

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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SCRIPTURE: John 1:1-12

In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of 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 the gospel; and the gospel was the life, and the life was the light of men: And the light shineth in the world, and the world perceiveth it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came into the world for a witness, to bear witness of the light, to bear record of the gospel through the Son unto all, that through him some might believe. He was not the light, but came to bear witness of that light, which was the true light, which lighteth every man who cometh into the world; Even the Son of God. He who was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, only to them who believe on his name.

He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened....." (Mosiah 8:82)

One of the familiar titles or appellations of Jesus is, "The Light of the world." He himself said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is our purpose this morning to analyze this title, and to try to discover some of the deeper and less obvious meanings behind it.

There are many kinds and forms of light. Light is energy, force, electricity, mind, spirit. It has many wave lengths. If those wave lengths, from shortest to longest, should be represented graphically on a scale sixty-three inches long, the light waves which are visible to the human eye would be represented by only one inch of that sixty-three inch scale. In other words, we can see only one part in sixty-three of the wave lengths of light which are about us all the time. Even in what seems to be total darkness, there are many forms of light which are simply invisible to the human eye.

Confining our discussion for a moment to that form of light which the eye can see, it is obvious that the purpose of that kind of light is to enable men to see. The purpose of light is not so much that men might see the light, as that they might see the things which the light makes visible. We do not put a candle upon a candlestick in order to see the candle, but in order that by the light of the candle we might see the room. Jesus, the Light of the world, came into the world not that men might see and admire him, but that in his light men might see clearly (1) what God is: (2) what man himself is: (3) what man may become: (4) how to choose right from wrong in order to attain to what he ought to be.

Without Jesus, men walk in darkness. With Jesus as the light, we see and know God in his majesty, his perfection, his love, his mercy, his justice, his truth. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," said Jesus to Thomas. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," Paul wrote to the Colossians. Though the brightness and glory of the Godhead were "stepped down" by the physical incarnation of Jesus so that they would be tolerable to sinful men, Jesus was the light in which God was and is revealed. Knowing him, we know the Father.

In the light of Jesus, man comes to know himself as he is. If we compare ourselves with other men -- even with the best men of history -- we can flatter ourselves that we are as good as the average, and not too much worse than the best. But when we compare ourselves with Jesus, when we look at ourselves in the light of his perfection, when we compare our fleeting mortality with his immortality, we are brought to see our own imperfection, our sinfulness, our weakness and utter dependence, our need of his redemption and his salvation if we are to live. In the light of Jesus, and his perfect example, we catch a clear vision of what we may become through the power of his resurrection and redemption. In him we see not only the manner of men we ought to be, but the manner of men we may be, by his grace and with his help.

In the light of Jesus, we find a sound basis for judging what is right and what is wrong -- what is good, what is better, and what is best. In darkness, there is no difference between white and black; everything looks black. In light, it is easy to distinguish between black and white, and all the shades of gray in between. Without Christ, there is no complete guide to perfection. With Christ and in the light of Christ, we can see more clearly to judge right and wrong. As Moroni, one of the Book of Mormon writers, puts it: "And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully --- Search diligently in the light of Christ, that ye may know good from evil."

Wicked men avoid this light of Christ. They prefer the darkness where their deeds cannot be evaluated in their true light. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one who doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that loveth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest." "Every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation."

Thus far we have talked of one small aspect of Christ's light -- the light visible to the human eye. In a larger sense, light is the source of all things, the power by which they are sustained and governed, the material out of which they are created. Jesus is the light and the life of the world, its Creator, the one by whom and of whom all things consist. We have only recently discovered that the atom is composed entirely of force, energy, mind, spirit, electricity, or light, rather than of tangible matter. The atom is composed of two principal parts: first, a central nucleus which is composed of positive charges of electricity called protons, combined with neutrons, which are neutral. Surrounding the nucleus as the planets surround the sun are negative charges of electricity called electrons. In the strictest sense of the word, then, the atom is not composed of solid, substantial matter at all, but of force, energy, electricity, or light.

Where does this all-inclusive quality of light come from? How is it produced? A revelation given through Joseph Smith in 1832, a hundred years before the atomic theory was stated in modern terms, says that it is the light of Christ which is in things and through all things; that it is the light of truth; that it is intelligence; that physical light, or light visible to the human eye, is essentially the same stuff as spiritual light, or the light of intelligence, or the light by which all things are created and sustained; that this light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space; that it is the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

Jesus, the Light of the world, "comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him and of him, even God, for ever and ever." In Jesus, the agent or instrument of creation, the power of God is manifest. In Jesus, the Son of God, dwells all the fullness of the light of God. This light enlighteneth every man that cometh