



*Called out of the Darkness*  
*Christmas, December 2018*  
*Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.*  
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December 21<sup>st</sup> is said to be the darkest day of the year. It certainly gets very dark here, but thanks to people putting up Christmas lights, those lights make it much easier to drive. I remember one year, however, when people did not put up Christmas lights, save for those who “go all out” decorating their yards; it was very dark, making us really thankful for the invention of electricity.

The time of Jesus’ birth was a time of high taxes, unemployment, failing morals, a military state, life on the dole. It was a time of Roman law, Greek philosophy, and a Jewish religious life with lots of rules and regulations. The world was in a moral darkness, a dark night of the soul. According to Galatians 4:3-5, we find: **Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law...**

When the time had full come, that is to say, at God’s appointed time, when the Jewish diaspora had spread throughout the Roman Empire and the Old Testament had been translated into Greek, opening the eyes of the Greek world to its theological power and beauty, when the Pax Romana extended over most of the known world with great roads and the Greek language linking the empire of the Caesars and making travel and commerce possible on a scale formerly impossible, when Greek philosophical thought had atrophied into skepticism, offering no hope in human wisdom to improve the ancient world (1 Corinthians 1:19-21), when the so-called civilized world as a result had sunk so low morally (Romans 1:21-32) that even pagans were crying out for relief from the perversities of immorality all around them-in keeping with the OT promises, prophecies, sacrifices...and other types and ordinances all pointed to Christ to come, God sent forth His Son.

**The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the Land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined...For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His Name shall be called wonderful, counselor The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father; the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and Peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:2, 6, 7)**

I don’t know whether experts agree on the exact day of Jesus’ birth, but we do know that shepherds were in their field, tending their flock by night. Penetrating the darkness came the angel of the Lord, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. They were really afraid!

**And the angel said unto them, fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David [Bethlehem], a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. A sign was given, a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a**

manger. Suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, said, **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace on those on whom God's favor rests. Luke 2:8-11**

These shepherds were on the night watch, keeping watch over their flocks. That was their job and their shift. It's dark, it's ordinary, and it's dull. Were they talking about King David, a shepherd of Israel? Were they thinking about the prophecies of a promised Messiah? There hadn't been a true prophet of God since Malachi. Maybe they discussed politics and life under Caesar's regime. Maybe they didn't care out there on the hills of Judea under the stars.

Back then, shepherds were despised by the orthodox religious people because they couldn't keep the details of the ceremonial law. They failed the "hand-washing test" and other rules and regulations imposed by the religious community. So, they were ritually unclean. "Good" people kind of hoped they didn't exist, except they were taking care of sheep and lambs, whose life-blood would mean atonement for their sins.

Now remember, in the first century, shepherds were seen as shiftless, dishonest people leading a nomadic lifestyle not trusted and not condoned. So we have shepherds of shaky reputation shaking in the midst of the glory of angels. Don't get the idea that they could be fooled. Shepherds dealt with the grit of life. And now they were squaring off with a great declaration and revelation of truth.

**You don't have to be prominent in the world to receive revelation from God. God chooses those to whom He will reveal Himself. He will interrupt your life to do it, and you won't be able to stop the glory of His appearing. He will bring good news to you that will fill you with great joy.**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void. Into chaos and darkness God said, Let there be light; and there was light. (Genesis 1:3) Light entering that chaos and darkness brought order.

Christ is Himself the light shining in the darkness.

In the Holy of Holies, there is no light other than that of God Himself. In Jesus is life, and the life is the light of all people. Jesus was born on a dark night, but God has the Star of Bethlehem shining on the place where He lay in a manger. The wise men followed that light, which guided them through the darkness. John 3:16ff tells us that God gave His unique Son that those who believe in Him might have everlasting life. The Father sent His Son on a mission with a message of salvation. The world doesn't know this light and will not come to this light because their deeds are evil.

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with [face to face] God, and the Word was God...All things were made by Him...In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the Light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it *or* overpower it *or* appropriate it *or* absorb it [and is unreceptive to it]. John 1:1-5 AMP**

The world immersed in sin and all that stands in opposition to God and His Truth cannot overcome the true Light.

Light has come into the world, The one that does truth comes to the light, but those who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, so do not come to the light but stand condemned.

The thing is, we must embrace the darkness in that we must acknowledge the full force of our being in the darkness without Christ. This means we must recognize that we are in moral darkness apart from Christ; that we are sinners, lawbreakers, bent at our core with iniquity. By doing so, we are better positioned to fully embrace the true light. The world would not know this light. Light exposes what's in the dark. Darkness threatens us, puts fear in us. But as we enter the darkness, seeing ourselves for what we truly are, seeing ourselves without hope save for the grace of God granting faith and repentance to turn to Jesus Christ and rely on Him alone as Savior and LORD, we begin to see the light shining into our darkness. We see the truth about our condition. In Ephesians 5, Paul exhorts those who have received Jesus Christ to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; rather reprove/expose them. The light exposes what has been hiding in the darkness. John in 1 John tells us that Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of darkness; that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

Jewelers display brilliant diamonds on plush black velvet for us to see and appreciate the contrast. Against the backdrop of darkness, light shines brighter and the darkness cannot overtake it. Darkness cannot overcome it. Darkness cannot put the light out.

When Jesus was dying on the Cross, ultimately to finish the work given to Him by His Father who sent Him, darkness covered the land for three hours. God surrounded Jesus with darkness. There in darkness, Jesus endured the Cross, enduring its shame, enduring suffering, enduring the price for our salvation. He had said: **I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.** John 8:12

The light of Christ shined into that darkness, beaconing hope, beckoning us to embrace Him, to embrace His life which is the light. His light burst out in glorious power, penetrating fear, triumphing over the darkness, over death, over the destruction work of Satan, over the Devil himself.

Jesus Christ calls us out of darkness, to have life in Him, to walk in the light, to walk in love, to walk in truth. Jesus reveals the Father. The Father glorifies the Son. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ.

**1 Peter 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.**

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. Jesus calls us out of darkness. The god of this world blinds 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...For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6)

Jesus came to perform the mercy promised to the patriarchs, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore to Abraham. John the Baptist prepared the way, to give knowledge of salvation unto the Lord's people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of God, whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (from Luke 1:72-79)

As we approach the darkest day of the year, let's ask the Living God to command the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to shine in the hearts of people of every tribe and tongue and nation; to shine into the darkness of people's souls and bring forth the miracle of God's

transforming grace and His electing love. Let us embrace Jesus Christ and His call to follow Him, not walking in darkness, but having the light of life. Let us abide in that Light.

**Have a glorious Christmas!**

**Dr. Mary Craig**

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