

The Light Of Day And The Dark Of Night

Mike Ford (1955-2021)

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Let us turn to Ecclesiastes 11.

Ecclesiastes 11:7-8 Truly, the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun; but if a man lives many years and rejoices in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness. . .

Just a few weeks ago, on August twenty-first, a large swath of the continental United States experienced a total solar eclipse. Nashville was the largest city in the path of the eclipse, so around a million and a half people flooded into town to watch it. International flights that week were going for a thousand dollars; hotel rooms are booked solid; farmers were selling parking spots in their pastures for big money. One man said he marked the date on his calendar *decades* ago.

Parties were held; people had too much to drink. I could not help but wonder over the hysteria. Now, like many of you, I watched the eclipse—I put a welding helmet on. I was surprised that where I was, outside of Atlanta, we had 97.5% blockage of the sun, and it was rather like a cloud passed over. That was my takeaway: 2.5% of the sun can still light up the earth. How powerful it must be!

I read with interest many of the articles that were written about this event. Now, like some of you, my days in astronomy class are far in the past. I remembered that the sun is 93 million miles from the earth, and I know it rises in the east—that was about it. I learned that our sun is just one of billions of stars in our Milky Way galaxy, and there are billions more galaxies in the universe.

There may be two trillion galaxies, according to research released in 2016—*two trillion galaxies*! And even though our sun is just an average-sized star in the universe, you could still fit 1.3 million earths in it. That is how big it

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is. All the brains in the world have yet to figure out how old the sun is, and how it got there. There are many theories. One writer mused that “we need another Einstein to figure it out.”

Did you know that the surface of the sun is ten thousand degrees Fahrenheit, but the corona, just beyond the surface, is 3.5 *million* degrees Fahrenheit? No one knows why. It certainly cannot be because it was created that way.

Let me distill for you the prevailing scientific view of how the sun came to be. I got this from an article on space.com. I am going to paraphrase it for you:

Space is filled with dust and gas from remnants of stars that exploded. Waves of energy pressed these clouds of particles together, and gravity caused them to collapse in on themselves. As the material compacted, gravity caused it to spin, and the center became denser and formed a protostar that would eventually become the sun. Over the course of 50 million years, the temperature and pressure of the material inside increased, jump-starting the fusion of hydrogen that drives the sun today.

That is a very fine theory, but it leaves a lot unexplained. Where did the gas and dust come from? Where did the hydrogen and helium and, for that matter, the remnants of previous stars come from? Then you have waves of energy traveling through space, gravity, fusion, and *voila!* Magically, 50 million years later, the sun is produced, just the right distance from the earth to allow life. That is a little bit more than my mind can grasp.

Did it happen this way? God does not measure time as we do; I really cannot say. However it happened, God did it; of that I am certain. Astronomers, scientists, researchers—they all hoped to learn more about the origins of the sun and the universe via the eclipse. We already know where it came from: It is in the Book.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

At some time in the far distant past, God created the universe—the heavens and earth (in verse 1). In verse 2 we see that earth was a formless, empty planet covered in darkness, and God said in verse 3, “Let there be light,” and

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there was light. Was the sun formed at some earlier time and revealed at this point? We do not know how this was done. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

The word “light” in the Hebrew is *owr*, pronounced “or,” and it means “light in every sense of the word—the sun, the moon, the stars, the morning, daybreak, daylight, light of prosperity, God as our light;” all in that word.

Genesis 1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

This word “good” in the Hebrew is “good in the widest sense of the word possible: pleasant, agreeable, excellent, rich, valuable, beneficial, prosperous, ethical, bountiful,” and so on. This was the first day.

From the beginning, God gave us light. Also, by making the sun, the moon, the stars, the rotating of the earth, and the tilt of the earth, He gave us the dark of night.

Let us turn to I John 1. I am going to spend a lot of time in the writings of the apostle John today.

I John 1:5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

There is no darkness in God at all. Why is that? Is sin equated with the dark? What about despair, depression, or hopelessness? They all seem to be worse at night, do they not? We have hope in light that tomorrow will be a better day. Do you remember what John Reid used to say? “Nothing good happens after midnight.” There is a lot of truth to that. The night is a time of rest and relaxing after the work of the day. But too many times, it is when sin abounds because we think we are hidden from sight.

Let me give you an example. Forty years ago was the New York City blackout of 1977. A few of you might remember that. A series of lightning strikes at 8:37 p.m. on July 13th tripped breakers, caused computers to shed

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loads, and multiplied by human error, within an hour the power went out over most of the city and it would not be restored until late the following day. One of the largest cities on earth was in darkness.

Looting and vandalism were widespread. In one five block stretch of Crown Heights, 75 stores were looted. Arson was rampant. At one point, two solid blocks of Broadway and Brooklyn were on fire. Eventually, 35 blocks of Broadway were destroyed, and 134 stores were looted. A Pontiac dealer in the Bronx lost fifty cars to thieves. They simply went in, grabbed the keys, and drove them off. Five hundred fifty police were injured. Forty-five hundred looters were arrested. This is what can happen when the lights go out.

Let us turn to Psalm 119. We will read a couple of verses there. We have been there this Feast as well.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:165 Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.

From there let us go to Acts 26. This is where the apostle Paul is recounting to King Agrippa the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Acts 26:18 [Christ told Paul that He was sending him to the Gentiles] ‘to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance [remember that] among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’

The name “Satan” means “adversary.” But once upon a time, he had another name: Lucifer (in the Hebrew *Helel*), which means “morning star, light-bearer.” But he let his pride run away with him. He became the adversary, the one we associate with sin and darkness.

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Paul tells King Agrippa that his aim was to turn people from darkness to light; from being under the power of Satan and of sin to forgiveness and an inheritance. We know that we do not come out of this darkness on our own—we have to have our eyes opened by God. And once we recognize our sins, we seek forgiveness, and, as Paul says, we are sanctified by faith—we are set apart; we come into the light of day.

In John 11 we have the story of the death of Lazarus. It is about a month before Christ's own death and resurrection. Jesus tells His disciples in verse 7 that they are going to go back to Judea and they say, basically, in verse 8, "*What? We were just there. They tried to stone You, and You're going back?*" Jesus says in verse 9,

John 11:9-10 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

Christ had work to do, and metaphorically speaking, daylight was fading; time was short. You might remember John Wayne in the movie *Cowboys*. He kept on saying, "We're burning daylight. We've got work to do." John saw this. He heard this. Years later he wrote it down for us. He was an eyewitness to these events. He was there when Christ called Lazarus from the tomb—from the darkness, as it were. And then he followed Christ through Judea. He watched Him tortured and killed a few weeks later, and he remembered what Jesus said.

I John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon on, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.

Let me stop there. This verse is very similar to what John wrote in John 1.

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

You can tell that the same man has written both of these.

I John 1:2-5 The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us [The language is a little bit stilted there. John is simply saying, “Christ appeared to us, and we saw Him”—that which we have seen and heard [we have *seen* and *heard*] we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you.

I want you to pay close attention. This is from a man that walked with Christ for years. He heard Him speak to thousands. He had private talks with Him. And he is going to sum up what he learned, so let me back up a little bit.

I John 1:5-10 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. [That is pretty straightforward.] If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [It is an interesting thing to me that John, if you read a lot of his writings, has a lot to say about lying.] But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

It is so simple, yet so hard. God is light and in Him is no darkness. So, if we walk in the light, if we repent of our sins, if we strive to follow the truth, if we come out of sin—out of the darkness, so to speak—Christ will be our advocate, as He says in the next verse.

I John 2:4 He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

John does not pull any punches here. Most of today's so-called Christianity is *antinomian*, meaning “the law is done away.” How do they address what John is writing here? They say he is simply speaking of the law of love. Yet it says “commandments” *plural*, and in verse 6 he says, “We ought to walk as Christ walked.” Jesus kept the Sabbath, the holy days, and the dietary laws. He tithed. That is walking in the light.

I John 2:7-8 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have heard from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning. 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.

This is poorly done, this translation in my New King James.

John says in verse 7, “There is no new commandment,” and he seemingly contradicts himself in verse 8 saying, “There is a new commandment.” But if you read other translations, you find out that what he is saying is that we see things in a new light. It is the same admonition as before. It is the same law, but now we have God's Holy Spirit. We see things more clearly. That is not to say that it is strictly a law-keeping thing; not at all. Love does not get left out. As Clyde said, “God is love.”

I John 2:9-11 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

John does not offer any middle ground here. It is either the light of day or the dark of night. It is either love or hate. If you have hatred for your brother, meaning someone in the church, you are in darkness, which is sin. Love of the brethren is walking in the light. How much love did Christ have for us? We heard this once already this Feast.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends [meaning his brethren].

God is the source of truth or *light*. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), which is darkness. We have been set apart. We have been called to a new life. If we hate, we are pulled back to the darkness we came from. John is writing to the church, and he is concerned with what he sees. In I John 2:13-14, he is speaking to the fathers (those older in the faith), to those that have known God from early on. He is telling them they should lead by example. We then have perhaps three of the most famous verses in the Bible:

I John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

I think that ties in beautifully with I John 1:5: “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

The theme of darkness and light runs throughout John's writings. It is interesting to me that he is the only gospel writer that makes mention of the fact that when Judas Iscariot left the Passover service to betray Christ, he says very simply in John 13:30, “and it was night.”

The dark of night hides sin, or so we think. Now, to make it more appealing, we dress it up with lights. You have all flown into a major city at night with all the lights. It is impressive, is it not? You have probably all seen Las Vegas in movies or maybe you have been there in person. The fountains in front of the Bellagio are an incredible thing, with water, backlit, dancing in synchronization to the music. It is a beautiful sight. But behind those dancing waters, behind those lights, what is going on? People are drinking, using drugs, gambling, committing adultery—who knows? There are sins of all stripes.

But, of course, what happens there stays there, right? Or does it? What if you lost all your money gambling and went home and could not make the mortgage? Your family is on the streets. What if you go home, bringing a disease to your mate? Does that really stay in Vegas? Eventually, your sins will find the light of day—or see the light of day. And, of course, you can never hide them from God.

It is the same thing with Christmas that Kim was talking about. All the lights to try to disguise it but it is just another pagan fertility festival. If Satan can light up the night, then he can dress up sin, and he can present it as good.

I am not saying you should not go out at night. Not at all. You have to understand the metaphor here. We had a fine time with the group at the Opry last night, and I was sorely disappointed that they did not call on Brett and me to come down and play. (We were there. We were ready. No call. And Monday night, I was able to see Vince Gill for a couple of hours in a little club. And it was something I will not forget very soon, I am sure.) It is fine in its proper respects. And course we go out to dinner every night, but it is the metaphor that I am trying to point out here. There is a lot of truth to the metaphor.

The dark hides sin—we have to be aware of that. Would you willingly walk down a dark alley at night? We see that in movies all the time. You see the hero headed down a dark alley and you are saying “No, no, no!” You know nothing good is going to come of it. And off they go.

When I was growing up here around Nashville, all my life, I have heard of a printer's alley downtown. It is now a touristy place and it is all cleaned up. But back in the sixties and seventies, it was a little mini Vegas. It was literally an alley where they strung some lights, and as I heard it, you could go into these clubs to find whatever you wanted. The police left it alone under the theory, I guess, that sin would be contained in this alley.

Paul says in II Corinthians 11:14 that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Satan is a deceiver and a liar. He takes it in, dresses it up with some colored lights, and dangles it in front of our eyes—you remember the lust of

the eyes. John said, “God is light, there is no darkness in Him.” The opposite is that Satan has to use lights to dress up the night, but turn the lights off, and you are left with the opposite of God.

We have been spending a lot of time with John. Let us give someone else a chance. Let us go to Luke 11.

Luke 11:33-36 “No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad [or evil], your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.”

We are to reflect God's light in us. If our eye, so to speak, is good—if we clearly see God's laws, if we are quietly obeying them (I do not mean standing over there shouting “Hey, look at me. I’m doing something good over here.”), if we clearly see certain things are evil and we avoid them, not even *lusting* after them—then we walk in the light.

I said the metaphor of the light of day and the dark of night runs the writings of John, but it really runs throughout the whole Bible, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. Let us get back to John. In Revelation 21, this time in the prophecy is after the Millennium, after Satan's final rebellion is crushed, after the Great White Throne Judgment, and after the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 21:1-4 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them

and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

Revelation 21:7-10 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son [you might say, those who walk in the light]. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death [you might say, those who walk in the night]. Then one of the seven angels who had seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as a crystal.

He then goes on to describe the walls, gates, and foundation of the city, and its size. It is called a city, but listen to how big it is. I am going to try to give you a perspective by quoting from the Ambassador College Correspondence Course number 31, page 15: “The New Jerusalem will be about 1400 miles in each direction. It will cover an area equal to the modern nations of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia combined.”

Another way to look at it is the ground level alone will cover two million square miles. That is 40 times bigger than all of England, and 15,000 times bigger than London. It is obviously no ordinary city, and this is where God is going to rule from, and we have been given the opportunity to be a part of this. In verse 16, where these dimensions are given, notice the length, width, and height are equal. Most commentaries, as well as most Protestant writers and speakers, feel that this is not a literal city, but merely a symbol of heaven. In verse 17, notice that he measures using the measurements of man. God wanted us to know its size. He wanted that to have an impact on us.

Now, since the city is to be a perfect cube, it will be 1400 miles tall. If that was one level only, that would mean it was a building six hundred thousand

stories tall. That is conceivable with God. But maybe it is not all one level; maybe there are multiple levels. As one writer said, in an attempt to show that this is figurative of heaven and not meant to be taken literally, he said, "A city 1400 miles high would extend into space. We could not breathe!" That is what he said. His god is too small.

I think the God who created the universe, with just an average star putting out 3.5 million degrees, has a plan for this city on earth. Will the city have multiple levels? I think that is quite possible. Think of the square footage! Billions could easily live there with literally square miles of space available to each and every one.

Revelation 21:22-27 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it [remember how much area this city covers], for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut it all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Now, does this mean that only this part of the world would no longer need the sun? Or will God provide light for the whole earth? In verse 1 it said there will be a new heaven. That could mean a lot of things. It says in verse 24, "The nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light." Is that in their own land, or only when they come to New Jerusalem? I do not really know how that would work. How could the sun light just part of the earth? I do not know what God has in mind here, but it is interesting that in Ezekiel 43:2, in his prophecy, he says, "The earth shone with His glory." In Revelation 21:23, we read that the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light. Will we, the bride of Christ, a member the God Family, also glow, so to speak?

Clyde read Revelation 1:14-15 the other day, where Christ's hair was white like wool, white as snow, [and had] eyes like a flame of fire. I could not help

but think, “I am partway there. [I am] just missing the eye of flame. (And I am not the only one, by the way.)

Remember how Moses’ face shone after being in God's presence, in Exodus 34? He had to wear a veil. If we are a reflection of our Creator, then maybe we too will shine as the sun—too a much lesser extent, I am sure. But as I told you, 2.5% of the sun still lit where I was perfectly well. We could see with only 2.5% of the sun.

Revelation 22:5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

Revelation 22:12 And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are those who do His commandments [you might say those who walk in the light] that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside [you might say, in the dark] are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. I, Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.

And finally,

Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus!