

24.5 Light or Dark?

Isaiah 9:2 (ESV):

**The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.**

There are about 166 verses in the Bible that deal with light. Light versus darkness then becomes a forceful theme for the followers of God. The contrast of light and darkness begins in **Genesis** and goes to the **Revelation**.

The Essenes were a sect of Jews that broke off from the Sadducees. When the Priests who were generally part of that group corrupted the temple and the temple worship, the Essenes established a new identity as the “*Sons of Light*.” Jesus may have been speaking of them in **Luke 16:8** (ESV):

For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

Some believe many of the Essenes went into the desert to fulfill **Isaiah 40:3** (ESV):

**³ A voice cries:
“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

We know that John the Baptist was renowned for this same statement as we read in **Matthew 3:1-3**, **Mark 1:2-5**, and **John 1:23**. Was John one of the Essenes? Perhaps. Some even speculate that he lived at Qumran for a time.

John, in fact, prepared the way of the LORD in the wilderness. Jesus came to him to be baptized – at the Jordan River in the wilderness. It was a righteous fulfillment of prophecy and the launching of Jesus’ public ministry as recorded in **Matthew 3** and **Luke 3**.

We know that John was not the Messiah but the witness to Him. John the apostle said it like this in **John 1:7-8** (ESV):

⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

This reminds me a bit of what **Edith Wharton** once said, “**There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.**” We, along with John the Baptist, are not the Candle but more like mirrors.

I don’t know if you have been to the **Holocaust Museum** in Jerusalem. It is called, “*Yad VaShem*.” It means “*A Monument and a Name*.” The museum takes you through the Jewish persecution prior to and during WWII. **The Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles** contains rows of trees planted in honor of non-Jewish people who risked their own lives to hide Jews from the Nazis. There are trees honoring the Ten Boom family and Oscar Schindler as well as many others.

There is one haunting place in the museum. That is the **Children’s Memorial** dedicated to the memory of the children who were murdered by the Nazis. I think that there were around 1.5 Million. In that section you walk into a darkened room. Some memorial candles are placed in the room. Such candles are a custom of the Jews to remember the dead. The light from those few candles is reflected by hundreds of mirrors that give the impression of an infinite number. As you enter the Children’s Memorial you are gripped by the reading of the names, ages,

and country of the children who were massacred by the Nazis. At the same time, the light of the candles and their reflections symbolically pierce the darkness of evil.

People who are obsessed with power to the point that they would kill innocent babies are the darkness. Where do you think those 1.5 Million babies are right now? Where do you think those Nazis are who ordered and carried out their murders? One group is with God the other isn't. Where do you think the perpetrators of the modern holocaust of murdering innocent babies will be if they do not repent of their evil? What nation has God allowed to stand with injustice and hardness of heart against the innocent? The helpless have a special place in the heart of God.

Paul said this in **Philippians 2:14-16** (ESV):

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

We are in a dark world in order to make a difference to those trapped in the darkness. We are not in the light of Christ merely for our own benefit. We are here to make a difference to others by being shining examples of biblical Christianity.

Christopher Columbus once said of his voyage to the New World, **“Following the light of the sun, we left the Old World.”** Let me make a play on his words and say it like this for us:

Following the light of the S-O-N, we left our Old World.”

Light will conquer darkness, but it has to shine! Jesus has done His part. The Holy Spirit is doing His. We must do ours. As Jesus said, **“let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”** (Matthew 5:16, ESV).

Today as we close, I just want to say let's . . .
Keep The Light Burning!