

The Light of the World

John 8:12; 1:1-14; 3:19-21

The topic of Light is very appropriate for the advent season. When Mary and Joseph came to the Temple to present Jesus, Simeon met them and speaking of Jesus said, "For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, **a light** for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:30-32)

Jesus called Himself the Light of the world. Believers are called children of light. It is important to clearly understand the meaning and significance of the figure. Then we can correctly apply the figure to ourselves.

I. The meaning of the figure "Light":

Jesus hints at the meaning in His allusion to a physical phenomena of the OT and in the figurative way He Himself used the word.

1. Jesus was alluding to the pillar of fire.

A tradition of lighting golden candelabra in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2; Lev 23:33ff; Deut. 16:13-15) commemorated God's provision of the pillar of fire for the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. Jesus applied this to Himself when He said that He was the Light of the World. There were two prominent functions of the pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21-22; Nehemiah 9:12, 19): it provided direction and it gave light by which to see (and travel).

To what other figure during the Feast did Jesus compare Himself?

2. Jesus offered the light of life. Other passages explain this figurative use.

a. Light means exposing hidden things and allowing people to see clearly. John 3:19-21. In the figurative sense light reveals the character of thoughts and actions. Cf the English expression "Let's put some light on this". *What other examples can you name?*

b. Light means providing direction for people. Romans 2:19. The parallelism would mean that light is intended to provide clear direction, what you ought to know, where you ought to go. Cf Psalm 43:3.

The light of life which Jesus offers in John 8:12 probably has then this sense: 1) the spiritual understanding of our condition that is necessary to have spiritual life, and 2) knowledge of the path that culminates in eternal life.

II. The significance of Jesus as the "Light":

1. He is the Light to follow. Jesus emphatically and exclusively applied this to Himself.

In the same manner that the Israelites could follow the pillar of fire at night and see without stumbling, we also can follow Jesus and see (spiritually). No other way leads to life.

The presence of the Light did not mean that people followed the Light. They rejected the Light. People must make a choice.

2. He is a Light that exposes our thoughts and deeds.

John 3:19-21. Our reaction to the Light reveals our heart. Those who do evil flee from the Light.

Those who do good, come to the light that it might become clear that the good which they have done is from God.

Evil men are like cockroaches that flee when the light is turned on. Godly people are like moths which are attracted to the light. These are the only two options: to be attracted or repelled. *How can we tell if we are being drawn to the light or repelled by it?*

III. The responsibility to be children of the Light:

John 1 says that those who receive the Light become children of God. Paul calls believers children of the Light. Jesus called believers, "the light of the world" (Matth. 5:14). Cf Acts 13:47. Paul writes that we had been in darkness, now we are in the light. He commands "live as children of the light." (Eph 5:8-14.)

1. In Ephesians the characteristics of being children of the light are goodness, righteousness and truth. If we are children of the Light, we should act like our Father who is the Light.

2. 1 John 2:8-10. If we hate our brother, we are still in darkness. If we love our brother, than we are living in light. Check your "love" according to 1 Cor 13. *What are specific, practical indications that we are loving (or not loving) others?*

3. Children of the light function like Jesus did by exposing "the fruitless deeds of darkness" (Eph 5:1-13). If we are children of the light, we will find the same response among people, that Jesus, the Light, had. *What other figure did Paul use to express the same idea?*

We have been called out of darkness into light. It has not been a choice of our own, but an action of God. We should thank God for having called us out of darkness into the light.

The lights of Christmas are a reminder that Jesus is the light and that He is calling people out of darkness into light. If anyone is not a child of God, today is the day to change that. All who are children of God are challenged to live as children of the Light.

What do I need to do to become a better child of the Light? When will I start?