

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12.

If we are to understand these words of our Lord correctly, we should review the circumstances under which they were spoken. It was at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem which marked the ingathering of harvest, and it was about to come to an end. Christ was there, joining with His people in thanksgiving to God for His continued mercies. However, it was in an atmosphere of acute tension. Christ was making stupendous claims for Himself, and being challenged at every step to prove them. There were His enemies, sullen and disgruntled, their anger mounting with each new claim. The atmosphere was becoming charged with the suspicion and hatred that finally broke in the tempest which swept Him to death.

Can we not feel the immense force of the words which He spoke in that setting when His ministry was drawing to a close and He had so much to do: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"?

Wonderfully interesting it is to watch an expert at his work. Christ Jesus was an expert teacher and preacher. "Never man spake like this man." It is interesting to observe and hear Him at His great work of teaching. The subject with which He dealt was that of the human soul and the needs into which it had been plunged through sin. One day He beheld the soul in hunger and ready to die for want of sustenance and said: "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger" (John 6:35). On another occasion He saw a soul suffering intense thirst and said: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). To the Samaritan woman He said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:14).

When Christ saw men wandering aimlessly in the wilderness of the world like sheep, exposed to enemies ready to devour them, He had compassion on them and said: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Seeing souls far from God without a path to lead them to Him, He said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). As Christ beheld men in darkness, groping along, unable to clutch at anything, not even aware of their position, most miserable and without a gleam of light from anywhere, He cried with tender compassion and said: "I am the light of the world."

This is an amazing statement. No writer or speaker can ever exhaust it. It can only be received, wondered at and believed in for the comfort of the soul. Christ put much of His teaching about Himself in the simplest form, using parable and picture and figure of speech where He wanted to express truths about which it is not easy for any of us to reason.

Did it ever occur to you how wonderful light is? More likely you take it for granted and accept the dawn and the brightness of noon just as commonplace things. But, how wonderful light is; the light of the stars and the moon and the sun! It is light that makes the world beautiful, restores order, creates harmony, imparts beauty to God's creation and floods the universe with life.

Light is so essential to our work, so closely associated with our knowledge, and so necessary to our happiness, that in a very real sense it is the indispensable preliminary to everything else. Figuratively, darkness has become associated with ignorance, sorrow and sin. Light is associated with knowledge, happiness and truth. Throughout the Bible, light is employed to symbolize the highest blessings, not only in the natural but also in the spiritual world. Light is the symbol of all that is desirable. It is the symbol of holiness, health, wisdom and power.

An inference we draw from these words, "I am the light of the world," is that the world stands in need of light. This is evident on the basis of that very simple law which rules in the sphere of light and darkness, namely, that light and darkness cannot exist together. There is a never-ending struggle between light and darkness, as there is between fire and water, and between life and death. Where there is no darkness light holds sway, and where there is no light darkness is triumphant. Because Christ offers Himself as a light to the world, it is clear that the world lies in darkness, else there would not be any meaning to His offer.

The two great words "light" and "darkness" are opposites. The mighty struggle which is being waged in the world is between light and darkness. When the light comes, the darkness vanishes; when the darkness comes, the light is obscured. In our personal lives we are conscious of the clouds and shadows. We are conscious of our evil desires, our doubts and fears, our anxieties and cares; of the shadows and sorrows that blanket our joys, and the sins which shut out the gladness of life. And, if we would simply turn our gaze from ourselves and look out upon the world, we would find the same thing.

When Christ said, "I am the light of the world," He was making everything and everybody dependent upon Him. Whether or not people comprehend and acknowledge this, it is true. This claim marks the uniqueness of Christ. If it had been made by anyone else, it would have been the height of presumption, but coming from our Lord it rings true, and its truth has been attested by the experience of Christians in every age. But it is a tremendous claim. Christ is not a reflector, but He is the spring and source of light, and His purpose is to flood our lives.

Humanity is in the darkness of ignorance, but the Lord Jesus Christ brings to it spiritual knowledge. Christ is the true light, instructing men who are very ignorant of God, of His designs of mercy, of the prospects of the future and of everything with which man should be thoroughly acquainted. Humanity is in the darkness of sin, and the Lord Jesus brings to it the light of forgiveness and holiness. Humanity lay in the darkness of death, and the Lord Jesus brought to it the light of life.

No matter how deep the darkness of sin, Christ can drive it away. He can disperse the fogs of doubt, and He can cause His light to shine through the mists of sorrow. His light is always available. It is light unextinguishable and sufficient.

As the light of the world Christ came to fulfill a great mission. He came to reveal God to men. He came to reveal the way to God and to heaven. He revealed the way by which sinners might get rid of their sins and walk in the way of life.

The light of the world is universal in its scope. Christ said, "I am the light of the world." This word, "world," embraces all of mankind. Christ

is not for a few only, but for all. Like the sun, He shines for the benefit of all, even though all may not value or use this light. The Lord Jesus brings to us light that we may know, warmth that we may feel, and power that we may do. He satisfies the mind, He inflames the right desires, and He communicates energy to the will.

We are enlightened by opening our eyes to the light. In the morning we raise or open our blinds and let in the blessed sunbeams, whereby our homes are brightened and our hearts are gladdened. In the same way we are to become illuminated by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. We must open our eyes and behold His glory; we must open our intellects to receive His instructions; we must open our hearts to let Him into our affections; we must open our lives to let Him rule over our actions.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say:
 'I am this dark world's light.
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
 And all thy days be bright.'
I looked to Jesus and I found
 In Him my star, my sun;
And in that Light of Life I'll walk
 Till traveling days are done."