

We know from actual fulfillment how Satan has succeeded in deceiving many who claim to be God’s servants. Such deceptions of the Adversary have often resulted in the preaching of the darkness of false doctrine, while casting off as error the plainly stated light in the Word of God. As but one example, many have taught the bitter deception of Satan that all who die outside of Christ in the present age are forever lost, and will spend eternity in a state of conscious suffering. This, however, is in direct conflict with the beautiful message of God’s Word, which states that the Gospel, in due time, is to be “good tidings of great joy ... to all people.”—Luke 2:10

Indeed, all will be brought to an accurate knowledge of the Truth, and by obedience to the laws of God’s coming kingdom of righteousness, will be given the blessing of “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (I Tim. 2:4-6; Rom. 6:23) Even for such a wicked people as those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah our Lord assures us that the thousand-year kingdom day of judgment will be a tolerable time—“more tolerable” than for some who had greater opportunities during the present life of coming to a knowledge of the Truth.—Matt. 10:15; Acts 17:31

THE END OF THE AGE

God, through his servant Paul, tells us that this conflict between light and darkness—between the children of light and the children of darkness—would be especially severe at the end of the present age, the time in which we are now living. The apostle calls

our attention to the bright shining of Christ's invisible presence at his Second Advent, saying at that time "there will be great activity on the part of Satan, in the form of all kinds of deceptive miracles, signs, and marvels, as well as wicked attempts to delude."—II Thess. 2:8,9, *Twentieth Century New Testament*

Against these attacks the faithful apostle exhorts the brethren, saying, "Stand firm, ... and hold fast to the truths that we taught you, whether by word or by letter." (vs. 15, *TCNT*) If we would stand against the wiles of the prince of darkness in this evil day, we must be faithful to the light with which we have been blessed, and walk in it. That is, our daily conduct and manner of life must be in accord with the enlightenment which has come to us. As the psalmist says, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."—Ps. 97:11

For the "upright in heart" living in this present day of trouble and spiritual famine in the world, the light of truth has shone brightly out of the darkness. To these, it is vitally important that they hold fast to, and walk in conformity with, the enlightenment now provided, as well as to possess more and more of its spirit of Christlikeness. Such is suggested by the psalmist's description of this class: "Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous."—Ps. 112:4, *English Standard Version*

Our Master said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) In other words, I am showing you the way in which one who has been illuminated with the knowledge of God, his plans and purposes, should walk in order to realize the hope of glory, honor and immortality held out to them. Walking humbly in

this way, we are able to enjoy the very great honor our Lord placed upon his followers as suggested by his words, “Ye are the light of the world.” (Matt. 5:14) Indeed, the footstep followers of Christ have been the only true light-bearers in the world during the present age. Hence the Lord exhorts, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—vs.16

Though many in the world may see the “good works” of the Lord’s servants, at the present time the response is not generally to “glorify” the Heavenly Father. As John says, “The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” (John 1:5) The majority of mankind cannot comprehend the light of God’s plan at the present time. Many oppose the light and ridicule or, at times, even persecute the light-bearers. However, during the millennial kingdom, remembering their previous contact with the servants of the Truth, they will, as Peter says, “glorify God in the day of visitation.”—I Pet. 2:12

SPECIAL FULFILLMENTS

The Apostle Paul indicates that the things written aforetime in Old Testament prophecy have a special application and fulfillment in “the ends of the ages.” (I Cor. 10:11, *Revised Version*) When Jesus was present in Israel during his earthly ministry, it was noted with reference to certain things he was saying and doing: “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.” (Matt. 13:35; 21:4) This shows that these prophecies to which Jesus referred, although given by God centuries before, were intended to have a special fulfillment at the end of the Jewish Age, at the time of Jesus’ First Advent. The Scriptures

indicate that even more prophecy was intended to have its special fulfillment when our Lord would return and again be present, though invisible, at the end of the present Gospel Age, just prior to the establishment of God's kingdom upon the earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness."—Matt. 6:10; II Pet. 3:13

In the natural realm, the ending of nighttime and the dawning of a new day is first signaled by rays of light which begin to be seen above the eastern horizon prior to sunrise, penetrating the darkness, but not dispelling it. The Bible uses the same illustration to indicate that more light upon God's Word would be given to his people "upon whom the ends of the ages are come." This is the time which will culminate in bringing to a close the long night of darkness and sin, and usher in the new millennial day of light, righteousness and divine blessing.

Incorporating the symbols of darkness and light, night and day, Paul emphasizes the importance of our being awake and alert: "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober." (I Thess. 5:4-6, *RV*) This is in keeping with the promised "meat in due season" which was to be dispensed when the Master would again be present. He said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."—Matt. 24:45; Luke 12:37

Indeed, God's glory has been seen in his gracious character and plan as these have been revealed to

those who are awake, alert and watching during this time in which the ending features of the present age are taking place. We now see with increased clarity God's character to be a perfect combination of infinite wisdom, justice, love and power. As this light has shined upon the faithful watchers, they have recalled Jesus' commission that the "gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." Then, Jesus continues, "shall the end come." (Matt. 24:14) Thus, during this "end of the age" period, the Gospel message has gone forth worldwide as never before, and in ways that were not possible prior to this time in history. These present efforts have been for the purpose expressed by Jesus, that of "a witness," and not for the conversion of the world, which will be accomplished on a universal scale in God's kingdom.

LIGHT WILL DISPEL DARKNESS

In spite of all past and present misunderstanding and confusion, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (I John 1:5) All his doings relating to his human creatures are, and have always been, in the fullest accord with righteousness and truth, and prompted by his infinite love. Likewise Christ Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, and man's Redeemer, is denoted by the Apostle John as "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." —John 1:9

The Prophet Isaiah wrote prophetically of the light which would, in due time, shine upon mankind through the redemptive work of Jesus. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon

them hath the light shined.” (Isa. 9:2) For six thousand years mankind has, for the most part, walked in darkness, not really knowing God and his gracious plan for their eternal blessing. Throughout this time the earth has been overshadowed by the darkness of suffering and death. Soon, however, man will see a “great light,” and “upon them” this light will shine. It will be the light of the “Sun of righteousness,” Christ Jesus, who shall “arise with healing in his wings.”—Mal. 4:2

The establishment of God’s kingdom, under the rulership of Christ and his faithful footstep followers of the present age, will dispel all darkness and bring the light of divine Truth to every corner of the earth, and upon each person. To accomplish this, the great resurrection work will take place, “every man in his own order.” (I Cor. 15:22,23) To begin with, there is the “first resurrection” of those who will live and reign with Christ. Then will be the “better resurrection” of the faithful ones of old, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others. This will be followed by the general resurrection of all the dead, both Jews and Gentiles.—Rev. 20:6; Heb. 11:35; John 5:28,29, *RV*; Acts 24:15

After Israel crucified their Messiah, blindness and darkness came upon them as a nation. However, as the apostle states, it is God’s eternal purpose that “all Israel shall be saved.” Christ, the one whom they crucified, will “come out of Sion” and deliver them from their blindness and darkness. He will “turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” (Rom. 11:25,26) The Gentile nations also will then begin to see and appreciate the light of the Gospel. Good tidings of great joy shall truly come to all people and nations!

Continuing the prophetic message of Isaiah chapter 9, we read: “Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.” (vs. 3, *RV*) We can well imagine how the joys of Israel and of all mankind will increase when they experience the blessings of God’s kingdom, and understand that the wonderful earthly inheritance lost through sin is to be restored to them! It will truly be “as men rejoice when they divide the spoil” of their harvest. The “spoil” will be the fruits of the Redeemer’s great victory, and the blessings which will come to all who, in that day of light, gain everlasting life by faithfully obeying from the heart God’s righteous and just laws.

The next verse of Isaiah’s prophecy points out that the burden and oppression upon mankind due to the curse of sin and death will be broken. (vs. 4, *RV*) The prophet then gives a picture of the destruction of the distressing burden of militarism and warfare which has been so commonplace during this so-called Christian dispensation, and especially during its closing years: “All the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments [of war] rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire,”—that is, for destruction. (vs. 5, *RV*) Earlier in his prophecy, Isaiah writes specifically concerning this, that in God’s coming kingdom of peace the people “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”—Isa. 2:4

Returning to Isaiah chapter 9, verses 6 and 7 bring to a climax the great and all-important truths concerning the salvation to come to mankind during

the time of the kingdom. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

In that kingdom day all will come to realize that a Son was born of the line of Abraham and David who has made atonement for the entire human family, all who lost life in Adam. As a result, mankind will receive the blessings associated with the restoration of all that was lost because of sin. Christ will be responsible for the affairs of earth in that day. Today he is not regarded by many as a wonderful counselor, for most give little attention to his teachings. Even those who have some theoretical knowledge of it seldom put his teachings and example into practice. When, however, under the influence of the righteous, just and loving rule of Christ the people begin to put into action the great principles of righteousness laid down by the Master, the results will surprise them.

The many social and political difficulties of the present time will quickly be resolved, and to the Master will be accorded, by common consent, the title—Wonderful Counselor—as well as the other names mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah. Surely, the vast majority of all human creation will sing with joy the refrain of our opening text, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”—Ps. 27:1 ■