

Children of the Night

John 12:34-50

Introduction

High school teachers have been surveyed over the course of several decades of experience. One such survey was compiled by the *Congressional Quarterly Researcher*.

Teachers, in 1940, were asked to rate the top ten problems they faced. The article then compared those problems with the ten top problems facing teachers in the 1990's.

In the 1940's, one of the ten top problems was "talking out of turn". In the 1990's, "physical assault".

1940's:	1990's:
chewing gum in class	alcohol abuse
cutting in line	assault/robbery
dress code violations	pregnancy
running in the halls	drug addiction

We are experiencing an encroaching darkness. We are becoming one more historic proof that Jesus Christ knew what He was talking about when He warned people that, if you reject His light, you have only one other alternative – darkness!

History is filled with illustrations. There was only one hope for Rome, a nation shrouded by darkness. They martyred the missionary of light, who had come to tell them – his name was Paul.

So, Rome would self destruct by internal corrosion. Child prostitution flourished and promiscuity and homosexuality were flaunted. One Roman contemporary stated that the elite socialite women could date the months of their calendar with

the names of their ever changing husbands. Rome had voted in favor of darkness.

Before Rome, there was only one hope for Israel. They, too, would cry out for the darkness and crucify the light.

And, there is only one hope for us – a nation desperately endeavoring to turn out the light. It is the same hope that Rome and Israel had – it is the message of light.

It is found in the gospel by John, in the last few verses of chapter 12. This forms the last public sermon by Jesus Christ, just days before the mob will scream, "Crucify Him."

In our prior discussion of John, chapter 12, verses 22 through 33, we listened in as the Lord preached His last sermon – just before His crucifixion. It was a message of sacrifice and it challenged every believer to say, "Here am I Lord, bury me."

Now look at John, chapter 12, verses 34 and 35.

The multitude therefore answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" Jesus therefore said to them, "For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes."

Now, John has used the metaphor of darkness throughout the first 12 chapters. I want to review it, for it gives us God's verdict on lost humanity.

What's The Verdict?

Intellectual Darkness

1. To reject Jesus Christ is to embrace intellectual darkness.

Turn to John, chapter 1, verses 9.

There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

“Enlightens” is “photizo,” in the Greek, which means, to shed light upon, to bring light, to make clear to every individual the meaning and purpose of life. Skip to verse 11.

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

Jesus gave the people enough facts, enough proof that He was of God, but still, they did not believe. Conventional intellectualism was looking for a different Messiah, so their mind was closed to the truth.

Our own history books provide illustrations where conventional wisdom is stronger than truth.

For centuries, people believed that Aristotle was right when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to the earth. He was regarded as the greatest thinker of his times, and surely he could not be wrong. In 1589, nearly two thousand years after Aristotle's death, Galileo summoned learned professors to the base of the leaning Tower of Pisa. Then, he went to the top and pushed off a ten pound weight and a one pound weight. Both landed at the same time. But the power of belief in the conventional wisdom was so strong that the professors denied what they had seen.

I think of Marco Polo, who traveled to China. He returned to Italy, where no one would believe his fantastic stories of another world. Priests were sent to try to bring him to confess his lies. Why? Because conventional wisdom said, “We're all there is.”

Ethical Darkness

2. There is not only an intellectual darkness, but an ethical darkness.

Look at John, chapter 3, verses 19 and 20.

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their

deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

The word “exposed” means, “to be tested, tried, and convicted as faulty or wrong”. These are people who have rejected the light and chosen to walk in moral darkness.

Is it any wonder that this fall from moral sanity has occurred at the same time the Bible and morality and ethics have been decried? Is it any wonder that a medical doctor cannot seem to be put away for assisting suicide? Is it any wonder that homosexual couples are being granted spousal insurance by corporate America?

Can you imagine a student in Virginia who was temporarily barred from reading her Bible on the school bus, yet, at the same time, every school day, an estimated 135,000 kids bring guns to school?

Should it take us by surprise that, as God's Word is abandoned, so are moral and physical restraints and human nature is given full reign.

For example, a rap album was declared obscene by a federal court. It is an album that includes pornography, bondage, and assault, yet it has sold millions of copies.

Another example is the fact that, in 1950, only one hundred seventy teenagers in all of America were arrested for committing a serious crime. Today, and every day, there are at least one thousand six hundred minors in adult jails.

Are we surprised that every day, six hundred twenty three teenagers contract syphilis?

Are we surprised that, during the next twenty four hours, more than 35,000 Americans will contract a sexually transmitted disease – thirteen million people this year.

While the variety of diseases change form, while the names and penalties for crimes change as well, never forget that the message has not changed. Jesus said, “If you reject the light, you are left with intellectual and ethical darkness . . . and you will pay the price!”

Judicial Darkness

3. There is also judicial darkness, which is the act of a judge who passes sentence.

It is the other side of the coin. While God elects by His grace, the Bible never invalidates human choice. That is why Jesus, knowing that Israel would reject Him, still invites them, still asks them to choose.

Look at the illustration of Israel, in chapter 12, verses 37 through 40.

But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him; that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, "He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them."

On the side of human responsibility, there is the terrifying principle that you can reject the light one too many times. You can turn away the Savior so that He does not return again.

Warren Wiersbe outlined this passage, as it relates to the will of man to choose, in this way:

They would not believe

- They would not believe, as verse 37 tells us.

The original word, in verse 37, for "were not believing" is in the imperfect tense. That emphasizes the repeated unbelief or the continual stubbornness of the unbeliever.

So, first, they would not believe. Then, what happens next?

They could not believe

- Secondly, then, they could not believe.

Verses 39 through 40 tell us this.

For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, "He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them."

This is a judicial sentence – "He hardened their heart". "Hardened" is an interesting Greek word that refers to a callous on a part of your body. You cannot feel the prick of a pin on a callous, so the Lord refers to the heart of man as something that becomes calloused or hardened.

One puritan divine wrote, "The man who deliberately shuts his eyes against the light of truth shall gradually lose the power of seeing."

Another one wrote in a way which combined the stubborn resistance and the ultimate judicial sentencing, "This is the law of moral hardening – the day of grace may terminate before the day of life."

You might say, "Wait! How can I know if it is too late for me to become a Christian?"

That is simple. Will you, right now, pray in your heart to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior? Will you bend your intellect and your ethics before the bloodstained cross?

Do you say, "Yes, I will! I will!"?

Or, do you say, "I can't do that. It would upset too many things in my life. I can't."?

You have given yourself the answer.

It is a terrifying thought to move from, "I will not believe," to "I cannot believe," because I love the darkness, and the light holds no attraction for me.

Remember, I am speaking from the vantage point of human responsibility and choice. I am echoing the words of Hebrews, chapter 3, verse 15.

. . . Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

There is an old fable of a special meeting called by Satan. It was a strategy session for subverting those who were close to salvation. "What shall we do to keep them from turning to the light?" Satan asked.

One daring demon stood and said, "I have it! We can tell them that there is no life after death; we'll tell them that there is no hereafter."

Satan mused and then answered, "It will never work. Even atheists will talk of a life after death; even unbelievers pray before surgery."

Another demon spoke, "Here's the solution! Let's say there is no God; simply a cosmic force of sorts and that there could never be a personal knowledge of God."

Satan replied to the dismayed crowd of demons, "That won't work either. Mankind has an innate belief in deity and they will search until they either find Him, or some replacement to Him."

Other ideas were presented, but none brought them satisfaction. Finally, as they were about to give

up, one demon leaped and said, "I have it! This will work."

The demons crowded around him to hear his plan. "We will go and tell them that God is real and the Bible is a worthy book."

A gasp came from the audience as the demon continued, "And tell them that Jesus is God's Son and He can free mankind from sin."

The other demons were horror-stricken, thinking that their associate had gone mad, until, with a smile, he added, "Then tell them that this is not the best time to choose Christ, help them make excuses, and tell them there is no hurry."

The demons danced in delight, realizing a plan had truly been discovered.

Why? Because the more times you tell Christ, "No," the less likely you will be to say, "Yes."

One of the most fascinating exposures of human nature appears in verses 42 and 43.

Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

It is fascinating that, in this Jerusalem scene, there are people who would not believe in Him and said so. Then, there are people who did believe in Him and would not say so.

The vocal unbelievers and the silent believers. If there was ever a time when Jesus could have used a supporting cast it was then – and now!

Before we are too critical of them, ask yourself, "Who am I living to please?! What is silencing me?"

Eternal Darkness

4. There is one final category, and that is, eternal darkness.

Look at what Jesus said in verse 46.

I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness.

There is a present darkness and an eternal darkness, or separation from the God of light. Jesus is inviting them to the light, now and forever.

For one hundred twenty years, Noah faithfully preached and hammered; preached and built; inviting every one of his contemporaries to enter the ark with him to be saved from coming judgment. Finally, the ark was finished and the day of invitation was almost over. The animals began to arrive, providing an undeniable sign that God was at work. Still, however, no one, outside of Noah's family, believed; no additional reservations were made. When they were all safely in the ark, Genesis chapter 6, verse 16 says, "... and the Lord closed [the door] ...".

Eventually, the rains came. I cannot help but believe that that massive door, which once was open, but was now closed, was the scene of an emergency meeting. I cannot help but believe that the door was banged on, scratched at, and clawed by panic stricken people.

Notice, though, that, at this moment, the message is not judgment but salvation. Continue to chapter 12, verse 47.

And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

Jesus declared, in verse 48,

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

The world must need saving – for Jesus came to save it!

So, if you reject His first message of salvation, the last message you hear from Him will be judgment.

Imagine the great white throne, "Lord, I believe now."

"The invitation is closed. Depart from Me into everlasting darkness, judgment."

God, who had offered mercy, now denies it.

A letter written to the editor of a Melbourne, Australia newspaper illustrates mental, ethical, judicial and eternal darkness in one paragraph of unbelief. A man wrote,

I am heartily sick of the type of religion that insists my soul and everyone else's needs saving. I have never felt that I was lost, nor do I feel that I daily wallow in the mire of sin, although repetitive preaching insists that I do. If, in order to save my soul, I must accept

such a philosophy as I have recently heard preached, I prefer to remain forever damned.

Present darkness, through unbelief, will lead to eternal darkness.

What's The Solution?

Look at chapter 12, verse 36a.

While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light. .

..

What does it mean to believe in the light? Simply put, it means to place your trust for salvation in Him alone.

Jesus did not say, "While you have the light, work for the light, join a church, and do good things to become a child of the light, be baptized for the light."

No! He said, "Believe in the light."

But James wrote, in chapter 2, verse 19b,

. . . the demons also believe, and shudder.

Are there going to be demons in heaven? No. There is a distinction.

Believing on Jesus means more than just saying, "Jesus Christ is God" – you must say, "Jesus Christ is *my* God."

Believing means more than saying, "Jesus Christ died on the cross for sin" – it means saying, "Jesus Christ died on the cross for *my* sin."

It means more than saying, "Jesus Christ came to save people" – it means saying, "Jesus Christ came to save *me*, and I have asked Him to do just that!"

What's In The Future?

What is in the future?

Eternal darkness for those who do not believe

1. For those who do not believe, eternal darkness.

God gave a visual illustration of coming darkness. When Jesus hung on the cross, for three hours, Luke records that, right in the middle of the afternoon, the sky went black. The sun's light was miraculously obscured and the world hung in darkness.

God was telling mankind, "You've asked for darkness. I'll give you three hours of it and, if you don't believe in Him, the coming darkness will last forever."

Eternal light for those who believe

2. For those who do believe, eternal light.

I want you to see something. It is found in the book of Revelation, chapter 21, verses 21 through 25. It is talking about the New Jerusalem that is a part of the new heaven and the new earth.

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed

I was deeply moved to read about the life of many children in nineteenth century England. Just over a century ago, children in England were made to work in coal mines because they were considered the only ones with bones flexible enough for the horrifying conditions. It was hard for me to imagine the horror of their little lives in the mine shafts.

The simplest job was being a "trapper". A child was lowered fifty feet down a shaft that connected two sections of railway for the coal cars. The child would kneel in the mud, in total darkness with trickling water, beetles, and rats, waiting to open the trap door for other children pulling the coal cars from one end of the mine to the other. The job was to let the child pulling the coal through that particular section and then close the trap door again. That way, if there was a mine explosion, it only killed the children between the trap doors who were pulling the coal cars. The trap doors cut off the exploding gas and kept it from spreading further.

Little children, seven or eight years old, would sit in the dark every day, sometimes eighteen to twenty hours, listening for the coal cars. Some would go insane, yet, in the mines, the trapper had the best job. These children suffered terrible cruelty at the hands of a greedy adult society who bargained for them, used them, and discarded them. Most boys and girls who worked were only eight or nine, but many children actually began toiling in the pits when they were only

four and five years of age. There were no hours of relaxation, their meals were mostly eaten in the dark, and they only saw the sunlight on Sundays.

If only someone would rescue them and bring them from the darkness to the light.

It would be the preaching of the gospel, in the early 1800's, that would end this practice by causing a revival and a reconciliation of the family. The work of a Christian statesman, by the name of Shaftsbury, would legally end the horrible practice.

So, what will end the enslavement of humanity to darkness? The gospel of Jesus Christ, and His work on the cross, that now offers to everyone the intellectual, ethical, judicial, eternal opportunity to move from the darkness into the marvelous light. To become no longer children of the night, but children of the light.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/19/1994 by Stephen Davey.

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