

Light and Understanding

*“The entrance of thy words giveth light;
it giveth understanding to the simple” (Psalm 119:130)*

Our reading for today introduces us to two aspects of the entering in of the Word into the believer’s heart. Firstly, it gives Light, and secondly, it gives understanding, making wise the simple. This first aspect features from the very beginning of the Scripture record. Genesis chapter 1 describes the entering in of the Word of God into a dark, formless and empty world:

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:3-4).

There are a number of important principles here:

1. The Spoken Word of God gives Light
2. That light is the first thing that is called “Good”
3. There is a Divinely ordained division between Light and Darkness

These principles are alluded to by the Apostle, when speaking of the New Creation in Christ Jesus:

“... God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

And again:

“... the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4).

Putting these verses together, we see that in the New Creation, just as God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, even so the preaching of “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” illuminates the hearts of men. In the face of Jesus Christ, we have the Light shining to us – unless we are blinded by the god of this world, king Sin. The Gospel record of John also refers to the New Creation in similar terms:

“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it no” (Jno. 1:1-5).

Again, we see that all things were created by the expressed Word of God as the fiat of the Divine Will. That Word provided light in darkness – yet men of the flesh neither comprehended, nor received it. And all these things find a focus in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ: “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth” (Jno. 1:14). The Lord Jesus Christ, as the embodiment of the Word was the “true light” (vs 9), able to illuminate them that come to him.

The Master also refers to this aspect, in terms that are very important for us to consider, in the context of our reading for today:

“Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you ... While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light”

And again, explanatory of this:

“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me, should not abide in darkness” (Jno. 12:36, 46).

Those who “believe” in the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ are “the children of light”. They are to be found “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:12-13).

Men of the world are men of the shadows. They are the children of darkness, exemplified by Judas, the great betrayer. He left the Light of the World, into the darkness of the night (Jno. 13:30). So it is the Messiah taught – in a mild rebuke of Nicodemus, who came to him by night:

“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (Jno. 3:19-21).

This is the way of the natural man, who strongly contrasts with the children of light:

“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day be sober ...” (2 Thes. 5:5-8).

Returning to the Genesis account, we noted earlier that there was a Divinely ordained division, or separation between light and darkness: “God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:4). Even so, there must be a division between those who are the children of light, and those who dwell in darkness. So Paul describes: and exhorts:

“... be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light ... proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather reprove them ... Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Eph. 5:7-15, see whole chapter).

Notice, the children of Light were not always so. They were once part of the darkness that prevails upon the chaotic state of the world. Hence, they obeyed the injunction to “come out from among them, and be ye separate ...” (2 Cor. 6:17). One way of dealing with wrong doctrines or practice in our day, is to not send speakers to the errant ecclesias - hence they can say that they are not supporting the error. But that is not a Bible way of dealing with the problem: the faithful must “come out from” among the children of darkness, and “be separate” from it. This is not merely a personal preference or even the advisable thing to do: it is a positive command: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate”.

The darkness of the World is like the darkness of the plague that came upon Egypt – even a darkness that “may be felt” (Exo. 10:21). But those who emerge out of that darkness, having received the good news of the Gospel message shining to them, are also the children of wisdom. As we saw earlier, the entering in of the Word of God is able to provide wisdom to the otherwise simple. As we read in the Proverbs: “Yahweh giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous ...” (Prov. 2:6-7).

There is an emphasis in Scripture, that the simple should become wise, by the faithful application of the Word. By contrast, very often it is thought that all is needed for the disciple, is to have a “simple faith”. That to be “simple” is a good thing, without being distracted by doctrinal issues, and controversies. And that to seek after “head knowledge” is disparaged, with the sentiment being expressed, that we should “live the truth, and not analyse it”.

There is, of course, an element of truth here. Yes, we should live out the principles of the Truth – but we must also seek to become wise. It is not an either/or situation, we must do both! The virtue of being wise is referred to many times in Scripture. To quote but a few:

“whoso is simple, let him turn in hither ... forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.” (Prov. 9:4,6).

“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge” (Prov. 1:22).

“the law of Yahweh is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple” (Psa. 19:7).

This passage in Psalm 19 is of particular interest to us in considering Psalm 119:30, because it focuses on our two themes of light and wisdom. It likens the preaching of the Gospel to the dissemination of light by the Sun (verses 4-6) and continues: “The statutes of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes ...” (verse 8). This is what we must search after: Wisdom, Understanding, and enlightenment – which can only come from searching out the hidden truths in the Spirit-Word.

Another passage that associates wisdom with light, is Matthew chapter 25: the parable of the wise and foolish virgins:

“They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps” (Mat. 25:see verses 1-13).

This parable seems to be based in part from the Proverbs:

“... there is treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up” (Prov. 21:20).

The wise are those who had the foresight to provide for the continual burning of their lamps - whereas the foolish were negligent in this matter. It is all very well to shine brightly in these days of Gentile darkness, but what matters is whether we are continuing to shine when Messiah comes. There is a class of men who have a name that they live, but yet are dead in reality (Rev. 3:1). Before men, they appear to be burning brightly, but when they appear before Christ, the lamps will go out, and they have nothing to offer, except darkness. They assume that they could purchase oil from their wise counterparts, but it is a principle of Scripture that no man can by any means redeem his brother (Psa.

49:7), and so their attempt to purchase oil was rejected. Going away to obtain oil, they were absent when their Lord came, and were shut out of the proceedings. Once the Bridegroom had arrived, and entered the house, "the door was shut" and all opportunity had ended. They besought him to open the door that they might enter in, but were told in no uncertain terms: "I know you not".

Evidently, the main lesson of this parable is to do with preparation. When Christ comes, there will be no time to go off and make belated preparations: the day of opportunity is now, and when he comes, the door will be closed. There will be no debate or remonstrance, simply the chilling words: "I know you not."

Another association between Light and Wisdom is seen when we consider the future state of the wise. So, it is written in the prophecy of Daniel:

"... many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they **that be wise shall shine** as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:2-3).

The future glory for the wise, is to be caused to shine as the luminaries in the heavens above. So the Lord Jesus Christ taught: "... then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father ..." (Mat. 13:43). This is describing the future political heavens, with the Wise shining in strength and glory. Psalm 19, which we alluded to earlier, also speaks in similar terms regarding the function of the future sun of righteousness in the political heavens:

"Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof" (Psa. 19, see verses 1-6).

This is the future work for those who hold forth the word of life in the present dispensation. They, with immortal splendour, shall bathe the entire globe with the warmth of the glory of God. In that day, every work and shadow of darkness shall be dispelled, and the knowledge of the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shall fill the earth by the sending forth of the Word, as at the very first. Let us then seek after the Light and Understanding that comes from a continual meditation upon that Word, to prepare ourselves to be part of the glory of the Age to Come.

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