

The Promises of God: He Removes Darkness

John 8:12

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Show of hands how many saw the eclipse this week? Even for just a few seconds, how many? It was an amazing sight. God demonstrating His glory. I saw it for just a few moments. I wasn't feeling well, or I wouldn't have even been out of bed. It was much easier to see and for me more fascinating than the eclipse last year. The things God does with light are wonderful for us to see.

We too often take the light for granted. We miss out on what God is providing for us with His light. Sunrises are beautiful. Sunsets can be glorious. The sun shining through the clouds is often inspiring. We are able to see because of the light. The world looks different in the light than it does in the dark.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. John 7:37–39 (NIV)

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 (NIV)

Jesus is referring to two massive candles seen all over the city. When Jesus spoke these words He was in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles. It's also called the Feast of Booths or Shelters. It's kind of like camping. They would take branches, usually palms and make a shelter. It had a two fold purpose: celebrating God's provision for the fall harvest and also to remember God's provision in the wilderness.

We know the Lord God, Yahweh Elohim, spoke to Moses from the burning bush. He told Moses to take the people out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. When Yahweh Elohim said this to Moses, He referred to Himself as I AM. In simplest terms He was saying He is the one and only God above all other gods.

So, Moses lead the people out of slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea. The army of Pharaoh was destroyed in the Red Sea by God. The people traveled toward the Promised Land to a mountain. On that mountain God called out to Moses. He gave Moses Ten Commandments. But, while Moses was gone, the people made an idol that looked like a calf. Moses destroyed the calf.

Then God called to Moses to select twelve men one from each tribe. These men were sent into the Promised Land. They came back and ten said the land was filled with giants so they shouldn't enter the land. Two men, Joshua and Caleb, said the land was a great place and God would be with them. At that moment they decided that this nation of God's people was no longer a theocracy, ruled by God, but a democracy ruled by the will of the people. Ten men out voted two men, which meant they would wander in the wilderness for forty years. Two generations of people would die and two generations of people would be born.

While they left Egypt and then when they were in the wilderness God was present with them, guided their path, and protected them with The Pillar of Cloud by day and The Pillar of Fire by night. That means for at least 14,600 nights there was a Pillar of Fire that could be seen by God's people. I have to think that would make an impression. Forty years there is a fire in the sky. The fire was a reminder to them that God was with them. The fire made know to any who saw it that this is the one and only God. This fire was reassurance that the one and only God would guide their path. This fire of God kept away any and all who might try to destroy God's people.

Jesus spoke at the celebration of the Booths or Tabernacles. For eight days the two massive candelabras were kept burning. Throughout the city this light could be seen. As we know on the last day of this festival Jesus made an astonishing proclamation. "I am the Light of the world." He was identifying with the God that rescued the people from slavery, who guided the people through their wilderness wandering, and who was always present with them.

Naturally some folks were excited. Then there were the skeptics, and those who were hostile. Jesus not only put himself as the God of Moses, but also the same God who created all things from the beginning, the one who called light into existence.

Now, we're getting somewhere. No longer is there any speculation about His identity. He is the Messiah, the one sent by God, the only God who can take away the darkness.

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The Light is God's guidance, presence, and protection; darkness is sin. We live in a dark world. The shadows of sin and evil are all around us. I know this is depressing. It's also the truth, even though I don't want to talk about it and you don't want to hear it.

Since Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, we've been able to see the darkness. We can't see in the darkness, it causes us to be blind. We can see the power of sin at work. We can see its destruction. We can see the shadow that it spreads. The darkness is anything and everything that tries to replace God as God.

Remember God said He is the one and only God, calling Himself I AM. He made it plain and simple that there is no God but Himself. That's all encompassing. It includes everything.

I usually define sin as selfishness. If I try to make myself greater than God, I'm being selfish. That's sin. If I try to prove I'm better than you, I'm being selfish. That's sin. The Lord God, Yahweh Elohim, laid it out for us with the Ten Commandments. Four of the ten point directly at us trying to be more important than God: Don't have other gods; Don't make idols; Don't use His name in meaningless ways; Don't stop worshiping Him. Selfishness.

Six of the ten point directly at us causing harm to others and ourselves; Don't dishonor your parents; Don't steal, lie, desire one another's stuff, have sex outside of marriage, and don't kill one another. Selfishness.

All of them are selfishness in action and in the heart. Each one of them as bad as the others. Murder is listed with lying. Stealing is put with dishonoring your parents. Placing anything in God's place is right alongside of wanting your neighbor's stuff. It's all sin and it's all darkness.

The darkness has invaded our lives. We're Christians, followers of Jesus, and the shadow of sin and evil is everywhere. We know we are forgiven. We know we have been given a new life. We know that eternal life in heaven is ours. But, we can see little things in the shadows that don't seem too bad. Things like being proud of our accomplishments can't be evil, right? Things like wanting a better life can't be evil, right? Things like feeling good, experiencing pleasure can't be evil, right? The desire that puts anyone of them in place of God becomes a temptation that leads into the shadow of sin.

We need the Light. We need to follow the Light of Jesus. We need the protection Jesus' Light provides for us from the shadows of sin.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 (NIV)

For all those who believe in Jesus the Light is always shining. Forty years times 365 days of the fire burning at night is a lot of nights knowing that God is with you. There is no mistaking His presence. There is no mistaking the protection that fire provided every night. There is no mistaking the guidance of God.

The people of God grumbled. They complained to Moses and to God. Every time God provided. He was always with them. Two generations of people passed on. Two new generations of people were raised up. Every generation that followed heard the stories of God's guidance, God's presence, and God's protection.

Many of those in each generation believed. They choose the Light of God's salvation. They celebrated God's gift to them. Hundreds of years turned into thousands of years. With every harvest they would celebrate by lighting these candelabras as a reminder of God's presence. Some of the people did it as ritual. Some of the people did it with expectation.

Jesus stood up among the men, women, and children and said I am the Light of the World. He announced to a dark world of doubters, critics, and unbelievers that God who delivered their ancestors was with them. He announced to a dark world of hypocrites, false teachers, and oppressors that God who called light into existence was with them. He announced to a dark world of people who wanted to be saved, who saw their sin and wanted to be redeemed that He was God who would lead them to salvation.

Jesus makes that same announcement today. His guidance, presence, and protection are always available. As much as the darkness of sin is able to blind people, the Light of Jesus overcomes. As much as the darkness of evil is able to entrap people, the Light of Jesus overcomes. As much as darkness tries to create shadows, the Light of Jesus overcomes.

Anyone who believes Jesus is the Light of the world can always walk, run, live in the Light. The darkness has no power over any believer. The darkness fades away, rolls away, runs away from the Light of Jesus Christ.

Since you are believer you have power over the darkness, over sin, over evil. You are not ruled by the desires of darkness, sin, or evil. You have been set free to live in the Light of Jesus Christ. Is the darkness around? Yes, but Jesus is the Light. Is the darkness creeping closer to you? Maybe, but you have the Light of Jesus within you.

Picture your life this way. The Light of Jesus is shining out of you. The devil may bring rain, snow, floods, and storms to put out the Light. Jesus' Light cannot be extinguished. The devil may throw hardships, troubles, problems, worries, anxieties into your life. Jesus' Light overcomes. The devil may try to make the shadows of sin and evil look appetizing and feel comforting. Jesus' Light exposes all the lies.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12 (NIV)

Receive the Light that can't be hidden when you believe Jesus. Final two things I need to share with you today. If you are a Christian you know you are walking in the Light. You have been saved from the power of sin and the punishment of sin. You have been redeemed to a new life. You have been delivered to eternal life in Heaven.

But every Christians lives in a world of shadows of darkness. Darkness is all around us, it's everywhere. There are desires in Christians which seek to defy the Light of Jesus Christ and seek out the temptations of sin and evil. There are temptations in all the shadows that are around us.

We've already named the what's in the darkness, the sin and evil. Although, through faith in Jesus those sins have been defeated we, you and me, still look into the shadows. It doesn't matter what desire is in your heart the shadow of darkness still calls your name. Shine the Light of Jesus on the temptation. Rebuke the desire in the name of Jesus.

If you gave into the desire and temptation by sinning against God, admit your sin and repent. Step out of the shadow and into the Light. Fall on your face before your Savior and Lord Jesus Christ empowered to overcome. Rejoice and give thanks for your soul is set free. Your heart is renewed. Your mind is transformed. The joy of salvation is living in the light.

You may have realized today that Jesus is not your Savior and Lord. That you are not living in the Light. But that you are a sinner. Jesus knows you. His light is shining upon you heart, it is revealing what is in your soul. Jesus knows your thoughts, your attitudes, and He has seen your actions. Jesus is calling you to put your faith in Him.

Jesus looked all over the world. He has seen all of creation, all that He gave life, and sees how it has been and is being corrupted by sin. He has seen me. He has seen you. He has seen our sin.

Jesus is calling out to you to leave the darkness and come to the Light. Jesus wants you to live for all of eternity in His Light. Jesus sees you in your sin. Jesus entered in this world of darkness as the Light. He never gave into the desires to walk in the shadow of the temptations of sin. He overcame the darkness. He cast out the darkness. He put the darkness in it's place: hell.

Jesus died as the darkness of sin, to throw it into the darkness where it belongs. Jesus didn't remain dead, He arose free of the darkness so that you could live in His Light everyday of your life forever. You don't have to live in the darkness of sin. Jesus is calling you into the Light of His salvation.

Do you believe Jesus is the Light of the world?

Are you ready to trust Jesus to bring you into the Light?