

INTO THE DARKNESS

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I have heard it said that darkness does not exist; that darkness is simply the absence of light. In fact, there is an Internet story to this effect that has been in circulation for several years. It has both a logical and emotional appeal.

But what if darkness does truly exist? What if the representation of evil as “darkness” is more than a mere figure of speech? What if there actually is a battle between darkness and light? This seems to be the understanding of the contributors to the Bible’s pages. For instance...

John 1:1-5

¹ In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He existed in the beginning with God. ³ God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. ⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

John suggests that there is a persistent, though failing, effort on the part of darkness to overcome the light.

His reference to “the beginning” reaches all the way back to the first page of the first book of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1-2

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

In the beginning, before the act of creation of the world as we know it, there was darkness—general darkness that “covered the deep waters.” What were those “deep waters”? One might assume they were the primordial oceans of our planet, but verse 6 reveals that they were not oceans at all, but vast layers of water in the atmosphere of deep space.

The point is that all space was shrouded in darkness. And the Spirit of God hovered in that darkness, and acted in that darkness. Then came the Word: “*And God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light.*” (Genesis 1:3)

Of this creative Word, John has written: *“God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.”* (John 1:3-4)

That Word was creative, and that Word was life-giving. But as John continues to narrate, it becomes increasingly apparent that the Word he refers to was more than just a sound vibrating through space.

John 1:6-14

⁶ *God sent a man, John the Baptist,* ⁷ *to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony.* ⁸ *John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light.* ⁹ *The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

¹⁰ *He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him.* ¹¹ *He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.* ¹² *But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.* ¹³ *They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.*

¹⁴ *So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.*

The “Word” is more than a sound, more than an idea, more than a principle—the Word is a Person—then God, and now also human. This God-man is Jesus, the Christ.

His coming brought life. For Jesus is the “way, the truth, and the life.” And this life brought light. For Jesus is the Light of the world.

That’s why we celebrate Christmas with so much light and the full spectrum of colors. Because Christmas is about the first coming of Jesus—the Word of God made flesh and blood. It’s all life and light!

When He came, there was much darkness in the world. Moral darkness, spiritual darkness, political darkness—more than the mere absence of light. There was a sinister, even deadly, corruption that was creeping through humankind—threatening to drown us in darkness.

But God spoke a Word, and Light dawned and began to rise, to give *“light to everyone.”*

Three thousand years ago, a prophet named Isaiah wrote this concerning the world’s populations: *“² The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. ³ You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice.”* (Isaiah 9:2-3)

The coming Light would ultimately expand the family of God, both geographically and ethnically, with a resounding joyous celebration.

However, the times out of which the New Testament was written were dark times.

The voice of Israel's prophets had been silent for four hundred years. Greek humanism had been swallowed up by Roman military might, and the Greek mythology of the gods had been adopted by the Romans, with equal fear and confusion. Moral darkness, spiritual darkness, political darkness—more than the mere absence of light.

The tiny nation of the Hebrews had been swallowed whole by Rome, and allowed to exist, but contained and oppressed by occupation forces. Some were content to make the best of those difficult days, some plotted insurrection, and some of God's people hungered for light and deliverance. Joseph and Mary were among those who clung to the words of God and longed to be rescued, according to His plan.

In obedience to Caesar's command, they returned to Joseph's ancestral home of Bethlehem, to be registered for taxation. The oppression of darkness was everywhere. And on one of those very dark nights, with no place to sleep but a stable, the Light came, just as Isaiah had predicted.

Isaiah 9:6-7

⁶For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

Plainly, this was to be more than a man-child, for His destined reign was to be perpetual and truly beneficent. That was assured by the *"passionate commitment of the Lord."* And so it was.

Luke 2:6-11

⁶While they were [in Bethlehem], the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

⁸That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.

⁹Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, ¹⁰but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. ¹¹The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

Into their darkness came the Light. A penetrating Light! A glorious Light! A Light that would produce joy among “all people.”

That light continues to shine today, although, over the last two millennia, many have fought to eliminate the Bible and stamp out the Church. Even now, many people suffer oppression, imprisonment, and death for no other reason than that they call Jesus Christ Lord.

Yet the Church has survived. More than that, the Church has thrived! 65 years ago, Mao Tse Tung expelled all foreign missionaries and closed the borders of China to Bibles and missions. Yet today, the Church of Jesus Christ thrives in China, in spite of difficulty and persecution—to the tune of more than 100 million baptized believers!

The Light shines today on every continent, and thousands more people confess faith in Jesus Christ for the first time each day!

This is the power of the Light that shines into the darkness. The darkness cannot prevail.

Into our darkness, too, comes that same Light—Jesus Christ. He is not ashamed to associate with our darkness. He is not embarrassed by your weaknesses.

He has come to drive out our darkness and overcome our weaknesses. His light is brighter. His love is stronger. He offers us a great salvation!

Give Him your darkness. Acknowledge your sins before Him. If you do so, He is faithful and just to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all your unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Then, be as gracious with others as He has been with you. Don't be afraid of their darkness or put off by their sins. Reach out with kindness. Accept others with grace. Put up with their weaknesses. Encourage their faith in Jesus. And pray for them fervently. That's what Jesus did.

Do you know Him? Have you welcomed His light? Have you received His grace?

If not, why delay? Do so today! Reach out to Him with this prayer:

Lord Jesus, I welcome your life, your light, your grace. Thank you for forgiving my darkness and my sin. Thank you for dying in my place. I believe you have risen from the dead, and, one day, I will rise with you. Even today, I rise by your Spirit to a newness of life. I want to know you more. I choose to follow your ways. I hope to honor you always. Amen.