

Matthew 4:12-17

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 6/21/2009

A Great Light in the Midst of Darkness

Prayer

Dear Lord, how great You are. I pray that the souls of those here today were singing to You, how great You are. You are a great God, a great God who sent Your son Jesus to die for us. I praise You, and we praise You and thank You for Your son. Thank You that You would not spare Him, but You sent Him to die. And Father I pray for us as we look into Your Word today which points to Your son Jesus, that You would illumine our hearts. But I pray as those hearts are illumined, those who do not know You, that they would respond by Your power and strength to the Gospel. For those of us who do know You, that we would be built up and drawn closer to Christ. Thank You for Your Word, thank You for this morning, may You be greatly glorified in the proclamation of Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Sermon

If you look in our world, it does not take long, maybe watch the news or whatever it might be, to see that we live in a dark world. There are all kinds of events that are evil and wicked and we see them blatantly. We see people who are living evil and wicked lives. We see people who are living dark lives apart from Christ. And yet, we (before we were saved) do not understand that all of us have sinned, that all of us have fallen short of the glory of God, that all of us before Christ at one time lived in darkness. Now today we are continuing our look in the book of Matthew, and we are going to chapter 4:12-17, where we are going to see a great light in the midst of spiritual darkness and death as we see the Lord Jesus begins His ministry.

Would you turn in your Bibles with me to Matthew 4? Now I have got a lot to share today, and we are going to have after the service a baptism, we are going to have those declare the truth of what Christ has done for them in baptism. And I wanted to share here before the context of the book of Matthew, but I am going to summarize it briefly, so we can get into our text today. But Matthew is about the Lord Jesus Christ, it is about the King. And we saw in chapter 1 that there was the genealogy of the King, that proved that He was the rightful King. And we saw that Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And that an angel comforted Joseph and turned his heart to make the right decision because that child would ultimately bring about the forgiveness of sins, and he was told to name Him Jesus, "the Lord is salvation."

And we saw the birth of Jesus Christ, and then we saw the responses to the birth. The Gentile magi desiring to worship Him, going at great lengths with little revelation to worship the King. Then we saw the response of those in Jerusalem who had great revelation concerning Christ yet unwilling to go six miles to look for the King. And we saw the murderous hate of Herod who saw Jesus as one who was going to take away His kingship. And then we saw that Jesus Christ fulfills the prophecies of the Old

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Testament concerning the Redeemer who would come, one who would be despised and afflicted in the midst of heartbreak and sorrow and bring salvation.

And then we saw John the Baptist who proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," preparing the way for the King, that repentance (turning to God from sin) is required. And last week, or the week before, we looked at the temptation of Jesus. Where Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to the wilderness and did not eat for forty days. And then Satan came to Him and tempted Him, and Christ responded continually in His humanity, not using His deity, He responded with the Word of God. And then last week we looked at a passage in the book of Hebrews, and I hope you have been drawing near to the Lord, I hope you have been thinking about Christ. I hope you have been understanding that the Lord God is a gracious God, who has opened Himself up to us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that we may draw near and receive mercy and find help in time of need.

And that leads us to our passage today in which we see Jesus begins His ministry in the book of Matthew. Again, turn with me to Matthew 4, and I believe we are going to see in this book that Jesus sovereignly withdraws to Galilee, fulfilling prophecy in that He is a great light, the great light in the midst of darkness. He is true life in the midst of spiritual death. Now as we look at this I believe we are going to see, first of all, that Jesus begins His ministry in the midst of great spiritual darkness.

Verse 12,

¹² Now when He heard that John had been taken into custody (this is Jesus in context), He withdrew into Galilee; ¹³ and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, ¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- ¹⁶ The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a light dawned." [Matthew 4:12-16]

Now first of all, as we look at our passage today, notice that He withdraws to Galilee after hearing of John's capture. It is important to realize now as we look at the book of Matthew that between verses 11 and 12 in chapter 4 about a year has taken place. About a year has taken place since Jesus was tempted by Satan, led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. And you say, "How do you know a year has gone by?" Well as I have shared before we have four inspired witnesses concerning the life of Christ, we have four Gospels. These four books are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, written with specific purposes in mind. Each book was written intended by the Holy Spirit for a specific purpose concerning the person of Christ. And not one of them is a complete account, and even all four of them together is not a complete account of what Jesus did when He was on the earth. Take for instance the statement in John 21:25. The apostle John says, ²⁵ ***And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written. [John 21:25]***

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There is so much more that Christ did, but these writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote and gave us what God wanted us to know in each specific Gospel. And then the Gospel of Matthew, as we have looked at it, is about the presentation of the King of the Jews, who brings salvation. So in the book of John we see actually the record of the events that happened between verses 11 and 12 here in the book of Matthew. We see what happened in the book of John after His temptation and His departure and then stay in Galilee moving to Capernaum.

In John 1 we have the baptism of Jesus, and the witness of John concerning Jesus. The next day we have the initial call of some of His disciples, and I say initial call because we will see them being called later. Then in day three we have a wedding in Cana in chapter 2, which Jesus performed His first sign, turning water into wine. As John would say, it was the beginning of His signs and the manifestation of His glory, John 2:11. Then Jesus goes briefly with His family to Capernaum and then into Jerusalem for Passover. And this is when He cleanses the temple for the first time, one of two cleansings. And then in chapter 3 we see Nicodemus, a Pharisee comes to Jesus at night, John 3, and Jesus shares with him how one must enter the kingdom of God. That one must be born again, and that this new birth comes from faith in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, who was sent from the Father to bring forgiveness of sins. And whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

And then in the end of John 3 we have the statement from John (the Baptist) himself, the declaration, "He must increase," speaking of Christ, "but I must decrease." And we see the decreasing of John to the point now in Matthew where John has been taken into custody. Now in chapter 4 of John the Pharisees are cluing in that Jesus is making more disciples. Therefore He leaves Judea and departed into Galilee, John 4:3, and that is this departure back to Galilee. Now besides Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman on the way to Galilee which we see in the latter part of chapter 4, this introduces into our passage now in Matthew 4:12.

And we see here a year has gone by since He was tempted. And the inspired account at the beginning of Jesus' ministry begins here in verse 12. This is what God wants us to know in the book of Matthew about the ministry of Jesus. " ¹² Now when He heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee..." [Matthew 4:12]

Jesus hears that the messenger (John the Baptist) to the prepare the way for Him has been taken into the custody. And He withdraws into Galilee. And later on in chapter 12 of Matthew we have the account looking back into the capture of John the Baptist and his subsequent beheading. Now chapter 14 speaks of Herod's arrest, this is not Herod the Great we saw in chapter 1, it is one of his sons, and this Herod was, Luke 3:1, the tetrarch of Galilee. He was the ruler under Rome for Galilee. He was the provincial, sovereign ruler of Galilee for Rome. And in Matthew 14 it reveals that Herod arrested John because of John's opposition to Herod taken his brother-in-law's wife. And I will read this for you, Matthew 14, you can scoot up there if you want to, to verses 3-5. Matthew 14:3,

³ ***For when Herod had John arrested*** (that is the capture of John that we see in our passage), ***he bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his***

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brother Philip. ⁴ For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

⁵ And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they regarded him as a prophet. [Matthew 14:3-5]

And we see later on in that passage that Herodias' daughter dances and causes Herod to make a vow to kill John the Baptist and put his head on the platter. So ultimately he was beheaded.

But John was taken into custody by Herod. And Jesus, when He hears this, it says, back in our passage, "He withdrew into Galilee." Now as we get into this passage we are going to see, now where is Galilee? What is Galilee, where is Capernaum, where are these places that Jesus withdraws to? And as we will see, the region of Galilee was north of Judea and Samaria, the Galilee region bordered the Sea Galilee, on the northwest, southwest and west sides, and it extended halfway to the Mediterranean. You can look in your maps in the back of your Bible and look for the Galilee area. Now as we see in verse 15, which we will look at in a moment in our passage, a quote from Isaiah 9:1, Matthew says, it is Galilee of the Gentiles. And obviously there is an overwhelmingly strong Gentile influence in Galilee.

Now how did it become this way? During the conquest of Canaan in Joshua 19 reveals that Galilee was the area which was allotted to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, those ones that we saw earlier. Unfortunately in Judges 1:30-33 we find in disobedience that those tribes did not drive out the Canaanites as commanded by God. And they eventually became thorns and pricks in their sides. They did not obey God, and they became like those people, like those Canaanites, a terrible thing. There was a plaguing mixture of Canaanites among the Jews in the Galilee area.

And it is also interesting to note that Solomon gave twenty cities in the Galilee area to Hiram king of Tyre in return for lumber and gold that King Hiram had provided, furthering this Gentile influence, and you can see that in 1 Kings 9:11-13. And if you read that passage you will see that King Hiram was not too impressed by those cities there in Galilee, it was not very impressive. And then we know after years of God warning His people because of their sin, the Northern Kingdom, which had split from the Southern Kingdom after Solomon had died, that God poured out His disciplinary wrath on Israel; and the Assyrians came down and took Israel capture to Assyria. And this included those in the Galilee area, 2 Kings 15:29. And this is why I believe Isaiah will share in Isaiah 9:1, "this is Galilee of the Gentiles," which is quoted in our passage.

Now with all of these events which had so much Gentile influence we can see that this area, although inhabited by Jews, had many Gentiles, and it is important to understand that for our passage. That Jesus Christ begins His ministry in an area permeated by Jews who were really worldly in a sense, they were like the Canaanites, they were like the Gentiles, and there were many Gentiles in that area. Now the Galilee area included such towns as Nazareth, Capernaum, which I thought before I studied, I did not know very much, I thought Capernaum by the sea was on the Mediterranean. I am thinking, "It is really odd how He is over there in the Mediterranean." Well it is not on the Mediterranean, it is on the Sea of Galilee as we will see.

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Capernaum, Cana, Chorazin, Tiberius, Boca, Genesaret. Also within that area, Mount Tabor. Now Galilee was not a place of status. In Scripture we see those who were Galileans spoken of in the derogatory sense. They were not seen as educated city dwellers, they were seen basically like country bumpkins. And remember in chapter 1 of Matthew we saw the prophecy that Jesus would be from Nazareth, which is in Galilee, that this was really a derogatory term, we know that. I think it was Philip who said, "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?" The view of the Jews was that Galilee was this mixed area that was not very sophisticated.

Now Galilee was the most pagan of the Jewish provinces. Not only was it the furthest north from Jerusalem, it was the furthest I believe of spiritual darkness as we will see. Galilee was a very dark place. And it is interesting that Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee. Again Matthew 4:12 ¹² "Now when He heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee..." [Matthew 4:12]

Now there are those who are devoid of the Spirit of God who might think that Jesus withdrew because He was scared because Herod had taken John into capture. But folks think about it, Herod was the ruler of Galilee. Why would Jesus withdraw to the area in which Herod was over? Jesus was not scared of Herod, this taking of John into captivity, God used that sovereignly to bring Jesus to where He wanted Him to be as we will see, fulfilling a prophecy which we will see today, in which Jesus withdraws to Galilee.

Now why the mention of John? I think part of this is it goes with what John said. John said, "I must decrease and He must increase." Now John is in captivity and Jesus is beginning His ministry, He is increasing, John is decreasing. Now at this point we are given some more information concerning Jesus withdrawing to Galilee. We will look at verse 12 and 13. ¹² "Now when He heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; ¹³ and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali." [Matthew 4:12-13]

Now this verse here, we actually have the focus of this verse is, "He came and settled in Capernaum." Before this time, although Jesus had traveled around, had gone to Jerusalem, He was raised and dwelt in Nazareth which is in Galilee. And in our text we see Him coming ultimately from Judea, but moving His dwelling place from Nazareth to Capernaum. "...and leaving Nazareth He came and settled in Capernaum." Now in Luke 4:14-29, Luke reveals that when Jesus returned to Galilee initially, the news had spread about Him and He went into the synagogue in Nazareth, this is His own hometown, and He read the Scripture concerning Himself which was fulfilled in Luke. And we see in Luke 4:29 that this Scripture was fulfilled in Christ and they in Nazareth, His own hometown, desired to cast Him over the cliff. When He reveals Himself, who He really is, His hometown wanted to kill Him.

Luke 4:29, and folks, just a side note, you think your family and friends and relatives do not like you now that you have come to Christ, when Jesus manifested who He was, they wanted to kill Him. But it says in Luke 4:30, "but passing through their midst, He went His way." It was not God's sovereign time for Jesus to be killed. And therefore in our verse we have " ¹³ and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali." [Matthew 4:13] The term

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“settled” here speaks of living or dwelling in a geographical place, settling down, this is where Jesus made the base of His ministry for this time. He settled down in Capernaum which is by the sea.

Now Capernaum is a little over twenty miles northeast of Nazareth on the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Obviously this statement “which is by the sea.” And the author inspired by the Holy Spirit includes the geographical boundaries in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, those two tribes we spoke about earlier who were allotted the land in the Galilee area, which had not driven out the inhabitants, so there was a mixture of Gentiles.

Now at this point, lest we think Jesus was fearing people while He came to Capernaum, we see in the next verse it was not because they were going to kill Him in Nazareth that He came to Capernaum, but He came to Capernaum as we will see to fulfill prophecy. Let’s go back to our text, verse 12, ¹² Now when He heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; ¹³ and leaving Nazareth (that is what we just talked about), He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, ¹⁵ ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- ¹⁶ The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a light dawned.’” [Matthew 4:12-16]

God had spoken through Isaiah the prophet concerning Jesus settling in this area, specifically fulfilled in Him coming to Capernaum. And before we look at this prophecy we need to recognize that even with the Son of God, while He was in His humanity, God sovereignly led Him to where He would be to fulfill the prophecies concerning Himself. And folks it is interesting that Jesus begins His ministry in what we would see as the most spiritually dark place. Now certainly Jerusalem was dark too because they were religiously dark, but in Galilee they were paganly dark in a sense. There are those who are dark in following religion and rules, they are really dark because they are not in Christ; and there are those who are outright pagans, and that is what we see up in Galilee, those who were very far from the Lord, at least.

Now folks, He brought Him specifically, this suffering servant, to the place in which He would fulfill prophecy concerning Himself. And folks God used those events, those difficult events in the life of Christ certainly, ultimately bringing Him to where He wanted Him to be. And folks we fret so much about our circumstances, we react to our circumstances rather than understanding that God is sovereign over where He takes us, where He puts us, that He is the one who is the Lord of our lives. And Christ perfectly fulfilled, as we will see, the prophecy which Isaiah had shared.

So then we are going to see Jesus begins His ministry in the midst of great spiritual darkness, fulfilling prophecy. And I believe we are going to see next that this Gospel ministry is done in the context of spiritual darkness. Gospel ministry is done in the context of spiritual darkness as we see Jesus is the great light in the midst of darkness. Verse 14 ¹⁴ *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, ¹⁵ ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the

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Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- ¹⁶ The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light..."
[Matthew 4:14-16]

The prophecy in verses 15 and 16 comes from Isaiah 9, and I think it is important for us to understand the context of this prophecy, it really fills in what Jesus is doing here. Back 700+ years before, Isaiah the prophet was prophesying to the Northern Kingdom, the ten tribes that had split off. There was Israel the Northern Kingdom and Judah the Southern Kingdom. Because of sin, the kingdom was split. And by the way the Northern Kingdom included the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Now in chapter 8, in the book of Isaiah, and let's turn there together. Now in Isaiah 8, in the book of Isaiah we have a prophecy concerning this Assyrian invasion and subsequent exile of the Israelites. The context is God's righteous discipline, expelling the Northern Kingdom from the land, Isaiah 8. And then in Isaiah 9 there is a contrast. Isaiah 8, desolation and discipline as the Assyrians come upon. Isaiah 9, redemption through the coming Messiah. Isaiah 8, and we will start in the last verse. Isaiah 8:22,

²² Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness. (Kind of summarizing this discipline of God's hand upon His people, darkness and all sorts of distress, but then in chapter 9:1 we have a contrast) **¹But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt** (speaking of that Assyrian invasion), **but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles** (sound familiar?). **² The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.** (As we keep reading...) **³ Thou shalt multiply the nation, Thou shalt increase their gladness; They will be glad in Thy presence As with the gladness of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil. ⁴ For Thou shalt break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. ⁵ For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. (now listen) ⁶ For a child will be born to us** (How is this going to happen? How is this great light going to shine?), **a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful** (that is the first name) **Counselor** (that is the second name), **Mighty God** (the third name), **Eternal Father** (now Eternal Father is a bad translation, it is Father of Eternity, He is the Creator, not the Father, He is the Father of Eternity), **Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. [Isaiah 8:22-9:7]**

Great darkness in the land, but a great light shined. And we see the prophecy concerning Jesus Christ. So although Zebulun and Naphtali, representing that Northern Kingdom, were in spiritual darkness which had caused their disciplinary exile, in the midst of this spiritual darkness because of sin, what would

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happen? There would be a great light. Verse 16 ^{“16} “The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light...” [Matthew 4:16]

Now this region in this prophecy is highly detailed, the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. And notice there is the modifying phrase in verse 15, “by the way of the sea.” Now it is well known that unlike Jerusalem, this area of Galilee was a crossroads and this term “by the way of the sea” was really called “via mares,” it was a great trade route that came from Damascus Syria, through Galilee to the Mediterranean sea and down to Egypt. One ancient writer said this concerning Galilee, “Judea was on the way to nowhere, but the Galilee was on the way to everywhere.” There was all sorts of influence by the way of the sea that Jesus would come, Galilee, that is where He would come, this area which was so influenced by the world.

And it says also “beyond the Jordan,” speaking of that trans-Jordan river area. And then lastly the phrase “Galilee of the Gentiles,” the generic term that combines all of those areas. And obviously as I have shared, there is a Gentile influence there in Galilee. Now it is interesting, one side note, that Jesus Christ the King of the Jews came to His own, the Jews, but the salvation in Christ was for the Gentile also. We saw the Gentile magi in chapter 1, here we see Jesus focusing His ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles, and in the end of Matthew we see that in our going we are to make disciples of all the nations. Jesus is King of the Jews, He came to save His own, but this King would also bring salvation to Gentiles.

So then in our passage we have Jesus settling in Capernaum which would be the headquarters of His ministry until later on, when He goes to Jerusalem to be crucified. Now this prophecy in Isaiah is fulfilled in this coming of Jesus. But this prophecy fulfilled reveals two things, it reveals two things. First of all, notice this prophecy reveals that the current spiritual condition of the area where He was was darkness. They lived in the shadow of death. The people were sitting, verse 16 in darkness, “who were sitting in darkness saw a great light. And those who were sitting in the land of the shadow of death, upon them light dawned.” [Matthew 4:16]

Two main phrases here, the two main verbs “saw a great light” (middle of 16), (end of 16) “upon them light dawned.” Those are the main phrases of this passage. Now with these main phrases there are two supporting phrases. Verse 15, “the people were sitting in darkness, who were sitting in darkness.” And then the middle of 16, “those who were sitting in the land of the shadow of death.”

So with this in mind, I want to share first of all, look at these supporting phrases, then we will look at these main phrases. And remember this is a quote from Isaiah 9. And Isaiah was written in Hebrew, and in Hebrew we have what is called parallelism, where a statement would be made one way and said another way to strengthen the main point of that statement. And we have these two phrases, “saw a great light,” “upon them light dawned.” And then we have “the people who were sitting in darkness,” and “to those who were sitting in the land of the shadow of death.”

But what does the author mean by these parallel statements? Sitting in darkness, and sitting in the land of the shadow of death? Obviously the picture of darkness in our passage is contrast with light, it is pretty obvious there is a contrast here between darkness and light. And certainly in Scripture we see the

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continual metaphor of darkness and light. Now in Scripture also we see that light represents righteousness and holiness, and darkness represents sin and evil. And we also see in Scripture that God is portrayed as light, and that those who are truly His are sons of light, they are children of light. And in our passage it is apparent in context that Jesus is the great light, He settled in Capernaum, Jesus is the great light that dawned upon those sitting in darkness and death.

Now in Scripture we have the affirmation, 1 John 1, that God is light. First John 1:5, and Bob went through this, well, probably about a year ago, 1 John 1:5-7, let's turn there. I am going to go through a few passages, one in 1 John and then a bunch in John, so let's turn to 1 John 1:5. John the apostle, shares the message that they had shared from the beginning, 1 John 1:5,

⁵ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you (and I announce to you today), **that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.** (We will see in context it is speaking of sin, there is no sin in God, He is light, and relating to believers, verse 6) **⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we** (we do those things that are evil and sinful, what does it say?) **lie and do not practice the truth;** (if I say I have fellowship with the Lord and I am walking in sin, I am lying.) **⁷ but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [1 John 3:5-7]**

God is light and in Him there is no darkness. And also in Scripture we see that Jesus Christ is portrayed as light. This metaphor revealing His righteousness, sinless nature. John 1, now to the book of John 1:1, and some of you know this by heart.

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. [John 1:1-4]

"Light of men." And skip down to John, keep your finger there, but skip down to John 8. Jesus Himself declared Himself to be the light of the world. John 8:12, **¹² Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." [John 8:12]** Another chapter down, John 9:5, **⁵ "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." [John 9:5]** God is light, Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

And then back to John 1:5,

⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ⁶ There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light (of what?), **that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light** (speaking of John the Baptist), **but came that he might bear witness of the light. ⁹ There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.** (we are going to see that later) **¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made**

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through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. [John 1:5-11]

Jesus is the light of the world, and this light shined in the midst of darkness, sinful darkness and darkness did not comprehend it. John 3:16, familiar verse,

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, (His first coming is not, and was not for judgment.) but that the world should be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (Darkness and sin, evil deeds. God's Son, fully righteous.) ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. (I tell you right now, someone who does not believe in Christ, although they say "He's a good guy," in their heart of hearts they hate the light because their deeds are exposed by Christ.) ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

The light shined in the sinful world, and they were enlightened yet did not comprehend. And folks, it is through faith in Jesus Christ that we are delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son. It is through faith in Christ that we are cleansed of our sins and able to walk in the light. Again, book of John 12:34,

³⁴ The multitude therefore answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" (They did not believe did they?) ³⁵ Jesus therefore said to them, "For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may 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, in order that you may become sons of light." [John 12:34-36]

We become sons of light through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the righteous.

Down in verse 44, **⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me. ⁴⁵ And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me. ⁴⁶ I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness."** [John 12:44-46] Jesus Christ is light, He reveals our sin and He saves us from that sin and delivers us from darkness. And when we are saved, we are identified by light, not darkness.

Do you remember when the apostle Paul was trying to woo back the Corinthian church in his fourth letter, which is 2 Corinthians? They were being tempted and wooed by false teachers in chapter 11,

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those who disguise themselves as servants of Christ. And Satan does, he disguises himself as an angel of light. And in chapter 6, this passage which is so applied to marriage, but there are some applications to it, but it really it is speaking about being yoked with bad teaching. He says in 2 Corinthians 6:14 ¹⁴ **Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? [2 Corinthians 6:14]**

You have nothing in common. You have nothing in common. And later on he exhorts them, "Therefore, get out of their midst, and I will be a father to you." He is not saying get out of the world but stop being like them and uniting with them. And believers are to be no longer walking in darkness. We are not to be walking in the context of sin. And there are a few passages that point to the fact that we are light to motivate us as believers to walk as sons of light.

Ephesians 5, let's turn there for a minute. Verse 3,

³ **But do not** (speaking to believers) **let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints;** (it is not fitting) ⁴ **and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting,** (it does not fit you) **but rather giving of thanks.** ⁵ **For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.** ⁶ **Let no one deceive you with empty words,** (deceivers come along and say, "Well, they do these things, but God still loves them." No, someone who practices sin is not saved; let no one deceive you. He says,) **for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.** ⁷ **Therefore do not be partakers with them;** ⁸ **for you were** (look at this) **formerly darkness** (you were identified by sin, but he says), **but now you are light in the Lord;** (he says) **walk as children of light** (walk, be who you are, walk as children of light, and he says) ⁹ **[for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth],** (and that fruit of the light is...) ¹⁰ **trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.** (When is the last time you in your heart of hearts were trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord?) ¹¹ **And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;** ¹² **for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.** ¹³ **But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light."**

Because we are no longer in darkness, we are motivated to walk as children of light. We see this same argument because they are going to be judged, to motivate us to right living in 1 Thessalonians 5, and I will read this. The day of the Lord's coming, and believers should not be taken off guard, 1 Thessalonians 5:4,

⁴ **But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief;** ⁵ **for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;** ⁶ **so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.** ⁷ **For those who sleep**

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do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath...[1 Thessalonians 5:4-9a]

Live the way you really are because God has spared you from wrath.

And then kind of a summary in Romans 13, again pointing to the fact that we are in light, and we have escaped judgment, therefore how should we live? Romans 13:11,

¹¹ And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. (It is coming fast.) ¹² The night is almost gone, (The day of evil and sin is almost gone.) and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. [Romans 13:11-14]

So then in Scripture we see the metaphor of light which is a characteristic of the living God, He is light, and in Him is no darkness. He is completely righteous and holy, there is no sin or evil in Him. And we see yet in mankind there is great darkness. And Jesus came and He was the light of the world. And when we place our faith in Christ, believing in Him we become children of light, we are delivered from darkness to light. And this, brother and sister, should motivate us to godly living.

So then first of all, we have the metaphor of light and darkness. And as we come back to our passage, notice, back in Matthew 4, these statements concerning Galilee of the Gentiles. Verse 16 ¹⁶ "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a light dawned." [Matthew 4:16] Notice the term "sitting" is repeated. It literally speaks of sitting down, and the tense of the verb speaks of a continual, habitual remaining. It can be used figuratively of residing and dwelling, this is where they lived in darkness. Their lives were consumed by darkness, that is what they resided in. And it is interesting to note, this is in the middle voice in the Greek. What does this mean? The subject initiates the action, they were in darkness because of their own action. But yet they participate in the results. The people in Galilee of the Gentiles were residing continually, habitually in darkness. And as we have seen, this is a metaphor ultimately of sin. In Galilee of the Gentiles where Jesus came, they resided in the continual habitual state of sin. They performed the actions; and those actions indeed, they participated in the results; they were sitting in darkness.

And notice the parallel statements, "sitting in the land" and "shadow of death." What does this mean? I think he is speaking of this region, this land, it is a spiritually dead, in the shadow of death. Means death is right there, right there, you could see the shadow, the shadow of death. And folks, this is the condition of all mankind. Mankind sits by its own actions in the context of spiritual death. The dark condition of the sinful heart. The reality of the wages of sin is death. Paul shares it this way in Romans

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5:12, ¹² **Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. [Romans 5:12]** Adam started it, but we all affirmed it with our actions. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Well what is death? Death is an awful but simple concept. It is separation. We saw the death of Michael Jackson, that was physical death. That body there is lifeless, there is no life, the spirit has separated from the body. And if his heart, and his declaration of where he was before he died stayed that way till he died, then his soul is in Hades. Physical death, separation of body and spirit. Spiritual death, separation from God because of sin. Genesis 3, the Lord said, "The day you eat of the tree you shall surely die," and they did not keel over and die right away, but they were immediately separated from God, and we saw the evidence of them being dead as they hid from God, and they blamed God, and they blamed one another. And they were ashamed, they were dead, spiritually.

And then eternal death, the second death which is an ultimate separation from God forever because of sin, in the lake of fire. It is the lack of life. The wages of sin is death. When we sin, it separates us from God, and all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And the wages of sin is death, it is the human state. And those in Galilee are just like us, sitting in darkness. Some of you are sitting in darkness. Your life is evidence of that, your heart is evidence of that, you have never come to the light in Jesus Christ, and believed in Him and been delivered from your sins. Mankind is sitting in spiritual darkness, in the land and the shadow of death. But there is wonderful good news. That God would not allow man to stay in this condition. And we see that in our passage, where Jesus fulfills this prophecy, enlightening the spiritually blind as they see a great light dawning.

Let's read verse 16 again, "¹⁶ "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, (they saw the light, now did they respond when they were enlightened? We will look at that later.) And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a light dawned." [Matthew 4:16] The light arose like the rising of the sun, all of a sudden it was there, it was dark and now it arose upon them. A great light. And what, or who was this great light that came in the darkness? The context points to Jesus coming to Capernaum. "¹³ and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, ¹⁵ 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. ¹⁶ The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light....'" [Matthew 4:13-16a]

Jesus Christ fulfilled this prophecy in coming to this spiritually dark and dead region. Is that not what we saw earlier, Jesus is the light of the world, He was the light of men? Do you remember what Simeon said when he prayed concerning the Lord's Christ when he saw the babe? Luke 2:27,

²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸ then he (Simeon) took Him (Christ) into his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹ "Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word; ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Thy

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salvation, ³¹ Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² A light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Thy people Israel." [Luke 2:27-32]

What did Zacharias share concerning the prophecy of John the Baptist, who would point to Christ? Back to Luke 1:71.

⁷¹ "Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷² To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, ⁷³ The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, ⁷⁴ To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. ⁷⁶ "And you, child, (speaking of John, initially) will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; ⁷⁷ To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, ⁷⁹ To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." [Luke 1:71-79]

Christ brings forgiveness of sins; He shines upon those who are in darkness, the darkness of their sin. The sunrise from on high, Jesus is. He shines upon those who sit in darkness, in the shadow of death. Christ fulfilled the prophecy here. Now certainly Jesus was the light in light of men, but how specifically was this light manifest? Verse 16, we will read it again, " ¹⁶ 'The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a light dawned.' ¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" [Matthew 4:16-17] I find it quite interesting that in the fulfilling of this prophecy of Him being the great light, it is tied together with "From that time He began to preach, 'Repent...'"

"From that time..." What time is He speaking of? In context, it is the coming to Capernaum, fulfilling this prophecy, from that time, He began to preach and say, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We saw this term earlier, preaching, *kérussó*, it speaks of officially heralding, or publically proclaiming, making something known. It is through preaching that God's Word is made known, exclusively in Scripture, preaching and teaching. God has ordained the means of preaching and teaching.

We saw it back in chapter 3, John the Baptist preached the Word. We see it throughout Scripture, Jesus preached the Gospel. We see Jesus instructing His disciples in Matthew 10 to preach the kingdom. Matthew 24, the Gospel of the kingdom is to be preached to the whole world, or proclaimed, *kérussó*. Luke 24, repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be preached, or proclaimed, *kérussó*. Peter made it clear that the apostles were ordered to preach to all the peoples, Acts 10:42. Paul thoroughly and completely, without shrinking back, preached the kingdom, Acts 20. Paul made it clear also that it is through the teaching and the preaching of the Word that the message goes out and is believed, Romans 10. Through Scripture, the Gospel is preached, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is Christ Jesus who is preached, as we will see.

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God has ordained the means of His preaching, and Jesus Himself exemplifies that, He began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But what about movie clips? What about drama and dance? Should we not share Jesus through dance? There are well meaning naïve believers and make-believers led by pastors and charlatans, ignorant and disobedient to the commands of the Word. We have no authority to do that. We have the authority to preach and teach the Word of God, and Jesus here exemplifies that, being the Son of God. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Notice it is exactly what John the Baptist said back in chapter 3.

And I want to briefly talk about repentance. We spent a whole Sunday on it a few weeks ago, you can look into that. I am just going to share a couple things about this idea of repentance. Repentance, first of all, is a change of mind which would be accomplished in a change of behavior, which when you truly change your mind, your behavior changes. Biblical repentance is turning from sin to God. And we see that God is declaring that all men everywhere shall repent because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through the man Jesus Christ which He furnished proof by raising Him from the dead, Acts 17. Repentance is a mandatory, Luke 24, to be proclaimed for the forgiveness of sins. We saw in Scripture that God's loving-kindness leads us to repentance, Romans 2. God grants repentance, 2 Timothy 2:25. And it is through the preaching of the Word of God that sinners are called to repentance; in a myriad of Scriptures, we see that.

And lastly, why should we repent? Our passage says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Repent because Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews has come upon the scene, taking on human flesh, that He might save His people from their sins. Because the King is at hand, the kingdom is at hand, because the King is light and righteousness, His servants must be righteous, they must repent. God is a gracious God, who burst on the scene of sin and death, in the midst of darkness, and the message in the darkness was "Repent."

Well, was this not what He shared in Nazareth, that called sinners to want to kill Him, Luke 4? Now it is important to realize, as we come to a close here, that although men are spiritually dead, when the light of the Gospel shines, they are enlightened, Jesus Christ is the light that enlightens every man. They are enlightened, and thus responsible to repent and believe. They are responsible. John 1:9 "There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man..." [John 1:9] And notice in our passage, they saw a great light, yes they were dead in their sins, but when Christ came among them preaching repentance, they saw a great light.

Notice later in John 3, those who are enlightened by the Gospel, respond in two different ways. I will read this again, we can turn to John 3, "16 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. 18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; (they saw the light, but they loved their sin rather than light) for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the light, and

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does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” [John 3:16-21]

Jesus said He is the light of the world. Now folks, Jesus was personally in enlightening the world, physically when He came to earth. But we know that He died for our sins, and rose from the dead, and He left this world and ascended to the Father. He said in John 9:5, ⁵ **“While I am in the world I am the light of the world.” [John 9:5]** “While I am here, I am the light of the world.” But now Jesus is in heaven. How is it that man is enlightened? How is man enlightened? It is through the same thing Jesus did, it is through the Word of God, the Gospel.

Let’s close and let’s turn to 2 Corinthians 4, and let’s look at this here, 2 Corinthians 4. The apostle Paul again is responding to criticism, the false apostles were basically saying that “Wow Paul, you must not be God’s ministry because there’s not many people being saved.” That is what is implied here, that the false guys are coming along saying, “Look, it is not a very big thing, not many people are getting saved.” And Paul responds this way. 2 Corinthians 4:3

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, (once they rejected it, and did not believe, their minds were blinded by Satan) that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. 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. [2 Corinthians 4:3-6]

The light of the Gospel, it is through the Gospel that we are enlightened to the fact that we are in darkness. It is through the Gospel that we are enlightened to the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus enlightens every man through the Gospel, and every man is accountable. Jesus is the only answer, and preaching His Word and the Gospel is the only method. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

So then, He began His ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles, fulfilling prophecy, enlightening the spiritually blind, a dark area saw a great light. But did they respond? Did they respond? Turn to Matthew 11:23. What does Scripture have to say about the response of those in Capernaum? Did they respond? Great light shone, they saw it, they did see it Scripture says, they saw the light, but did they respond? The dead in their sin were enlightened, although still dead. Matthew 11:23,

²³ “And you Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven will you? You shall descend to Hades. For if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ Nevertheless, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you. Sodom is going to get a lighter judgment than Capernaum.” [Matthew 11:23-24]

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That is a pretty strong statement. What happened on earth in terms of Sodom? They were destroyed in judgment and they will be judged for their wicked sin, but here Capernaum obviously rejected Christ, He was in their presence, preaching "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Capernaum rejected Christ. He preached the Word, validating it through miracles, and they rejected it, and they will be judged.

For some of you that do not know Christ, substitute your name for Capernaum right here. ²³"And you, will not be exalted to heaven will you? You shall descend to Hades." [Matthew 11:23a] If you reject Christ, that is your lot also. If you reject the light that enlightens every man, you have no excuse. God has enlightened you through the Word that you are sinful and He declares to all men now that they should repent. And if you reject that, you too shall descend to Hades. The wages of sin is death. It is appointed men once to die, and then the judgment. The people saw a great light, and they rejected it.

So then we have seen in our passage, Jesus Christ began His ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles, fulfilling prophecy, a great light shining in the midst of spiritual darkness. He enlightened the spiritually blind. His Word pierces the darkness. What are the applications for those of us who believe? Brother and sister, we have been saved from judgment and death. Give glory to God, walk as children of light, and turn with me to Psalm 107. It is a great Psalm to share what we should do, who have been delivered from darkness.

Psalm 107:8, here is what we should do brothers and sisters,

⁸ Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, (It does not say, "Complain about your circumstances, and grumble about this, and worry about that." "Let them give thanks, to the Lord for His lovingkindness...") **And for His wonders to the sons of men!** ⁹ **For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.** ¹⁰ **There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, Prisoners in misery and chains,** ¹¹ **Because they had rebelled against the words of God, And spurned the counsel of the Most High.** ¹² **Therefore He humbled their heart with labor; They stumbled and there was none to help.** ¹³ **Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses.** ¹⁴ **He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, And broke their bands apart.** ¹⁵ **Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men!** ¹⁶ **For He has shattered gates of bronze, And cut bars of iron asunder.** ¹⁷ **Fools, because of their rebellious way, And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.** ¹⁸ **Their soul abhorred all kinds of food; And they drew near to the gates of death.** ¹⁹ **Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses.** ²⁰ **He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.** ²¹ **Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men!** ²² **Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, And tell of His works with joyful singing. [Psalm 107:8-22]**

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That is what we ought to be doing, we ought to be telling of His works with joyful singing, giving thanks to the Lord because He has delivered us from great darkness and sin and death. He has saved us. Well what about those of you who do not know Christ? Friends, you are in your sin, you are living in darkness. And the light of the Gospel has shown on you, you have been enlightened. God's Word reveals that you are in darkness, and God is gracious to pierce the darkness with the light, which is Jesus Christ. He is the only Savior, He will save you from your sin, if you cry out to Christ to be saved. "Lord Jesus I am sinful, I am sorry, please save me from my sins. I believe that you are God, and that you rose from the dead and that you paid the penalty for my sins. Save me." Repent, and believe. And for those of us, praise Him, and walk as children of light.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. I thank You so much for those of us who have been saved, that You have enlightened us, and we by Your grace have responded, that You showed us our sin, You broke us down to nothing. And You revealed Your Son, the only Savior, Jesus Christ. And You caused us to turn to Him and believe. Father I pray for anyone here who is sitting in darkness. I pray as the light has shown in their lives, that they would not love evil and reject the truth. But that they would confess their sin and be saved. That they would trust in Your Son Jesus. They would only trust Him. Thank You for Your Word, thank You for Your grace that You came even to those who would reject You. And today, maybe there are those here who may reject You. Lord, I pray they would not. That they would be saved. And Lord, that we would rejoice in what You have done, in Jesus name. Amen.

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