



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## A Continuing Message 1 John 1:5

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**Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility.<sup>1</sup>**

### JOHN'S MESSAGE

*This is the messagee we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*

What is John's focus? What is John getting at? It is obvious John expects his readers to know what he is referring to when he makes this statement. Which brings us to a very important aspect of Bible reading, study, and interpretation: and that is audience relevance. We have noted before but it bears repeating since long-held notions diehard: the Bible was not written **TO** us but **FOR** us.

Therefore, in order to correctly grasp what is written we must place ourselves in the historical setting of the original audience. We must understand their background and understandings for it is in view of this the writer builds his argument.

We know when the apostolic band began to carry out the Great Commission they went first to the Jews in obedience to the Lord Jesus' directive<sup>2</sup>. It is therefore plausible the majority of the audience to which John is writing is made up of Jewish believers who would understand this reference to Light.

### OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

What is meant by **LIGHT**? It is obviously a metaphor and metaphorical language is often baffling. In Isaiah 7:18 it says the Lord shall hiss for a fly in a distant river...whatever that means? Translators render it as *whistle* but the Hebrew says **hiss**. Then we have the animals, colors, wings, and wheels of Ezekiel.

**IT IS ALMOST TAUTOLOGICAL TO SAY THAT WHAT GOD IS DETERMINES THE CONDITIONS OF FELLOWSHIP<sup>3</sup>**

*Psalm 4:6 Many are saying, "Who will show us any good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD! In this Psalm any one of a number of God's favors are symbolized by light.*

*Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread? Obviously, safety from enemies is in mind.*

*Psalm 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.*

*Psalm 43:3 O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me;*

These two Psalms suggest God as the source of knowledge. In Psalm 43:3 the word **and** is in apposition, i.e. truth explains what light is versus connecting two different thoughts.

*Psalm 19:8 The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes, here the understanding is enlightened.*

*Psalm 119:130 The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. Here words give light. Finally,*

*Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light;*

We can conclude from the Old Testament that light is a figure of speech that means information from God.

### NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

*John 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.*

Contrary to this translation and a number of others, this verse is not a reference to the Incarnation. We find that in verse 14.

This verse strongly suggests Jesus is the one who enlightens every man who has come into the world, from Adam down to the children being born today around the world.

Men and women are born with knowledge<sup>4</sup> and not a Tabula Rasa<sup>5</sup>. As we shall see, this is an aspect of the Image of God.

*John 8:12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."*

*John 12:35, 36 So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36"While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light " These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.*

*2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

The light is the gospel, the good news. It is information that is to be understood. The enemy of the gospel, Satan, worked

# Delaware

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to obscure this information while assaulting the ministry of the apostolic band and the extent of his impact continues with us to this day.

*2 Corinthians 4:3,4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Notice, the evil one **blinded the minds** by giving them false thoughts versus truth.

The gospel, the good news, is part of the mind of God. It is part of that which he has chosen to reveal which, along with the writings of the Apostolic Band, make up what the Apostle Paul calls "...the mind of Christ..."<sup>6</sup>

John Cotton makes this observation: "Light...is put for knowledge (Matthew 4:16, Ecclesiastes 2:13). Hence ministers having knowledge are called lights (Matthew 5:14, Romans 2:19)...Your light is your doctrine and holy life...God...is said to be light because he makes us so, men of knowledge scattering the darkness of ignorance (Psalm 91:10)...Hence at our first creation, God's image consisted in knowledge (Colossians 3:10) and holiness (Ephesians 4:24)...God is essentially knowledge, and so his holiness is himself (p35)."<sup>7</sup>

### SO WHAT?

If what God **is** determines the nature of our fellowship, and if one of John's central purposes in writing this epistle focuses on our fellowship with the triune God, then it follows we must come to grips with God's truth as it is displayed in his inspired word.

This is not only significant for us in our personal relationship with Him, but it affects how we behave in societal relationships, in our occupational relationships, yea in every aspect of our lives.

It is not enough to maintain a devotional relationship with the Lord focusing on evangelism to the neglect of discipling new believers and/or believers in need of such discipling.

This discipling is not only focused on an evangelical aspect but seeks to equip each believer to live as salt, light, leavening his or her corner of the Lord Jesus' ever advancing kingdom.

The impact of the kingdom's continuing advance is somewhat different in each century that passes, but I suspect a good case can be made that the common grace of

God experienced by the lost today is degrees better in many areas of the world when compared with a previous millennium. Not that common grace gets anyone a gnat's eyebrow closer to heaven, but it certainly puts the lie to anyone saying, "...God, you didn't show me any good...!" We live double-edged lives: citizens and ambassadors of another kingdom while having a salt, light, and leavening influence here on earth.

Such is the level of responsibility falling to members of the New Covenant. God no longer treats those in His kingdom as children, but as adults.

We are to be a "...wonder to many..."<sup>8</sup>

***"Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy scripture to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ."***<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collect the First Sunday in Advent, The Book of Common Prayer. Pg 85

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 10:6; 15:24

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in G H Clark, Trinity Paper #2, (The Trinity Foundation) 1980, p27

<sup>4</sup> Job 38:36

<sup>5</sup> "blank slate" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/tabul\\_rasa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/tabul_rasa)

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:16

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in G H Clark, Trinity Paper #2 (The Trinity Foundation), 1980 p30

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 71:7

<sup>9</sup> Collect the Second Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer, pg 87