

3. Light Shines in the Darkness (2Q 2024 The Great Controversy)

Biblical material: John 8:44; Prov. 23:23; Acts 20:27–32; 2 Thess. 2:7–12; Ps. 119:105, 116, 130, 133, 160; Prov. 16:25; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; John 12:35.

Quotes

- Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness. *Desmond Tutu*
- It's so much darker when a light goes out than it would have been if it had never shone. *John Steinbeck*
- Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that. *Martin Luther King Jr.*
- We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light. *Plato*
- It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light. *Aristotle*
- The darkness declares the glory of light. *T. S. Eliot*

Questions

How do we understand Jesus as the light—what do we really mean? In what way do we put out trust in the light? What is the light in the context of the great controversy? How can we avoid becoming philosophical and without real relevance to everyday life? What was John referring to when he wrote, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not extinguished it.” John 1:5.

Bible summary

In John 8:44 Jesus calls the Devil a murderer from the beginning. Prov. 23:23 tells us, “Invest in truth—and don't sell it! Invest in wisdom, instruction, and understanding.” Paul says he told the elders in Ephesus everything God wanted them to know (Acts 20:27–32). 2 Thess. 2:7–12 describes the coming and the work of “the lawless one.” The psalmist calls on God to show him how to live, concluding “Your word can be summed up in one word: truth!” (Ps. 119:105, 116, 130, 133, 160). Prov. 16:25 explains “There's a way that seems to be right, but in the end it's the way of death.” 2 Cor. 4:3–6. Jesus tells the people, “The light is here with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that the darkness doesn't overtake you. Those who walk in the dark don't know where they're going. Put your trust in the light while you still have it so that you can become children of light.” John 12:35, 36.

Comment

The great controversy can be illustrated as the conflict between light and darkness. However many religious systems also use such imagery. In what way are we different in expressing this conflict that we observe in the world? For example, Zoroastrianism states there is an eternal struggle between good and evil, between light and dark, between the god Ahura Mazda and the evil spirit, Ahriman. How would we want to differentiate the great controversy from such a perspective?

When Jesus said the Devil was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), what was he referring to? While the Devil has surely caused many deaths down through the ages, maybe the most applicable aspect that Jesus was referring to was the Devil's character assassination of God. By accusing God of acting in such malevolent ways, the Devil portrayed God as an uncaring, despicable tyrant who vengefully punished his created beings.

It was to answer such charges and this false picture of God that Jesus came. He is the light shining in the darkness. In John 12:32 identifies exactly what Jesus was doing. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me.” (Note the word “men” is supplied here in the KJV). His death on the cross draws—not just us, but the whole on-looking universe. Why?

Because we all need to see and know and understand the truth about God in contrast to the Devil's misrepresentation. Only through the demonstration of God as he is are we drawn to accept God, and only then can we accept the salvation he has to offer. Unfortunately, however much we might want salvation, if we do not see God in a positive light then we will not want to accept eternal life with such a God. That's why the cross is so important—far more than fixing our salvation or adjusting our legal status, God is winning us back to loving trust, healing us from the damage of sin, and fitting us for an eternity in the presence of our loving Lord. Otherwise the cross doesn't make any sense!

God came to be with us, to take on humanity, so that we could see and understand, and by his grace become like him. We are to be participants in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The most important aspect of Christ's coming to human beings was to reveal God in his true nature—in contrast to all Satan's misrepresentations. Without Jesus, the image of God would continue to be warped and misunderstood. Who would want to be saved into the presence of a divine dictator, cruel and severe? To counter the charges of the Devil, God comes in person.

The more you read of the kind of person God truly is, the less you have to be fearful of Him. In the Bible, God comes to human beings, and the first words are, "Don't be afraid!" Why not? Because this returning God is not a stranger. "This same Jesus shall return..." the angels told the amazed disciples who watched Jesus leave earth for heaven. This same Jesus is defined in the gospels, and is the proof of God as He really is—the God of love and truth and right, who will save all who come to Him. Ultimately, perfect love casts out fear...

Jesus is the light of the world. This light of truth, this right understanding of God must be in our hearts, must burn within like those on the road to Emmaus. Convinced not because of God's might and power, but by the rightness of the truth. As Jesus himself told his disciples, if you have seen me, you've seen the Father. (Jn 14:9). Through Jesus we understand the very nature of God Himself. Hanging on the Cross, Christ was the gospel—the revelation of God in love.

Ellen White Comments

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22}

The Son of God came to be a light to the world, to reveal wonders to the children of men that even the angels had vainly longed to understand. He patiently explains the marvelous transformation of sinful mortals into children of God and heirs with himself in the kingdom of Heaven. The introduction of sin had opened the door to every species of suffering and wretchedness, till moral darkness shrouded the earth like a funeral pall; but Jesus, the Restorer, brings man into connection with himself and re-creates him in the divine image. {2SP 250}

The Teacher from heaven, no less a personage than the Son of God, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship him in spirit and in truth.... In this he was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth... {CE 74}

Truth looked down from heaven and saw not the reflection of her image; for dense clouds of spiritual darkness and gloom enveloped the world. The Lord Jesus alone was able to roll back the clouds; for He is the light of the world. By His presence He could dissipate the gloomy shadow that Satan had cast between man and God. {CT 28.1}