

The Light of the world

Reference: SHM-S10-004-Mw-R00-P2

(Originally spoken on 7 November 2014, edited on 9 November 2014)

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Let us turn to **John 8: 12**

John 8: 12

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

This is one of the major declarations of the Lord Jesus regarding who He was. If we want to appreciate who the Lord Jesus is, we need to pay heed to what He says about Himself. He explains to us who He really is. So if we love Him, we want to know Him, we want to relate with Him, we want to be faithful to Him then we need to consider carefully who He is.

What comes through to us when we hear Him say, "I am the Light of the world"? What would we wish to receive from Him who is Light of the world?

In terms of practical reality, in terms of the responses of people towards the Lord Jesus over the years, we may realize that the way we respond to Him can be very often very different from His intention and can be opposite to what He wants to give to us.

Many people may say, “Yes, I have many problems in life, there are many things I do not understand; it is good to have light. If the Lord Jesus is the Light of the world, He can solve my problems; He can show me what to do.”

And what are these problems? Most of these problems in reality are quite self-centred: ambitions that we may have; things we want to accomplish because of the attractions of this world; competition amongst people; there are many things that we may long for. We want solutions and we want light to shine on that. But the Lord Jesus being the Light of the world is not meant to help us solve our self-centred problems.

Then there may be others who have better aspirations. They are Christians; they want to grow well in the kingdom of God, they want to understand the principles of God’s kingdom. The Lord Jesus is the Light of the world: we come to Him to seek to understand the principles of God’s kingdom. And so there are many people who may seek to understand many spiritual truths, what are the important spiritual principles of life.

But then is that all that the Lord Jesus is concerned about?

We read in **John 1: 4**:

John 1: 4

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

The Light of men comes from the life that was in Him. If we are concentrating purely on spiritual principles and we are not so conscious of the life behind that, then we may not benefit from who the Lord Jesus really is. In Him was life – and that is eternal life, the moral character of God, moral perfection in Him. This is the primary aspect in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I am the way and the truth and the life" – at the heart of what God wants to give to us is life.

Yes, understanding of the principles of God's kingdom is very important. Such understanding can help us to know how to respond to God, how to cooperate with Him, how to live according to His will.

They are important but unless we appreciate spiritual life and we want it and we are prepared to walk in it and to live by it, then all the things that we learn will not be of benefit to us. Instead, knowledge can make arrogant or puff up but it is love that edifies. It is the reality of the life of God that enables us to help others to find life.

So the Lord Jesus said in **John 8: 12**:

"I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

So what kind of light we are pursuing is very important. Is it the Light of life?

Bear in mind there is also the light of death. We are told and we all know even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. He may come to us as if it is God speaking to us. He may appear bright and there is light that comes from him but it is the light of death. It is not the true light from God; it is not the Light of life because in Satan there is no life, there is no spiritual life: in him is death. And yet we know that many people respond to him: they listen to him, they follow him.

The apostle Paul was very conscious of the false apostles, deceitful workers who disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. These are servants of the evil one and he himself disguises himself as an angel of light.

So we need to be very careful. If we appreciate the Lord Jesus as the Light of the world, we must make sure we are coming to Him and not to an imposter: a false apostle, an imitator, a counterfeit.

There are many false Christs in the world, and in the Last Days this will increase. There will be more deception and we need to know who the true Lord is.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness..." What is the meaning of following the Lord Jesus? Does it mean we look and see where He walks and after that we walk there? We see what He does and we try to imitate what He is doing?

We have no power to live as the Lord Jesus lived. We cannot truly follow Him if we try to imitate Him and copy the way He lived His life.

If we look at the Scriptures, we see that when the Lord Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, it meant their giving up their former way of life, giving up what they had in order to accompany Him, move together with Him, identify with what He was doing, cooperate with Him, learn from Him and live like Him.

Following the Lord Jesus involves far, far more than just understanding some aspects of what He is doing and seeking to be like Him.

"...he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness..." What is the meaning of "will not walk in the darkness"? One way of looking at it is to say: because we have light, so we will not walk in the darkness. That is a major aspect of what it would mean. If we have the light, we will not walk in the darkness.

But in terms of the spiritual implications, walking in the darkness has to do with choosing the path that is morally negative. So if we follow the Lord Jesus, we will not walk in the darkness; we will not choose to walk in that path.

As we walk in the light of the Lord, we will have the Light of life. His life will then come to us and this will strengthen us to keep walking in the light and not to walk in the darkness.

The phrase "in the darkness" here is not just "not understanding, not recognizing what is the right path". "...in the darkness" here is the path that is morally negative. Walking in the darkness is the path of going our own way, rebelling against God and His commandments; a life of self-centredness. That is a life lived in the darkness.

If we see that the Lord Jesus is the Light of life and if we follow Him we can have light and this will bring life to us, would not that be such a wonderful thing? Would not all of us want to come to Him? Many people will say, "Yes, certainly. I want to come to the Lord Jesus because He is the Light of life; I come to Him, I can have life." But then in reality, there are many people who turn away from the Lord; they do not want to come to the Light.

John 3: 19-21

- 19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.
- 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.
- 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Light is good; light brings freedom, and yet there are many people who reject the Light. Men loved the darkness rather than the Light. Why? Why do men love darkness?

In the darkness you can say we may stumble and fall, we do not know where we are going, there is no meaning; there are many difficulties and problems that will come. Why would people want to move in the darkness?

How does a thief generally operate? Thieves come in the darkness so that people will not see them stealing and that is what is stated here: *...everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.* So a thief tries not to steal in broad daylight. He tries to do so when it is dark, when others will not see him doing it.

There are many people who reject the light but we must be very careful not to jump to conclusions. For example, when you share the gospel with someone and that person rejects it, you may then say this person loves the darkness that is why he rejects the light. But before you conclude, consider carefully: Have you properly presented the gospel or have you distorted the gospel? Have you misrepresented Christ; have you misrepresented the Light?

When we say that *"everyone who does evil hates the Light"*, we are talking about the true Light. So when we seek to bear a witness for the Lord, we must be careful that we properly represent Him.

And what is the most powerful manifestation of the representation of the Lord?

It is Life: when the Life of the Lord is abundant in us, we are deeply identified with Him then when we speak, when we share, when we live, there will be that Light that shines, there will be that Life that is transmitted. In such a context, those who love what is good will be responsive, they will be appreciative of what you are seeking to communicate; but those who want their own way, they want the things of the world, they will rebel.

As we read **Acts of the Apostles**, we can see the picture very clearly. The apostle Paul, at one time he misunderstood who the Lord Jesus was but when he saw the light, when the Lord Jesus came to him, manifested to him in a bright light, the apostle Paul's eyes were opened. He saw, he understood and he responded deeply because deep in his heart, he wanted to know God, the true, living God but he was mistaken.

What happened after that? When he responded to the Lord, he sought with all earnestness to communicate the message of the gospel to others to save especially the Jews that he was deeply burdened about. What was the outcome?

The apostle Paul was persecuted from city to city. So many wanted to kill him; they plotted, they were determined to destroy him. The apostle Paul preached because he loved them; he wanted to bring life and light to them but the Scriptures tell us many of them were jealous, they were angry with Paul; and there were others whose business was disturbed because of what Paul was doing. And so we find opposition to the light from the darkness.

"But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." So the characteristic of a life lived in the light is deeds... having been wrought in God. It is not just a matter of following certain rules and regulations, certain practices that people say are good to do; it must be deeds that are wrought in God. So this aspect is very important for us to recognize. If we want to develop a life in which we can help other people in the Light then we must make sure that we truly love God and the things that we do arise from that love for God; and the deeds are wrought in Him in that we have learnt to depend on God, trust Him, seek His will and we seek to honour Him in the things that we do; we give up the way of self-centredness in our living.

“...he who practices the truth comes to the Light” does not mean that we must share our lives with everybody so that it is “in the light”: everybody knows. The meaning here has to do with our honesty before God, that we are prepared to come before God that He will search our hearts and examine our lives to make sure that every aspect is truly right and good. And having come before God, we then consider what is appropriate: in what setting to share with whom and what.

The Lord Jesus did not do everything openly for everyone to see. He was wise; He considered what would be most helpful, but His life was totally open before God. There was nothing that He wanted to hide from God.

So although we may know we cannot hide from God because God is omniscient, omnipresent, yet in reality many people try to hide from God, even Christians.

Right from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve tried to hide from God. How could they? But they tried.

And so too it has been over the ages: When God wants to speak to us, we run away, we close our ears; we do not want to hear.

This can be in a context when, for example Stephen was speaking to them in the power of the Holy Spirit, they stopped their ears, they rushed at him, they stoned him to death. They did not want to hear what God wanted to say to them.

It can come in many different ways but we need to consider: Are we running away from God? Or are we prepared to come before Him, let His light shine into our hearts, examine us?

Spend time before Him honestly so that if there is any aspect that is wrong, we can be corrected. And then we will have the Light of life. Then we will be following the Lord Jesus; we will be seeking Him, identifying with Him; and we will have the Light of life.

So as we come before the Lord, let us ask Him to help us appreciate Him, the Light of the world.

How should we approach Him? What should we seek from Him? How should we respond to Him? What is the appropriate way in which we should live our lives in the light of this knowledge?

God wants us to have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we look at Him, we should be able to appreciate the true Light.

So let us remember that the Lord Jesus is the Light of the world. It is not just that He shines the light. He Himself is the Light. So if we want light, we must look at Him: consider His life, His ways, His character. Then the Light of God will shine on us.