

The Light of the Cross

One of the common themes of the Bible is light. The contrast between darkness and light are easily seen. Last Sunday we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. Three days before that was the Friday when Jesus was crucified. We are told that darkness was on the land from noon until 3:00 PM.

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. (Matthew 27:45 NASB)

I have heard many people attempt to explain the reason for the darkness. Some say that God turned away from the scenes of Jesus dying on the cross so the source of light was taken away. That may well be the reason but again, we don't know. What we do know is that as Jesus was on that cross, darkness had come to the region during a time when the sun should be shining at the brightest part of the day.

We are all familiar with the periods of light and darkness that make up our day. It is part of the orderly arrangement of the creation as designed by God.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. (Genesis 1:1-4 NASB)

When there was darkness on the region that Friday, it would indicate that something bad was occurring. God in the flesh was being killed on a cross. The history of mankind is one of rejecting God. Relatively few people serve God and remain faithful to Him. Here, in this time, God became flesh and lived with His creation. A few disciples (perhaps less than 500) believed in Him and remained faithful to Him. We read that even though some of them had moments of doubts, they remained true to Him through the resurrection. Those few were the exception. The vast majority of the people alive at that time rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Even some of His early disciples turned away from Him as John records in the 6th chapter.

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So, Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also?" (John 6:66-67 NASB)

So, God had come in the flesh and been rejected. Not only was He rejected, He was killed. This is a dark day in world history. We now, from the perspective of hind-sight, understand that the death of Jesus on the cross was the payment for our sins. We can and hopefully see the Friday afternoon as the time of sacrifice where, once and for all, Jesus paid the debt of sin.

The contrast of light and darkness is seen. At the creation, God called for light and it was good. At the cross, the darkness covered the region when God incarnate dies while bearing the sins of all mankind. Jesus bears the sins of all those who rejected God from the creation and forward to the end of this age.

As John begins his gospel, he starts back at the creation. He shows that the Word was with God and was God and that the Word became flesh and dwelled among men (John 1:1-14). During John's introduction to Jesus being on earth, he tells us that this Jesus (God incarnate) is the **true light**.

There was the true light which coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to

His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believed in His name, who are born, not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:9-13 NASB)

For John, the idea of light and darkness is ideal for showing the contrast between good and evil, the things of this world and the realm of God and revealed in Jesus.

We have gone from the creation and seen God calling for light and then to the crucifixion to see darkness on the land. We have seen that John reminds us that Jesus is the true light that enlightens every man. Later, John writes three letters to the church and he continues to use the imagery of light. Let us turn to the first letter of John, where we will see the importance of light in our salvation.

The first epistle of John was likely written while John was in Ephesus. It was likely written around AD 90. This dating is suggested because the persecution that began under the reign of Domitian around AD 95 which resulted in John being exiled to Patmos. The “fatherly” tone of John’s writing suggests that John is advanced in age. As a side note, the persecution of Domitian that began around AD 95, is the ominous shadow over the church when John wrote Revelation to encourage that church to endure and maintain while under persecution. The final victory is Jesus the Christ and not Satan or his minions.

John begins his first epistle reminding the reader that Jesus is the incarnate word of God. He reminds us that those who believe in this Word of Life have fellowship with each other, but more importantly, we have fellowship with God the Father and God the Son.

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. (1 John 1:1-4 NASB)

For John, this fellowship was a cause for joy. I speak with so many Christians today that seem to no longer have any joy in their life. How can this be? We have fellowship with the God of the universe; we have fellowship with the God who love us so much He sent His only Son to die for us, we have fellowship with God who has adopted us to be His children; and we cannot find joy in any of that?

John shares his perspective as an eyewitness. John is qualified to tell us about Jesus. He was there throughout the ministry of Jesus and was the apostle to whom Jesus entrusted with the care of His mother.

From this introduction, John once more presents the theme of light. In the opening remarks from his gospel account, John speaks of the true light coming into the world. We know that he was speaking of Jesus. John now tells us that God is light. As he mentions those who walk in darkness, he is talking about those who walk outside the light of God. They reject, through their actions, the God many claim to serve.

Within his discourse on walking in the light, John ties the blood of Christ and walking in the light together.

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He

Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:5-7 NASB)

There are a couple of things that jump out at me as I read this passage. First, God is light. As I walk through this life, I need to stay in the light of God. When I stay in that light, I have fellowship with God. We are lying to ourselves if we are walking outside God's light (in the darkness). We cannot live in the darkness of a sinful world and have fellowship with God.

Darkness and light do not coexist. Darkness is driven out by light.

Second, as I walk in that light, the blood of Jesus cleanses me from all sin. Even in this phrase, I find two things. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin, and my life is a journey. I travel through my life and I may stumble and fall. Yet, when I pick myself up and resume my walk in that light, the cleansing continues.

Many of you have already heard that 1 John 1:7 is my favorite verse in the Bible. Now, perhaps, you see why it speaks to me. It is personal and it is reassuring that my walk in God's light brings me into the cleansing blood of Jesus and allows me to have fellowship with God and fellow Christians.

John does not stop with verse 7. The, inspiration of the Holy Spirit, knows that some Christians will be lured into the sin of pride. After all, we are Christians therefore, we are without sin. John addresses this error immediately in his letter.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10 NASB)

We are human and we will make mistakes. There are times when we will be lured into sinful situations or actions. We need to be honest with ourselves and with God. As a Christian, we need to confess our sins and receive God's forgiveness.

That is the assurance we have: **He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

That assurance that God will forgive us when we confess our sins is strengthened as we continue into John's letter.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.* (1 John 2:1-2 NASB)

When we confess our sins, we have an advocate. We have previously looked at this word advocate. The Greek word is Paracletos which is one called alongside to help or an intercessor. Jesus is there to plead our case.

Not only does He plead our case, He has paid the penalty for our sins. That word propitiation carries the meaning of total satisfaction for our debt.

The writer of Hebrews explains why Jesus is the best priest we could ever want. This is also the reason Jesus is able to be our advocate.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16 NASB)

Jesus lived through everything that we may experience and therefore is qualified to intercede on our behalf. He brought the light of God to the cross and from that day on, He shine that light into a dark world to illuminate our path as we walk through our life.