

**The Light of Life – *John 1:1-18***  
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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

How does the darkness affect you? With winter upon us, we've entered the season of darkness...a season when most of us wake up in darkness and come home from work in darkness. And we have it pretty good here in Oregon compared to some places in the far north. Growing up in Alaska, I experienced a lot of darkness in the winter...sunrise at around 10:00 am and sunset at 3:30 pm with a pale, weak light in between...and further north it got much worse. And I can remember that each year when the darkness started to close in, I began to struggle with a feeling of heaviness, a battle with hopelessness, a drop-off in my motivation and energy level, and a daily struggle in the morning to find joy for the day.

December I could survive pretty well since I loved Christmas and snow, but January was a lot more of a challenge and I can remember counting the days until the first month of the year was finally over and light began to return. Even here in Oregon, I notice the darkness sometimes affecting my state of mind and in the mornings especially I often have to consciously turn off the despairing thoughts and remind myself of the hope I have in Christ as I walk from my bed to the shower.

Darkness is a hopeless place. It's associated with blindness, despair, fear, sin, being lost, wandering aimlessly, and even death itself. Why is it that almost all children and even many adults are afraid of the dark at some point in their lives? We're troubled by what we can't see in the darkness. Walking in darkness brings injury and can even result in death. Evil activities are almost always done in the dark and once they're complete the perpetrators seek the continued cover of darkness. The world apart from God is described as living in darkness and participating in the deeds of darkness.

But did you know that even when we were living in darkness, in full rebellion against God, none of us have ever been completely without a light? You see, God

has left a light within every person that ever lived to point the way to him. Today we're going to look at God's progressive unveiling of the true Light, a light that was and still is suppressed and ignored by most of the human race, and yet can never be extinguished or overcome...a Light that offers us hope and joy in the darkest of seasons. Turn with me, if you would, to John chapter 1. We're going to be studying verses 1 through 18 as we begin a journey into the true Light.

## **II. THE SUPPRESSED YET UN-EXTINGUISHABLE LIGHT (John 1:1-5)**

Let's begin by reading verses 1 through 5 where we learn about this suppressed, yet un-extinguishable Light.

***1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.***

### **A. The Word was with God and was God at the time when the universe and all created things came into being.**

This passage begins with the introduction of the Word, a person who was there when the universe and all created things came into being...at the time when emptiness and darkness exploded with light and life. We're also told that this person called, the Word, was not only with God at that time, He also was God. The Word was God and the Word was with God in the beginning.

### **B. All things that have come into being, have come into being by the Word**

And not only was this person, called the Word, present at the beginning of all things, He was actually the One doing the creating. And, interestingly, if we think back to Genesis 1, the account of creation, we remember that all things were created through the spoken word. The Word spoke and things appeared out of thin air. He didn't take existing materials and mold them into something new, he created all that we see *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. The power of the Word is like nothing else.

In the verses we just read from John 1, the bold statement is also made that NOTHING that has ever come into being, has come into being apart from this Word. This means that no one and no thing is self-originated. Everything and everyone owes their existence to the eternally existent Word. As we're told in Psalm 24, verse 1:

***The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains,  
The world, and those who dwell in it.***

Everything and everyone, every planet, every star, every speck of dust and drop of water on the earth, belong to God. Another passage in Colossians 1, verse 16 tells us that all things have been created by God and for Him.

Have you ever considered the implications of this truth considering the way most people on earth either live their lives as if God doesn't exist or spend their lives worshipping false gods? Can you see that just maybe there's a good reason why "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men," as we read in Romans 1. If each person on this planet was specially created by the Word for the Word and yet they live for themselves as if he doesn't even exist, don't you think some wrath might be coming and be very justified?

Because you and I have grown up with and been surrounded with this way of living, and have spent time living this way ourselves, I don't think we often realize how serious sin and denying the God who made us, actually is. But I'd say it must be a pretty serious thing considering the reality of eternal hell for those who ignore the Word who created them and His message.

### **C. The Word is the giver of life and the very life within men is their light**

Now some of you might say, that's just not fair. You might say that God just hasn't made it clear enough to people that he really exists and that we're not just the result of random chance and accident. After all, scientists have diligently studied and the vast majority have concluded that we're just here as a result of a Big Bang of nothingness.

Well, let's see what we learn in answer to this way of thinking in verses 4 and 5 of John chapter 1:

***In [the Word] was life, and the life was the Light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."***

There's a very interesting concept here that you may have missed on a first reading. We see first that in the Word was life. This makes sense. The Word is the Creator. Everything that came into being, receiving life, came into being through the power of his word. He has life and gives it to the creatures he's created. Of course, he created many things that don't have life, like rocks and dirt and water. But he gave life to some his creations, like people and animals and plants.

And the Word created human beings specially unique, fashioned after the very image of God, giving us each a soul and allowing us to share in some of the invisible characteristics of God. We can think and love and be creative and have mercy and carry out justice, not perfectly like God can, because of our sin nature, but nonetheless in ways somewhat like God.

But the next thing we see in verse 4 is that the life in the Word...the life that flows out of him and is shared with us as he breathes into us the breath of life...that life he gives to us is our light. The life within human beings is their light in the darkness. In other words, the life within each human being...the fact that we can think and breathe and talk and run and jump and have babies and build things and make judgments about right and wrong...the design that permeates our bodies...this life that originates in the Word and has been shared with us...this is the light that points all men to the existence of God, the Word, our Creator, whether they admit it or not.

And this light shines in the darkness. No matter how hard people try to deny the existence of God, no matter how many scientists boldly proclaim that we're fools to insist there's a Creator, the light still shines and they're held accountable for denying and suppressing the truth. The light is right there shining within every person who has life and all are without excuse.

As we read in Romans 1:18-22:

***18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools...***

The life within us shines brightly, pointing to the originator of life, the Word, our Creator, and reminding us that we belong to Him and were created for Him. But notice that there's a progression. As people continue to ignore the obvious evidence within them, they become futile in their thinking and their hearts become darkened...they become fools as they continue to deny the truth until they reach a point where they no longer even see the light God has placed within them to point to him. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not comprehended it.

Now that word, "comprehended," can also be translated, "overcome." So the verse could say this: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." In fact, I think this is the way the ESV Bible translates it. But I like the view expressed in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* on this word. The writers argue that there's no reason to choose one or the other, that both meanings have significance when we think of it this way: "When the life, which was in the Word, manifested itself as light, the world in darkness neither accepted it (cf. v.11) nor was able to put it out (ch. 20)." People can deny it or suppress it all they want, but it doesn't affect the reality and can never extinguish the light.

### **III. THE PRE-SUNRISE (John 1:6-10)**

But as we move on in John, chapter 1, we see that God had a plan to brighten the light pointing to the Word and shine it even more clearly for all the world to see. You see, God had determined before the foundation of the world that at the right time he would send the Light himself, the very Word of Life that created it all, to

live among us and show us the way out of darkness forever...there was a glorious sunrise coming that would provide bright light for the whole world living in darkness.

But before the true Light arrived, there was some preparation to be done, a pre-sunrise, you might say, and God had hand-picked just the right man to carry this out. This brings us to verses 6 through 10 of John chapter 1, which I'm going to call, "The Pre-Sunrise":

***6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. 9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.***

That last verse tells us again why the true Light needed to come: the sad fact was that even though every living being was given life by the true Light, and even though the very life within them pointed to his powerful work, still they did not know him or acknowledge him. Even though the true Light was still holding them together and their every breath was dependent on his continued work, yet they lived as if he didn't exist and ignored the light shining within them.

So as God prepared to bring the sunrise, he sent a man named John the Baptist to testify about the true Light (the Word) who was coming into the world. His job was to prepare people's hearts, showing them their need for the true Light, and telling them ahead of time that the true Light was coming. That way, when the true Light arrived, John could say, "See, there he is. The true Light has come. This is from God because only God knows what will happen ahead of time."

And the reason John was doing this was so that people would believe in the true Light when he arrived. As we'll see shortly, belief in the true Light was going to be very important. The light was just starting to glow behind the mountains in preparation for the glorious sunrise...the coming of the Light of the World...the only One who gives light and life to every man and provides the light we need to see our way out of the spiritual darkness we live in.

#### **IV. THE FULL SUNRISE (John 1:10-18)**

And now, continuing on in John chapter 1, we arrive at the full sunrise...the coming of true Light. Let's read verses 10 through 18 of John chapter 1:

***11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" 16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.***

##### **A. The Word (the true Light) became flesh and lived among us**

The sunrise crested the mountains when the Word, the true Light, the One who spoke us into being and is right now holding each of us together...when He became flesh and lived right here on earth with us...the very Creator of the universe living and walking around on earth among those he created. This is what we call the incarnation...what we celebrate this time of year...when the only Son of God, the Word, Jesus Christ, put on human flesh and came to earth as helpless baby in order to provide a way for us to come out of the darkness and walk into his perfect light.

Notice in the last half of verse 14 that when this happened, when the true Light arrived and dwelt among us, "we saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." Do you know what that word translated, "glory," means? It means splendor and brightness. Do you see a little bit of a light theme here in this passage? The true Light had arrived...the sunrise had crested the mountains and was shining on the earth. Now don't take this to mean that Jesus' body was glowing with light when he came out of his mother's womb or that as he walked through his days he was surrounded with an aura of light. We learn instead that

he was ordinary in all appearances and just looked like a normal, everyday person. But it does mean that in the way Jesus lived his life on earth, the choices he made and the miracles he performed, people saw God's glory in a way they'd never seen before.

Can you imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph to have a child that always did what was right and always made the right choice? Can you imagine how much that must have irritated his brothers and sisters? How would you like to follow in the footsteps of an older brother who was perfect in each and every way? And we do see evidence that at least some of his brothers were not his biggest fans at first. But when they watched his ministry and were eyewitnesses to the glory he displayed in everything he did and said and then even more profoundly in his death and resurrection, even they were convinced Jesus is the true Light. His brother James became one of the pillars of the early church. He must have seen, in a big way, the splendor and brightness that could only come from the Son of God, the Word.

## **B. He came to His own people, but they rejected Him**

But unfortunately not everyone responded to the glory of the true Light this way. We're told in verse 11, that the true Light came to his own people, and they rejected him. The people of Israel, God's chosen people, who should have recognized him more readily than anyone else and who had more opportunities to see his power and glory on display through the healings and miracles he performed among them...his own people in the end rejected him, being led astray by their leaders who were so entrenched in their own power and religious observances, that they turned their back on the sunrise and pretended it wasn't happening. In spite of the huge amount of prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah and how Jesus perfectly fulfilled them all, the Jewish people as a whole rejected him.

Did you know that still today, Jewish rabbis are forbidden to read and teach on Isaiah 53? Why? Because no one can read that section of the Hebrew Scriptures without seeing Jesus Christ in a prophecy that was written down hundreds of years before he was even born. Sadly, this ignoring of the true Light that has dawned on the earth is and has been happening all over the world, and not just among Jewish people. In fact, among Jewish people today, there's actually a



growing awakening as many are finally recognizing Jesus as their Messiah. Yet as we consider our world as a whole today...Despite the light of life within each of us that points to a Creator...Despite the profound life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that has given light to the world...Despite the power and life-changing truth of the Word of God...people still prefer darkness to light and do everything they can to ignore it and suppress it.

Why do you think Christianity is the one thing it's OK to be politically incorrect about? Why do you think, "Jesus," is such a popular swear word? Why do you think when you watch documentaries on TV, Buddhism and Hinduism and Islam are admired and treated with respect, while Christianity is either completely ignored or great effort is made to tear it down or prove it's inaccurate? It's because people prefer darkness to light...it's what they're comfortable with and they think if they stay there, they can live their lives however they want and be their own god. They think they're choosing freedom, but are really enslaving themselves to the prince of darkness and will experience the pain and injury and hopelessness you might expect if you tried to live your life in complete darkness.

**C. But those who did accept Him, believing in His name, became children of God, receiving re-birth (new life) by the power of God**

But I have good news for us today! Look back at verses 12 and 13:

***12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.***

The good news is that none of us need to walk around in darkness. The message the true Light was and is shining into the world, is that there's a way out of the darkness. There's Light that shines in the darkest of seasons. There's hope that drives away the hopelessness. There's power to break out of whatever darkness has a hold on our lives. The One who gave us physical life can also give us something even more profound: spiritual life.

God's Word tells us that even though every human being has physical life, we all begin life spiritually dead, walking around in darkness. Listen to what this looks like from Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 to 3:

***1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which your formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.***

This is the darkness where every person begins and continues to live until something very important happens...something that's described for us back in those verses we just read in John chapter 1, verses 12 and 13. The one and only way every person can walk out of darkness into light is by simply believing in the name of Jesus Christ, the Word of Life, the true Light. Instead of rejecting him as his own people did, we receive him and take him as our own. And when we do this, we walk out of darkness into the Light of life...In that moment of belief, we are spiritually reborn by the power of God and become His very own children forever! Just as the Word gave us physical life, he also gives us spiritual life when we recognize that we're walking around in darkness and turn to him for the light we need.

**D. Through Moses we receive the Law...through Jesus Christ we received the power to actually live it out**

And you know what else happens when you believe in Christ and join yourself to him? You not only receive forgiveness of sins and come to life spiritually, you also begin to change and receive the power to live life in the light...breaking the chains of sin in your life and walking into God's way of living life. Look at verses 16 and 17 of John chapter 1:

***16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.***

As we become children of God through believing in Jesus, he shares his fullness with us and gives us what is described as grace upon grace. He doesn't just forgive our sins and then leave us waiting in the darkness until we die and go to heaven. No, he gives us his himself right now...notice it's past tense...we have all

received of his fullness and he has infused us with grace upon grace. New birth and new life in Christ bring the power to change and be transformed...the power to walk out of darkness into light!

Think about this for a moment: the Law, given to the Israelites by God through Moses, provides us the standard of right and wrong. Through Moses we learned the 10 commandments...the truth showing us what it looks like to live life God's way...a life of loving God and loving other people. But through Jesus we realized truth AND grace. In other words, through Jesus we were given truth, a much fuller picture about what God is like and his design for living, but we were also given the grace, or the power, to actually live it out. Truth AND grace were realized through Jesus.

Did you know that the word translated, "realized," is the same Greek word that's translated, "came into being," in verse 3 of John chapter 1? The word is *ginomai* and it's the word that describes the act of creation, bringing things into being. So through Christ, the unique combination of both truth AND the power to actually live it out from the heart, came into being.

Before Christ, the Law provided truth about how people should live their lives, but people remained spiritually dead and were unable to live it out beyond just trying to keep their external behavior in line with the commandments. Their hearts remained unchanged and they didn't have the Holy Spirit dwelling permanently inside them to enable them to actually live out God's truth from the heart. The Law was given to show them that they could never meet God's standard on their own and needed to trust in God alone for salvation...the endless animal sacrifices of the Old Testament covered their inability to keep the Law's requirements until the time when Jesus would take care of it once and for all on the cross.

In some ways the Law performs the same purpose for us. It shows us we're spiritually dead apart from Christ and can never measure up to God's standard. It shows us that as long as we're spiritually dead, living in darkness, we can never please God, no matter how hard we try to keep his Law. It shows us that we can't save ourselves and points us to the true Light, Jesus Christ. But when the Law has shown us this, we have a solution to the problem that wasn't available before the true Light arrived and accomplished his mission on earth. We can now experience new life and the power to live life God's way.

By turning to Jesus Christ for salvation, believing in his name, we are made spiritually alive, given a new heart, and receive the Holy Spirit living inside us...we're given the grace to be transformed and actually start living life God's way from the heart. This doesn't mean we can now be perfect and never make mistakes. But it does mean that over time our lives will be changed and we'll be becoming more and more like Christ. We'll be transformed from the inside out.

## **V. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION**

So how's the transformation going? Is your life changing? Are you growing in Christlikeness? Are you still living mostly in the darkness or are you walking in the light. Happily, I see a lot of this transformation going on here in our body. God is changing and growing many of you and it shows. Keep seeking him...keep knowing him through his Word and continuous prayer...keep learning to walk by His power as you enjoy him and ask for his strength and wisdom in everything you do.

But are there any of you out there, who have made the mistake of thinking the good news is just about getting your sins forgiven and then waiting for heaven? I fear there are many Christians who walk through their lives with this perspective and don't experience the full change and freedom and life transformation that God intends to be the result of new life in Christ. So as we wrap up today, I want us to consider together a few Scriptures that talk about the reasons why we were saved...why we were called out of darkness into light...and the fruits that will result from true saving faith. Let's look at them together:

Eph 2:10

***For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.***

1 Thess 4:7

***For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.***

Heb 12:14-15

***Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.***

Matt 7:21-23

**21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.  
22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'**

In each of these verses, it's abundantly clear that true salvation leads to transformation. We're not called to remain in darkness, just barely surviving until the light of heaven dawns. We're called into God's marvelous light right now and he's given us the grace, the power, to start becoming more and more and more like Christ. The Light of the World does not leave us in darkness. This doesn't mean that we're instantly perfect in all our behavior and desires, or that we can become 100% like Christ during our earthly lives. But it does mean that there should be a pattern of progress and changing over time. As we look back on our lives with Christ, we should see that we're not the person we used to be. If we're still just the same person we were when we said a prayer to accept Christ 10 years ago and we're still just as much in darkness as we were then, we should be concerned.

If you're confident that you're already his child, but just need to see more growth and transformation. I'd give you similar advice to what I just shared with those whose growth is evident. Start seeking him diligently...start believing that he really is everything you need and want...start knowing him more through his Word and continuous prayer...start learning to walk by His power as you enjoy him and ask for his strength and wisdom in everything you do.

And if there are any of you here today who have either never accepted Christ or who have said the words or prayed a prayer sometime in the past, but no freedom or transformation has come, I want to challenge you to make sure you've truly invited Christ to be your Savior and Lord...make sure you've really joined yourself to him. Do it again if you need to. I invited Christ to be my Savior several times when I was young until I came to the firm conviction that I really was God's child.

It's not rocket science. The two key elements are repentance and faith...turning from sin and trusting in Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Here's what you do. Just talk to God. Say, "God I know that I'm a sinner. I've done wrong things and have lived as if you don't exist or aren't worth my time. I don't want to live this way anymore. I need you. Jesus, I believe you died on the cross from my sins and rose from the dead. I invite you to be my Savior and the Lord of my life."

It's that simple. This is how you become a child of God and a new creation. Express that to Jesus and mean it in your heart and let new life begin. He will resurrect you spiritually...and over time you will begin to change as you study his Word, share your life with him through prayer, and learn to trust in his power. You'll become aware of any darkness in your life and find the power to walk out of it into light, life and freedom. That doesn't mean it will be easy. But it does mean that as you seek God's power and fullness and his grace upon grace, he will give it to you and you'll start to change.

I want to close today with verse 18 of John chapter 1:

***No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.***

The Word has spoken. He has explained many things to us in his life and teachings and actions and in his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. He has explained through all of this who our Three-in-One God is, what He's like, and how we can live our lives according to his design. And there's no better way to get to know the fullness of who God is and what he's like than to get to know the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And, Lord-willing, that's what we're going to do in the month of December and then continue doing on the first Sunday of each month following. We're going to harmonize the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, once a month examining a full picture of something from the life and teachings of Christ, with the goal of getting to know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, our Three-in-One God, better.

For the full month of December, I'm planning to focus on the birth and coming of Jesus, and then we'll continue on with his life and teachings on each Communion Sunday in 2017 and probably beyond. I'm close to finalizing what we'll be

studying on the other Sundays of each month, but I'm still seeking the Lord for a final decision. So please be in prayer for God's guidance. I'm excited about what God's going to show us in our study of the life and teachings of Christ.

We get to be his disciples and like the 12 disciples, I know we're going to be transformed as we walk with the Light of the World and know him more.