

December 16, 2018
UNWRAPPED - Part 4

“Light”

We want to focus on the why behind the what and allow our celebrations to intentionally reflect our faith.

Genesis 1:1-5 (ESV): “¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.”

The Apostle John tells us light, much like love, represents the very essence of God Himself.

1 John 1:5 (NLT): “This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.

Darkness often carries the sense of evil and death that keeps us apart from God and His glorious light.

Isaiah 5:20 (NLT): “What sorrow for those who say that evil is good and good is evil, that dark is light and light is dark....”

Psalms 107:10-15 (ESV): “¹⁰Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, ¹¹for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. ¹²So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. ¹³Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ¹⁴He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart. ¹⁵Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!”

Isaiah 9:2,6-7 (ESV): “²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.... ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

God’s *answer* to darkness for individuals and even nations is light.

Isaiah 60:1-3 (ESV): “¹Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ²For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”

Luke 1:67-70,78-79 (NLT): “⁶⁷Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy: ⁶⁸Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. ⁶⁹He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David, ⁷⁰just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago.... ⁷⁸Because of God’s tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, ⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.”

Matthew tells us the birth of this Savior, Jesus, is marked by a star – a point of light in a dark night.

Matthew 2:1-2,9-10 (NLT): “¹Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²‘Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.’... And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!”

John 1:1-5 (ESV): “¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

No matter how much darkness, it can never “overcome” “the light.”

In our Christmas Eve services, God uses us to begin to spread that light across the room, and the darkness is pushed back in the light and joy of Christ!

Jesus: “...‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (John 8:12 NIV)

It’s inherent in the nature and purpose of Christ’s light that we are to spread it!

Jesus: “¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, 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 5:14-16 ESV)

Jesus says lighting a light and then hiding it essentially makes no sense.

1 John 1:5-7 (NLT): “⁵This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. ⁶So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. ⁷But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

Ephesians 5:8 (NLT): “For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!”

Christmas serves no purpose if the light stays inside - it’s meant to be taken out into the world, because hiding our light makes no sense.

Early Christian tradition and theology placed both Jesus’ death and conception on March 25th, linking his conception and death as part of the same event, and thereby placing his birth on December 25th.

December 25th is appropriately symbolic, for on what was then considered the longest, darkest night of the year, a star appeared and the light came into the world, and, still, “the darkness has not overcome it.”

Colossians 1:11-14 (NLT): “¹¹We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, ¹²always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. ¹³For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.”

Get the *Life Journal* Bible Reading Plan at gateway-community.org/Find-it