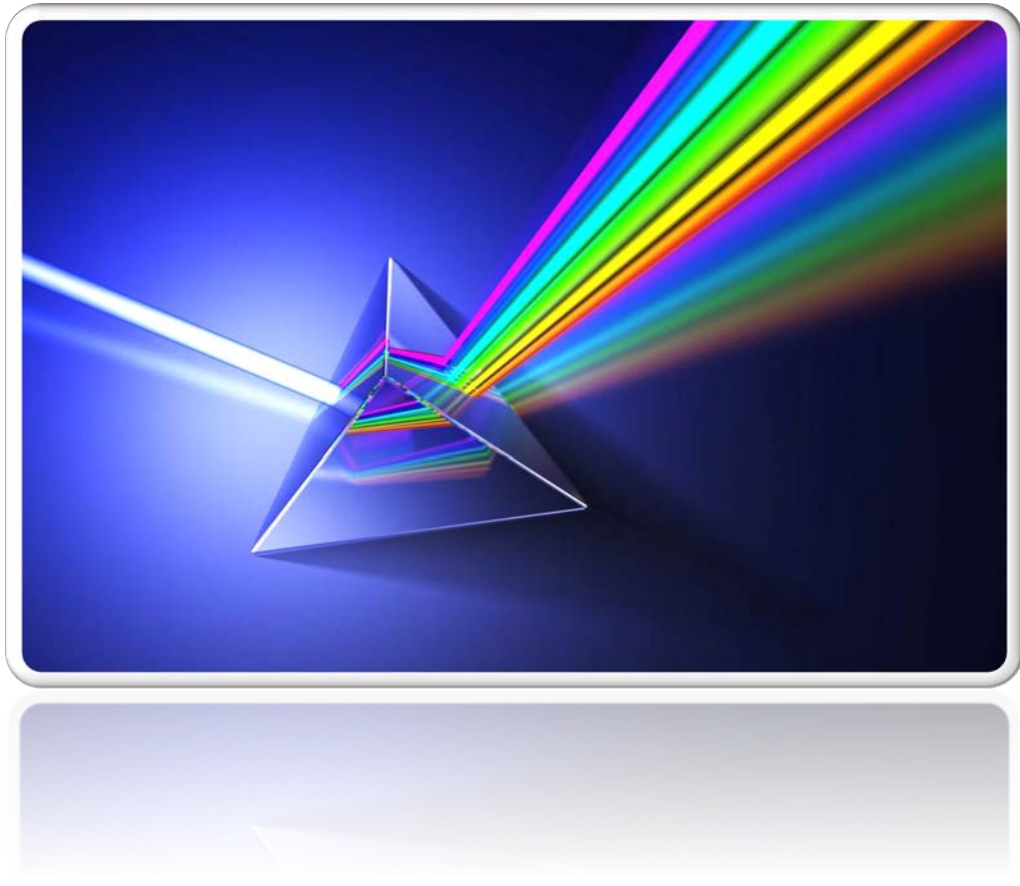


# THE COMING OF THE LIGHT



T . M . M O O R E

A R E V I S I O N S T U D Y F R O M  
T H E F E L L O W S H I P O F A I L B E

*The Coming of the Light*

The Coming of the Light  
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## Welcome to *Kingdom of Light*

Light is a powerful image for representing Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. Jesus identified Himself as the Light of the world. In His Kingdom, all who believe in Him walk in the light as He is in the light

But what does this mean? What are the effects of it? How does this happen? And what does it mean for us to *refract* rather than merely *reflect* the light of Christ into our world?

These are some of the questions we will unpack in this brief study of the Kingdom of light.

*ReVision* studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 Light to Darkness

*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.* Colossians 1.13, 14

### *Deep darkness*

Light is one of the most familiar images associated with Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. And precisely because it is so familiar, it's easy to lose sight of just what a powerful image this is.

We who believe in Jesus have been delivered from a domain of darkness into the realm of Him Who reigns as the Light of the World (Jn. 8.12). In Him *we* become the light of the world (Matt. 5.13-16) as we radiate the reality of Jesus and His Kingdom through all our words and deeds.

The world around us beyond the pale of saving faith is all darkness, and the darkness is very deep, indeed. We need to understand just how dark the world is apart from Jesus Christ. While the idea of darkness is sometimes used in Scripture to refer to the mystery and incomprehensibility of God (cf. Ps. 18.9-11), this is not its primary use.

The Scriptures use the idea of *darkness* in many ways. The first use is in Genesis 1.2, where we read that the unformed earth was shrouded in darkness. Darkness denotes not only the absence of light but a kind of incompleteness, lacking shape, purpose, form, direction, meaning, and substance. Darkness is confusion, uncertainty, and even fear, because it comes up short of that *good* condition God desires for His creation.

Later, in Genesis 15.12, darkness is associated with dread, fear, and uncertainty. Only when God comes to speak to Abram in the darkness are his doubts resolved and his fears dispelled. Darkness is not where God intends the earth and its people to remain. He comes into the darkness to dispel it by His Word of promise.

Darkness is also associated with the presence of God in judgment and wrath. Darkness heavy enough to be felt enveloped the people of Egypt as God poured out His wrath on Pharaoh's recalcitrance (Ex. 10.21). The suffering psalmist of Psalm 88 descended into a judgment of darkness (v. 18), foreshadowing here the darkness that enveloped the earth as Jesus suffered the wrath of God for our sins (Matt. 27.45). Job employed the image of darkness to signify death and unfruitfulness (3.1-6), confusion (5.14), chaos (10.20-22) frustration and uncertainty (19.8), and complete dissolution and despair (20.26).

It is from such darkness that we have been rescued and conveyed into the Kingdom of Light.

### *Darkness and wickedness*

One of the more common uses of the image of darkness is to depict wickedness and sin. The path of darkness is the opposite of the way of uprightness (Prov. 2.13). The way of the wicked is like deep darkness as men stumble over their iniquities, harming themselves and others (Prov. 4.19). The works of darkness are unfruitful and displeasing to the Lord (Eph. 5.10, 11).

This wickedness is ultimately associated with spiritual powers, which roam the darkness, far from the light of God, and work to impose their dark ways on every unwitting and incautious person (Eph. 6.12). Ultimately, complete and unremitting darkness, where all these images of darkness combine and compound, is the final disposition of those who continue to oppose the light of truth and the Gospel (Jude 8-13).

"The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin," the old hymn by P. P. Bliss declares. And how deep that darkness is can be seen by the widespread sense of uncertainty, anxiousness, wrong belief, and anger that blankets our world like a death shroud.

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### *Whistling in the darkness?*

As a child in middle school, I often walked home after basketball practice during the winter months, when it was dark and cold. The quickest route took me through the largest cemetery in our town, and I never walked through that place without a sense of dread, talking to myself and whistling in the deep darkness, to bolster my soul against the fear of the unknown.

It is a terrible thing to dwell in darkness, as doubtless many of us can remember from our experience prior to coming to faith in Jesus Christ. We are not meant for the darkness, for confusion, uncertainty, sin, dread, and death. This is the life of those who do not know the Lord, all who have not gained entrance into the Kingdom of Light, where Jesus enlightens every person with the grace and truth of God. “The Light of the world is Jesus!”

The confident, boastful, self-assured ways of the lost are only so much whistling through the graveyard of a dark world, for they inhabit a deep darkness of doubt, uncertainty, insecurity, disappointment, discouragement, and the fear of death (Heb. 2.15).

Such people may put on a happy face, confident that their gray skies are going to clear up at any moment, but in their souls, dark doubts loom.

Look around you: Many of your neighbors, co-workers, school mates, and friends are dwelling in deep darkness. Oh, they seem to be doing just fine, thank you, but then, so did you and I before the Light of Christ dawned in our soul. And you can know this for sure: Darkness deep and fearful enshrouds the lost day after day after day.

And you and I are called to show them the way to the Light. We are citizens and ambassadors of the Kingdom of Light, where the Light of the world is making all things new.

### *For reflection*

1. How is it evident to you that this world is draped in deep darkness?
2. What did Jesus mean by saying that believers are the light of the world? How do we fulfill that calling?
3. Meditate on 1 John 2.8. What are the implications for your life as a believer?

*Next steps – Preparation: Have you mapped out your [Personal Mission Field](#)? Watch the brief video at this link, then download your worksheet and get started bringing the Light to that part of the Lord’s field which He has assigned to you.*

## 2 Light of the World

*And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:*

“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,  
By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles:  
The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,  
And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death  
Light has dawned.” Matthew 4.13-16

### *Light and Kingdom*

From the beginning, Jesus’ earthly sojourn is associated with two things: light and the Kingdom of God. Jesus came *as* the Light of the world to *bring near* the Kingdom of God. The next verse following in Matthew’s gospel reads, “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

For Jesus, being the Light of the world, and proclaiming and bringing near the Kingdom of light, were inseparable aspects of His mission.

The gospel writers understood that God intended to associate Jesus and His Kingdom with the coming of light into the darkness, an experience familiar to every human being, every day of their lives, but in association with the Biblical use of darkness, a metaphor of great significance and power. The apostle John tells us that the coming of Jesus’ light – the light of the Kingdom – is so powerful that it dispels the darkness, and the darkness is unable to resist or overcome it (1 Jn. 2.8; Jn. 1.4, 5).

Every Jew of Jesus’ generation understood that the Gentiles lived in darkness. They did not know the Lord and had no regard for His Law, which is the light of truth (Ps. 119.105). The Gentiles did horrible things because they worshiped pagan deities and obeyed a far-away emperor who fancied himself God and tyrannized his subjects with brutality and bribes. The Jews despised the Gentiles, even though many of them, especially those who lived in the traditional tribal lands that bordered Gentile territories, had regular commerce of various sorts with unbelievers.

### *Light to the world*

Jesus’ move into this region, bordering on Gentile lands, was intended as a deliberate signal concerning His ministry. He had come as Light in the darkness initially among His own people, but He would bring light into the darkness of the Gentile world, beginning in “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

Born in a manger in Bethlehem, the most Hebrew of Hebrew villages, the home town of King David, Jesus’ coming had been announced in glorious light by a chorus of bright angels, singing of the arrival of Him Who would bring peace to uncertain, frightened men. But while the Light of the world broke into human experience among the Jews, He began to announce His Kingdom among Jews and Gentiles alike. He brought the light of God’s grace and truth deliberately into the regions of darkness, where both Jews and Gentiles stumbled in spiritual confusion, political uncertainty, moral compromise, and widespread despair.

In John 8, just as the people of Jerusalem were beginning to become aware of Jesus and were speculating wildly concerning who He might be (Jn. 7.40-44), Jesus declared Himself to be the Light of the world (Jn. 8.12). He called on all who recognized that they were trapped in darkness to follow Him, for in so doing they could expect to find the light of life. He promised they would come to know the truth of God, which would set them free from all the fears, uncertainties, guilt, and doubts associated with the darkness of unbelief (Jn.

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8.32).

He had come as the Light of the world to honor God and make His glory known throughout the earth (Jn. 8.49, 54). And as if to make His point emphatically, He gave light to the blind eyes of a man who had never seen before (Jn. 9.1-7).

### *Light that overcomes*

In Jesus, all the negative images of darkness are overcome and dispelled. He came from the brilliance and radiance of the glory of God to bring that glory to the world. Jesus is “the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person” (Heb. 1.3). He breaks into every region of darkness, radiating the light of grace and truth, so that all who believe in Him may gain entry to His Kingdom of light (Col. 1.13, 14). From there, walking in the light as He is in the light, all who believe in Jesus see the world and themselves as never before, and become lights in the darkness of an unbelieving age (Matt. 5.13-16).

We may be tempted to think that what our lost generation needs most is better government, a more robust economy, or an improved moral and cultural climate. All these are important, it is true. But *JESUS* is the Light of the world! He is the Path through the darkness of confusion, uncertainty, fear, guilt, and despair. He illuminates the hidden recesses of the soul, and bathes it with the light of God’s glory, transforming those who trust in Him, from glory to glory, into His own radiant image and likeness (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

Only in Jesus’ Kingdom of light can people break free of the darkness of this unbelieving age, and grow in the Light of grace, truth, hope, peace, righteousness, and joy. What our friends need most is Jesus. He is the Light of the World!

And we are His light, that the people who sit in darkness today, in the region and shadow of death, may know that Light has dawned, and life and hope have been brought near.

### *For reflection*

1. Why is light such an excellent way of thinking about Jesus? What properties does light have that can help us in thinking about ourselves as His lights to the world?
2. How does the light of Jesus get “turned on” in someone’s life? Believers are called to bring the light to the dark, unlit lamps of people’s souls. What does this mean for you?
3. How do you experience the light of Jesus in your life?

*Next steps – Preparation: How can you see that the people around you are, in many ways, living in darkness? Make a point to begin praying each day, for all the people you expect to meet that day, that God might allow you an opportunity to share some of Christ’s Light with them.*



### 3 Banishing Darkness

*Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 1 John 2.8*

*Our Babe*

In his “Ode on the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” 17<sup>th</sup> century poet John Milton showed that he understood very well the implications of Christ’s coming for all the regions of darkness.

Toward the end of the poem, as the Incarnation occurs in a lowly manger in Bethlehem, Milton depicts the terrified flight of every false deity and bogus pagan philosophy, every demon and foul spirit, reeling and fleeing before the coming of the Light of the world. Satan, the chief of darkness, is shown pacing in his dark lair, unable to do anything to prevent the rout of his minions and himself.

Milton magnifies the power of Christ the Light against these forces of darkness by saying,

*Our Babe, to show His Godhead true,  
can in His swaddling clothes control the damnèd crew.*

The apostles also understood the meaning of Christ’s coming as the Light of the world, both for their day and for the course of history. Paul insisted that we who have come into the light of Christ and His Kingdom are no more prisoners of the darkness; thus, we must no longer continue in its wicked and fearful ways. We are children of the light; light is our inheritance and our calling; and it is our privilege to live as those in whom the Light of the world resides and is shining to refract the glory of God into every area of our lives (Col. 1.12, 13; Eph. 5.6-21; 1 Cor. 10.31). We may expect to grow in the light, so that the light of Christ and His Kingdom may advance in and through us unto righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17-19).

The apostle John also understood the implications of coming to faith in Jesus Christ. He had walked with the Light of the world for three years, and he understood the power of Christ’s indestructible life to bring light and truth to the world. The darkness had been invaded by the true Light of God, and now the darkness was everywhere beginning to recede. Those who claim to live in the light, as Christ is the Light of the world, live in love and turn away from every fleshly desire. The light of God increases in them as they love one another and do the will of God (1 Jn. 2.8-17).

And the darkness, fleeing the growing Presence of the Light, cannot overcome it.

*To fill the earth*

References to the Kingdom of God throughout the Scriptures leave no doubt that God’s intention is to fill the earth with the reign of His Son, and to bring Kingdom light to every nook, cranny, culture, and person, throughout the world and for all time.

The Kingdom of God is like a stone that grows and overcomes all other dark kingdoms and realms (Dan. 2.44, 45). Though it meets with opposition and violence as it advances, still it makes progress and prevails (Dan. 7.18-27).

Of the increase of Christ’s Kingdom and righteousness there will be no end (Is. 9.7). The citizens of Christ’s Kingdom shall become shepherds to the world, bringing even enemies of Christ into the Kingdom of His peace (Mic. 5.2-5).

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The Kingdom grows to encompass the whole world and all of humankind (Matt. 13.36-43). In Jesus Christ, the Light of the world has come to men and history, and the darkness is fading away. Our Babe and King controls every segment and sector of the darkness, and we are His agents of grace, truth, and light to the world. Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, is filling all things with Himself (Eph. 1.22, 23; 4.8-10).

It's time we recognized our provenance, claimed our inheritance, and got on with our calling as the light of the world.

### *Seek first*

So is it any wonder that Jesus commands His followers to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6.33)?

Given that Jesus is advancing His Kingdom of light against all the gloom and terror of the darkness, and given that we have been delivered into that Kingdom by His powerful grace and truth, how can we in any way continue in the darkness? Indeed, how can we devote our lives to anything other than laying hold on the Kingdom with all the vigor we can muster, forcing our way into it, striving to understand and express our citizenship, and laying down our lives so that this Kingdom of light can come on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 11.12; Lk. 16.16; Matt. 16.24, 25; Matt. 6.10)?

The light of the Kingdom increases first in the lingering darkness of our own souls, as we bask in the light of Jesus, daily in His Word and prayer. From there, Jesus radiates light through us via good words and good works into all the relationships, roles, and responsibilities of our Personal Mission Field. We must not think of the Kingdom as advancing on earth in large, institutional, or movement terms. It makes progress daily, beginning in our soul, then spreading through all the places and to all the people with whom we have contact each day.

For it is in and through us, living each day to the glory of God, that the Babe of Bethlehem banishes the darkness and shines His light into the world.

### *For reflection*

1. Have you identified your Personal Mission Field? Watch this brief video ([click here](#)), then download the accompanying worksheet and get started.
2. Are you getting enough time in the light each day – in Scripture and prayer – for the light to be increasing in you? Explain.
3. Since living in the light of Christ and His Kingdom is so important, why do we have to seek the Kingdom? How can we know when we're finding it?

*Next steps – Conversation: What is involved in seeking the Kingdom of God? Share your thoughts with a fellow believer.*

## 4 Light in Good Works

*“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* Matthew 5.14-16

### *Good works*

As we have seen, the Scriptures speak often of the “works of darkness” (cf. Jn. 3.19; Eph. 5.11). Such works arise from and sow seeds of self-interest, confusion, uncertainty, doubt, corruption, and worse. It is sadly obvious that works of darkness are a prominent feature of life in our world.

But light has dawned with the coming of Christ and His Kingdom, and, over the long run, works of darkness can neither overcome that light nor stand against it.

But how does the Kingdom of light make progress in and against a world of darkness?

The apostle John insisted that those who have come into the Kingdom of light do the *works* of the light – works of love and the will of God (1 Jn. 2.1-11). The works of darkness shall not be found in them; instead, citizens in the Kingdom of light have renounced the works of darkness and have nothing more to do with them.

John is simply explaining what Jesus taught when He said that those who believe in Him must understand that He has appointed them as the light of the world. Light penetrates darkness in countless, minute photons and waves, one after and upon another – supplanting darkness with radiance, gloom and confusion with clarity. Light stands out in darkness, exposing everything the darkness hides, whether ugly or beautiful, and sending those who prefer the darkness back to it. Wickedness flees from the light of Christ, as He shines through His people into the pervasive, but retreating, darkness of our secular and unbelieving age.

Jesus said that the light His followers bring to the world comes in the form of good works. He has lit our souls by His Word and Spirit, revealing to us the ways of grace and truth and fitting us to live for Him. We are a light-filled city, situated on a high hill. We are lamps brightly lit and carried into a dark room, radiating photons and waves of true, spiritual light in a continuous stream of good works – small, constant, and filled with Spirit and truth. We must resist every attempt to cover or squelch our light as we persevere in shining it into the world. All our words and deeds are to be vehicles of light into the darkness, and this not for our own glory, but for the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor. 4.15).

### *The glory of God*

For the larger purpose of Jesus’ coming, the greater objective of His growing and advancing Kingdom of light, and the overarching goal of the lives of those who know Him, is that the knowledge of God’s glory should fill the earth as waters cover the sea (Hab. 2.14). The glory of God is everywhere present in the creation, in an infinite array of forms and expressions (Ps. 19.1-4). Yet most people, including most Christians, have never learned to discern that glory, much less to appreciate and celebrate it.

This is the Christian’s calling as light to the world – to discern, discover, display, and disseminate the radiant glory of the unseen God, like light flooding a dark room (Prov. 25.2; 1 Cor. 10.31).

The glory of God is the Presence of God made visible to human beings in surprising ways and with astonishing effects. In Scripture, God’s glory typically appears in familiar forms – fire on a mountain or in a bush, bright pillars of flame and smoke, the face and clothing of Jesus as He glowed on the mount of transfiguration. God makes His Presence known in such familiar forms by super-exaggerating the forms, so

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that there is no mistaking the fact that something more than what is merely natural is present here. Some times that Presence is undeniably on display; at other times, those who discern must point it out to those who do not (cf. Acts 14.17).

When Paul, therefore, commands us to do everything for the glory of God – even down to such mundane activities as taking a meal – he means that we should prepare and live in such a way that Kingdom light will shine through our words and deeds, and the glory of God will be refracted to those around us. What may seem like an ordinary task, a simple word, or an unexpected gesture of appreciation or concern will radiate with the light of God’s glory when we live as lights in the darkness of our unbelieving age. Jesus’ breaking the bread before those two disciples in Luke 24 is a perfect example of what can happen when suddenly the glory of God shines forth in an ordinary event (see [Caravaggio’s painting of this](#), and note the astonished response of the two disciples).

### *Preparing to live for God’s glory*

This requires understanding and preparation. What makes the way we take a meal stand out from the way our unbelieving friends do? Is there more grace in our conversation? Elegance in our manners? Restraint in our diet? Do we evidence in our faces more of the peace that passes understanding, and in our words more kindness and grace than is typically encountered? Do our eyes demonstrate real interest in what others are saying? Are we easy about giving thanks to God for what we eat, and the company in whose presence we eat it? And are we careful about the subjects and manner of our conversation over meals?

How does such thinking and living translate into every other area of our lives, so that *whatever* we do, the glory of God radiates His light from within it?

Doing works that glorify God is not like falling off a log. The good works to which we are called and for which we have been redeemed (Eph. 2.10) will bring glory to God when we engage them with that objective in mind. But to do this we must study God’s Word faithfully, seek Him in prayer, talk with fellow believers and seek their advice, encourage one another to the love and good works that will show the glory of God to the world, and prepare faithfully each day, committing all our works to God and His glory (Heb. 10.24; Ps. 90.12, 16, 17).

We are agents of light and ambassadors of the Kingdom of light. We are the light of the world. Isn’t it about time we began to live that way?

### *For reflection*

1. Describe some ways you observe the glory of God in a typical day. How do you know when you are in the Presence of God’s glory?
2. Are unbelievers likely to observe and appreciate the glory of God as it comes through creation? What is our role in helping them see God’s glory?
3. Meditate on Psalm 90.12, 16, 17. How might these verses help you in preparing to live for the glory of God each day?

*Next steps – Preparation: Where will the glory of God shine out from you today? How should you prepare to be an agent of the Kingdom of light?*

## 5 Prisms of the Light

*The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.* Romans 13.12-14

### *Prisms, not mirrors*

At the end of his rope, and desperate for relief from a burden of guilt and the inability to escape his sinful ways, Augustine strayed into a garden. Filled with anxiety, doubt, and self-disgust, he would shortly encounter the light of Jesus Christ, and be forever changed.

We sometimes use the word *reflect* to express what we want to see happen in our lives as Christians. We say we want to *reflect* Jesus to the world, like a mirror reflects an image.

As agents of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, believers are not so much like mirrors as they are like prisms. Mirrors *reflect* light. The light strikes them and bounces off, without bringing anything of the mirror with it. Prisms *refract* light. The light passes through a prism where it engages internal facets before passing through in a different form. That form is truly light, but it expresses the character of the prism as well. Pure light is separated into colors through a prism and is *refracted* in ways that uniquely express both the character of the light and the nature of the object through which it has passed.

The Christian wants not to *reflect* the light of Christ, so that it bounces off him into the world, without passing through the believer or carrying any of his character with it. If Augustine had merely reflected what he read from Romans 13, those around him would not have experienced the inward change that had happened in him. Instead, the light of God's Word entered Augustine's soul, accomplished a work of transforming grace, then used his own personality, words, and relationships to *refract* that experience of the light to the people around him.

We want to *refract* the light of Christ. We want His life to enter our souls, pass through and affect every aspect of our inward being – heart, mind, and conscience. Then we want that light to come through us, in words and deeds that manifest the true character of the light, but that do so in ways that are uniquely our own expressions.

### *Instantly transformed*

Augustine (354-430 AD) was one of the brightest people of his day. An intellectual and a teacher, he had many friends with whom he cruised and caroused in the avenues and hallways of darkness. He'd already fathered one child out of wedlock – much to his Christian mother's dismay – and he was well on his way to destroying his future through a life of dalliance and dissipation.

But he was also a desperate young man. He feared the darkness which had become his familiar haunt, but he was powerless to extricate himself from it. He was weighed down with guilt, going all the way back to his childhood. His mind was filled with doubts, and he had begun to be disgusted with certain of the diversions to which he devoted his leisure time. He no longer trusted his teachers; he considered himself a fraud; and he was beginning to lose his friends because he could no longer join them in their degrading activities.

Accompanied by a close friend in his mother's garden, he had reached a moment of crisis. His life seemed to be over, and he was deep in the throes of despair. Then he heard the voice of child singing a little song he'd never known before: "Take up and read; take up and read." What could that mean? What should he do?

Desperate to do something, he grabbed a nearby Bible and flung it open to a random place. Then he read the

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words of Paul in Romans 13.12-14.

### *Putting on Jesus*

Suddenly the light of God's truth flooded his soul. He understood the folly of his former life, and he despised it and longed for more of God's truth. All at once, he was filled with peace and joy, and he declared his newfound faith in Jesus Christ. He was a new man, a freed man, a man caught up in waves of grace, overflowing from his soul. His heart leapt at the prospect of "putting on" Jesus Christ, and all his values and priorities suddenly changed.

Augustine could not contain the peace and joy that flooded his soul. He ran to his close friend and declared with tears that he believed in Jesus and intended to serve Him forever. His friend, astonished and relieved, believed as well, and they ran to his mother, Monica, and joyously declared to her their conversion.

Everybody who experienced Augustine in those brief moments knew what it was like to be in the presence of God's glory. And since then, everyone who knew or has read him realizes the power that transforming grace can wield in a life.

This is what it means to refract the light of truth. When the light of Jesus Christ, shining from His Word, strikes the receptors of the soul, the effect is like the rays of sun on a solar panel, where sunlight is converted to electricity. The mind is opened to new insights; the heart quickens with bright affections; priorities shift; and spiritual energy for good works of love ignites and flows through words and deeds in ways uniquely personal, and appropriate to the circumstances of one's life.

And the more this becomes our daily experience, the more we refract the light of Jesus in ways unique to our personality and calling, the more we will put on Jesus and manifest His glory in the places and to the people of our daily lives.

The coming of the light into our souls has power to transform us, so that the light of Jesus shines through us with greater consistency and power.

### *For reflection*

1. In what ways is Augustine's experience of the light of Christ like what you experience as you read and meditate on His Word?
2. Can you see why it is so important that Christians, as citizens and ambassadors of the Kingdom of light, spend time each day reading God's Word and communing with Him in prayer? Explain.
3. As the light of Christ *refracts* through you into your daily life, who are the people who are most likely to be affected? In what ways?

*Next steps – Preparation: Meditate on Psalm 90.12, 16, 17. Why is this a good prayer to use in preparing for a day of refracting God's light?*

## 6 Exposing Darkness

*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.* Ephesians 5.11

*Start here*

The Word of God is described as a lamp (Ps. 119.105). It shines the light of God by which we make sense of all the rest of our experience in the world (Ps. 36.9). The more we shine the light of God into our lives, the more we can expect it to revive and renew our souls, so that what we think, desire, and value comes to expression in good works appropriate to our circumstances, glorifying God. This was Augustine's experience in that sudden garden moment so many centuries ago, and it is what God intends for each of us as citizens in His Kingdom of light.

But the first effect of the light of truth, as it shines into our lives, is to reveal whatever may be hiding in the darkness. Light exposes darkness before it banishes and overcomes it (Rom. 7.7). Sin is still present in our lives, even though we have been redeemed and forgiven (Rom. 7.21-25). If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth of God is not in us (1 Jn. 1.8).

Pockets and crannies of darkness exist yet in your soul, and the Kingdom of light must overthrow these as well.

So we should expect, each day as we shine the light of God's Word into our lives, that it is going to reveal areas of lingering darkness. When this happens, we must not run from the light, but welcome it, confessing our sins and repenting of them, so that we might overcome the evil that yet lingers in us with the good works of love and God's will revealed in His Word (1 Jn. 1.8-10; Rom. 12.21).

*Then here*

But exposing the works of darkness is not simply a matter of our souls. The light shines in us so that we might refract that light to the world, in our ways and circumstances. As the light of the world, believers must not hide their light under some basket of reticence or by turning a blind eye to evil; rather, we must shine the light of truth into all the dark places of life, so that wickedness, vanity, and futility of every sort are exposed for what they are.

And this aspect of our calling as citizens in the Kingdom of light has two foci.

First is our responsibility to one another. Christians are called to stimulate and encourage one another to love and good works (Heb. 10.24). But we must not hesitate to point out the sin which we observe in one another as well.

When the apostle Paul saw Peter and Barnabas slipping into sinful practices in Antioch, he didn't hesitate to call them on it, and to do so publicly, since their offense was public (Gal. 2.11-14). This is the first step in church discipline, in which we recognize that we are our brothers' keeper, and we take responsibility in love to help one another put off the old ways of darkness and sin and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

But isn't this exercising judgment on someone else? And aren't we told not to judge others?

We're warned against judging others in any way that we would not want to be judged (Matt. 7.1, 2); but Jesus commands us to judge with righteous judgment (Jn. 7.24), and one of the results of doing so will be to expose sin for what it is, as Jesus Himself did.

It is loving as Jesus loved to challenge our fellow citizens in the Kingdom of Light to recognize where they

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are betraying their calling and failing to live in the freedom which is ours in Jesus Christ. This is a pastoral ministry in which we shepherd one another with the truth of God's Word into greater and more consistent brightness in His light.

We are made for the light, not the darkness, and it is our calling and duty to help one another walk in the light as Jesus is in the light.

### *Finally here*

But Christians are also called to expose the darkness of the world. This is a prophetic ministry, in which we expose every dark and wicked way, bringing to light transgressions against the Word of God and offenses toward the holiness of Jesus Christ.

We must not be shy here but bold, like the prophets of old, to say to the unbelieving world that its ways are not God's ways and that if they persist in them they will ultimately have to deal with Him. And this calling falls not just to preachers, writers, and Christian intellectuals; every believer must take responsibility, as Paul explained to the Ephesians, for exposing the works of darkness in this unbelieving age. Wherever in your Personal Mission Field darkness is robbing people of the light of truth, you need to bring the light and joy of Christ there.

This does not require that we be condemning and angry. We must always speak the truth in love (Eph. 4.15). But we must be clear and uncompromising where the Word of God is being transgressed and the will of God flouted by our unbelieving age.

As citizens in the Kingdom of light we must work to expose the darkness wherever we find it – in ourselves, our fellow believers, and in this age of unbelief and darkness, in all its words and ways. As children of the light, we must prepare ourselves both to receive and to refract the light wherever the darkness reigns to rob people of the full and abundant life God intends.

### *For reflection*

1. People don't like to have their sins pointed out to them. Does this mean we should just look the other way and hope that God will deal with them? Explain.
2. If we are being bright, warm, and consistent in bringing the light of Christ into our Personal Mission Field, it is inevitable that darkness will be exposed. How should we prepare for being effective light-bringers where needed in our lives, churches, or world?
3. Meditate on Matthew 5.14-16. What are some ways we hide our light "under a basket"? How can believers help one another *not* to do this?

*Next steps - Preparation: "Here...here...here..." Review these three points in our lives where we are called to expose the darkness. Do you see this in your own life? Can you think of some ways to improve?*



## 7 Living toward the Eternal Day

*The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.*  
Revelation 21.23

*Here, but not yet*

The Kingdom of light, which Jesus, the Light of the world, has brought near and given to us, into which He has conveyed us to be lights shining in the darkness, is a present reality. It is unfolding and expanding against the darkness of unbelief as the followers of Jesus Christ walk in the light as He is in the light, and as they expose the darkness and proclaim the onset of the new day. We are to pray for the coming of the Kingdom and to seek it as a defining priority in all we do (Matt. 6.10, 33).

Christians seek the light of Christ and His truth, that they may be illuminated by Him, made radiant with His transforming Presence and power, and luminescent to refract His light into their Personal Mission Fields. If we do not love the light, so that we seek it diligently day by day, it can only be that we love the darkness more.

But while the Kingdom of light is here and advancing, it is still yet to come in all its fullness. For the final realization of the Kingdom will not be until the Lord returns and banishes all the minions of darkness to the eternal and outer darkness which all their lives they have preferred. Then He will create the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells, where the light of Christ will shine fully and fruitfully on, in, and through all those He has redeemed and saved.

It is *toward* this day that we strive, *for* this day we long, and as *harbingers and heralds* of this day that we conduct our lives in the world.

*Living for the eternal day*

Now this longing for the eternal day is neither a hypothetical nor a merely intellectual experience. We know this day is coming, because the same Word Who delivered us into the Kingdom of light tells us that the new day assuredly is near. We embrace the coming new day by faith, and strain toward it in all we do, not simply as an idea to be indulged, but as a way of life to embrace. We walk in the light of that coming new day so that, when we finally arrive there, it will be clear to all that this is, indeed, our native land.

Peter writes of this in 2 Peter 3.10-13: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

The *coming* new day must make a difference in *each new day* of our lives. “Therefore,” Peter continues (v. 14), “looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless...” We do not live our citizenship before the watching world only. The Lord of light scrutinizes His people, and He urges us day by day, through His Word and Spirit, to be clothed with the light and to proclaim the light so that the world might know the light is coming and the darkness is about to pass away.

*Then and there, here and now*

We are called, in short, to live in the “there and then” in every “here and now” moment of our lives. We are a people oriented toward the future, and who prepare for it every day of our lives. The future we expect is one

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of no more sorrows, no more tears, no more sin, and no more darkness. So when that day at last dawns upon us, we want to be seen as qualified to take our place within it, true children of the light and followers of the Light of the world.

It should not be hard to see that living this way will make us stand out – “shine,” as Paul put it – as true citizens of Light in an age of darkness and unbelief.

Does this describe your life? Do you live with an eye always toward the far horizon of eternal glory? And does that longed-for destination and hope inform, shape, and direct every aspect of your life in the present? Do you live joyously and in ready obedience to the Lord? Are you constantly laying aside your old person to be increasingly renewed in the likeness of Jesus Christ? Do you labor and pray to see as much as possible of His beauty, goodness, and truth abounding in your Personal Mission Field? And is “Even so, come, Lord Jesus,” the continuous refrain of your soul?

This is how we as Christians are called to live, and if we do not live this way, then how will it be known, when the Lord comes to call for an accounting, that we have any real claim on that eternal Kingdom of light? Paul said we must press on to realize this upward calling of God, laying aside everything that keeps us from refracting more of the light of Jesus every day (Phil. 3.7-15).

If we hope to know the eternal light of that glorious then and there, let that fervent desire direct all our soul and lead us to increase in that light every moment and day of our here and now.

*For reflection*

1. How do you understand what the new heavens and new earth will be like? Do you look forward to this? Think about it often?
2. What does it mean to live *toward* this coming day of light?
3. How can believers encourage one another to walk in the light as He is in the light?

*Next steps – Transformation: “The coming new day must make a difference with each new day of our lives.” How are you planning for this to be more true in your life during the year to come?*

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*For reflection or discussion*

1. Why is “Kingdom of light” a good way of referring to the Kingdom Jesus has given us?
2. Why is the image of light a good one for thinking about the place Jesus intends to have in His Kingdom, and in the world?
3. Why do you suppose we are reluctant to banish the darkness that remains in our own soul? How can believers help one another in this matter?
4. What does it mean for you to be the light of Christ in your Personal Mission Field?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this study? How will you put that lesson to work in your life?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 103 Reynolds Lane, West Grove, PA 19390.

Thank you.