

HOW GREAT THE DARKNESS!

**For century after century of human history,
it would appear that the devil had the upper hand in the world.
No matter what God did, the devil was able to undermine the effort,
and it appeared he had a firm grip on humanity.**

Yes, it all started in Eden.

After God had finished creating the world in six days, Scripture tell us:

³¹And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.
And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. – Genesis 1:31

But creation did not remain **“very good”**.

Just two chapters later in the first book of Scripture we read these words:

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field
that the LORD God had made. – Genesis 3:1

The **“craftiness”** of the serpent, the devil, was his ability to **“deceive”**,
that is, to get Eve to turn away from the truth and to believe a lie.

**Once he was successful in his deception,
all who came from Adam and Eve were under the curse of sin and death.
With that fact established, the war for the souls of mankind had begun,
as all humanity was lost to God
and must be retaken from the “domain of darkness”** (Colossians 1:13).

Time and time again, God would act in human history, in human lives,
and time and time again the devil would come with deceiving lies.
Few people were able to withstand and prevail against the lies of the devil.

At the time of the Flood, only one family entered the Ark, eight people in all.
The rest of mankind, deceived and corrupted, perished in the Flood.

How great was the “darkness”, the prevalence of evil upon the earth!

Generations after the Flood, man united on the plain of Shinar – Babylon.
The descendants of Noah came together to exult themselves in defiance of God.

⁴Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens,
and let us make a name for ourselves,
lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” – Genesis 11:4

As man sought to unite, not under God, but apart from God, Scripture tells us:

⁶And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language,
and this is only the beginning of what they will do.
And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

⁷Come, let us go down and there confuse their language,
so that they may not understand one another’s speech...

⁹And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.” – Genesis 11:6-7, 9

Again we see, How great was the “darkness”, the prevalence of evil upon the earth!

Ten generations after the Flood, God called Abram for a special purpose:

¹²Now the Lord said to Abram,
“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house
to the land that I will show you.

²And I will make of you a great nation,
and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse,
and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” – Genesis 12:1-3

**Now, for the third time in human history,
God would from One Man build a people for Himself.**

- God started with Adam;
- God started again with Noah and his family after the Flood;
- God started yet again with Abraham!

The descendants of Abraham multiplied greatly while in Egypt,
and they became **“a great nation”** as God had promised.

After God brought the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites, out of Egypt,
He led them through Moses to Mt. Sinai, where God told Israel:

⁴You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians,
and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.

⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant,
you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine;
⁶and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” – Exodus 19:4-6

**One people, one nation, among all the nations of the world
would be God’s “treasured possession”.**

**What of all the other nations? – Darkness! Ignorance!
They did not know the true God!**

They only knew the gods, the idols, they served.

Again we see, How great was the “darkness”, the prevalence of evil upon the earth!

As the generations of the Israelites passed one to another in the “Promised Land”,
God’s people likewise turned to darkness, to the gods of the other nations.
Through the prophet Isaiah, God described the people of Israel in his day
as God calls upon heaven and earth as witnesses against the people of Judah:

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken:
“Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against Me.

³The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib,
but Israel does not know, My people do not understand.”

⁴Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,
offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly!

They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
they are utterly estranged. – Isaiah 1:2-4

Again we see, How great was the “darkness”, the prevalence of evil upon the earth!

HOW GREAT THE LIGHT!

The apostle John, as he describes the conception and birth of Jesus,
the entrance of the **“Word” become flesh** into the world
and the reception Jesus received from the people in the world,
writes in Scripture:

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through Him,
yet the world did not know Him.

¹¹He came to His Own, and His Own people did not receive Him. – John 1:9-11

How great the **“darkness”** over all the earth.

“... the world did not know Him” – Him, through Whom the world was made!
“... His Own people did not receive Him” – His people, Israel!

**Yet, now, through this One Man, the Promised One,
God would begin the work of redeeming a people for Himself
from all those in bondage in the darkness.**

²*For 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.*

– Isaiah 60:2

Out of the descendants of Abraham, in the land promised to Abraham,
the Light of God’s presence would shine, and the nations living in darkness
would come out of darkness, drawn to the Light:

¹*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you...*

³*And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*

– Isaiah 60:1,3

And so they did! People from the “Nations”, the Gentiles, came to the Light of Christ!
The first to do so were the wise men of the east.

¹*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king,
behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying,*

“Where is He Who has been born king of the Jews?”

For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.”

– Matthew 2:1-2

**God revealed His Plan to the prophets of Israel to send the Savior.
Yet, all the details of the Plan were not clearly understood by those in Israel
before the coming of Christ.** The apostle Paul writes...

⁴*When you read this, you can perceive my insight into **the mystery of Christ,***

⁵*which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations
as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*

⁶*This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body,
and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* – Ephesians 3:4-6

What is most interesting is that not only did those Israelites before Christ
not understand clearly and fully what God had revealed about the work of Christ,
**but even, the spiritual forces of darkness, the devil and the fallen angels,
did not understand the Plan God had revealed
and how God would accomplish the rescue of mankind
from their power over mankind.**

⁸*To me... this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
⁹and to bring to light for everyone*

what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God Who created all things,

¹⁰*so that through the church (“the called-out”) the manifold wisdom of God
might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

¹¹*This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,
– Ephesians 3:8-11*

**The “Church”, that is, those who are “called-out to assembly” (ekklēsia),
is the revelation to the devil and all the spiritual forces of evil
the wisdom of God’s Plan to reclaim from the devil’s domain of darkness
a people made righteous through Christ for Himself.**

The devil was wrong!

He thought that he had gained supremacy over man in Eden.

The devil thought he had supremacy over the nations living in darkness!

The devil believed that by killing Christ

he prevented Him from establishing His Kingdom!

But God concealed enough of His Plan from the devil

so that the spiritual forces of evil actually had a role to play

for the success of the Plan in the death and resurrection of Christ!

⁷*But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God,
which God decreed before the ages for our glory.*

⁸*None of the rulers of this age understood this,
for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* – 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

THE GREAT REVERSAL: What a Plan!

God in His Wisdom devised a Plan before creation

– a Plan ready to be put into action when the devil revealed his hand
in deceiving Eve;

– a Plan that would restore righteousness to those “called-out” of darkness,
out of the domain of the devil;

– a Plan where the spiritual forces of evil would seal their own doom
when they crucified Jesus, thinking they were ruining God’s Plan.

**That God’s Plan included the spiritual forces of evil “killing” Jesus was established,
the question was “When did God’s Plan call for this to happen?”**

When the wise men came to Jerusalem seeking the one “**born king of the Jews**”,
the fact that God had sent the Christ was made known to king Herod.

The devil used this by trying to work through Herod to kill the Christ
while He was still an infant.

But God intervened, thwarting the devil’s attempt:

¹³*Now when [the wise men] had departed,
behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,*

“Rise, take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt,

and remain there until I tell you,

for Herod is about to search for the Child, to destroy Him.” – Matthew 2:13

CONCLUSION

You and I are so blessed!

Our God conceived a Plan in eternity, before creation,
to rescue us from the power of darkness.

We live in the time when God has revealed the “**mystery**” of His Plan
as worked in His Son, Jesus.

What we celebrate in the birth of Christ is not a cute, quaint story
involving an innkeeper, shepherds and angels, and wise men.

**We celebrate God’s Plan, so clever, so wondrous,
that it concealed from the spiritual forces of evil how it worked
and it even involved them in the Plan,
all the while rescuing those held captive by them
from their power of darkness!**

This is an amazing section of Scripture, Colossians 2:9-15.

We’re going to look at verses 13-15:

¹³*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh,
God made alive together with [Christ], having forgiven us all our trespasses,*

¹⁴*by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.*

This [record of our debt God] set aside, nailing it to the cross.

¹⁵*God disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame,
by triumphing over them in [Christ].*

In Christ’s crucifixion, His sacrificial death for us, the devil lost all claim on your soul!

As Jesus’ suffered and died on the cross, He paid your debt for sin.

“The record of debt that stood against [you]” was “nailed to the cross”.

Those spiritual forces of darkness, “**the rulers and authorities**”

were put “**to open shame**” for their folly and their own defeat!

You are a living testimony to the wonder of God’s Plan!

You are a testimony to the Grace of God, as He gave His Son for you!

**You are a testimony to the Shame of the devil, outsmarted, outmaneuvered,
by the wisdom of God, a mystery concealed by God
until it was revealed in the Gospel and in the Church!**

Now that’s an “Epiphany” for the ages! AMEN