

JOHN 12:44-50

I HAVE COME INTO THE WORLD AS LIGHT

“Jesus cried out and said, ‘Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.’”¹

For almost 150 years, Christians have sung the hymn, “The Light of the World is Jesus.”² For almost two millennia before the hymn was written, followers of the Christ knew that He was the light of the world; the song merely put into lyric form the faith of the faithful. It is difficult for us to imagine a world in which we could know neither the love of God nor enjoy walking in the light of Christ the Lord. Or is it?

John opens the Gospel that bears his name by writing words we recognise immediately, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light.

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” [JOHN 1:1-13].

In this prologue of the Gospel of John, the Word, Jesus the Son of God, is identified as “the True Light.” Jesus is identified as very God in human flesh in this passage. This Jesus was the unique God-man—there was no other like Him, nor shall there ever be another like Him. To be certain, He took upon Himself the sin of mankind, providing an infinite sacrifice for fallen mankind; but more than that, the Living Saviour has shed light into every corner of our existence so that we no longer need to live in darkness.

BELIEVE? IN WHOM? Words matter! Promises matter! What is promised is important, and the more so when the promise has an impact on our eternal destiny. I have heard people ask how to believe. John wrote, “To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” [JOHN 1:12]. John equates receiving with believing—to receive Jesus is to believe Jesus. He must be the Master over life if He is to be Saviour of an individual.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² “The Light of the World Is Jesus,” Written by Philip P. Bliss, 1875

It is essential for us to realise that God, through His Word, promises to give to a select group of people what He has identified as “eternal life.” Eternal life, God’s salvation, is not distributed to all mankind, but only those who receive it by faith. Those people to whom this divine gift is given are those who receive as Master over life the One whom God sent to deliver them. The eternal life God has promised is not merely endless length of days, though it does refer to an absence of death; eternal life speaks of a quality of life, a new existence based upon an everlasting relationship to God who is life. This new quality of existence is found only in Christ as Master, as emphatically and repeatedly promised throughout the Word of God. Eternal life, that new relationship with God who is life, is reserved for those who accept the Son of God as Master over life. He takes up residence in the individual’s life, and His presence ensures the new relationship with God.

The Apostle to the Gentiles affirms that Jesus must be Master over life when he writes, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” [ROMANS 10:9]. The emphasis is upon Jesus as Ruler over life, not merely a distant deity. I often say, “Jesus is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all.” We are not given the luxury of choosing what role we relegate Jesus to—He is Master!

We have often heard that we need only believe to be saved. However, I must caution that it is not our faith that saves us! It is the object of our faith that saves. Too many of the professed saints of God have faith in faith, or they have faith in their church, or they have faith in their doctrinal position. We need to point people to Jesus as the Saviour of the world! Jesus said, “Whoever believes *in me*, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” [JOHN 11:25b-26a]. It is believing in the Son of God that brings salvation.

We have each heard the message delivered in John’s Gospel: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” [JOHN 3:16]. “Whoever believes *in Him*!” You cannot have watched a football game without seeing this message displayed at some point. We teach this truth to children in Sunday Schools throughout the world. And yet, the majority of people imagine that they can find another way, if their failure to believe in the Son of God is any indication.

Later, the Word will emphasise this truth when John writes, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” [JOHN 3:36]. “*Whoever believes in the Son* has eternal life.” I iterate—we are not saved by faith; we are saved by the object of our faith.

The Apostle to the Gentiles will challenge those reading His Second Letter to the Saints in Corinth, “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test” [2 CORINTHIANS 13:5]! The issue is too important to ignore, for failure to believe must result in facing the wrath of God.

I understand that many people choose to scoff at the idea of God’s wrath. After all, they have never witnessed His wrath, so why should they worry about what they have never seen? What is sad about this particular idea is that these people are now under the wrath of God. Their present condition, the situation that they have come to accept as normal, excludes them from the mercy of God, condemning them eternally. The Word informs Bible readers, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” [JOHN 3:18]. Condemnation is not a condition that is relegated only to a dim, unseen future; divine condemnation is the present condition of those who have never received Christ Jesus as Master over life.

We who know the Saviour must be very careful not to call people to join the church. Is church membership biblical? Absolutely! However, church membership has meaning only for those who are born from above and now entered into a relationship to the Living God. We must not allow people to foster false hope that joining a church will somehow assuage divine wrath. Similarly, we do not call people to identify through believer's baptism as a condition for forging the eternal relationship with the Living God. Is baptism a biblical concept? Without question! Is baptism expected of those who have received the Christ as Master over life? Assuredly! All who have believed are called to openly identify with the Saviour through the act of receiving baptism as a symbol of what God has done. The same holds true with the Communion Meal. One does not take the Communion Meal in order to be accepted in the Beloved Son of God, we partake of the Meal because we are already accepted in the Beloved Son of God. We who are saved are responsible to call all people to faith in the Risen Son of God.

We live in a day in which words are used in disingenuous fashion. What I mean is that many people assume a Humpty Dumpty attitude toward speech. Some of you will undoubtedly remember that Lewis Carroll portrayed Humpty Dumpty, when addressing Alice as saying, "When I use a word ... it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." However, words don't mean what I want them to mean. Reality does not allow any of us to adopt that sort of attitude when we are speaking; and especially are we not permitted such deviant luxury when we are speaking of matters of such eternal import.

We have come to a day when angry mobs cannot be called mobs; rather they are aggrieved citizens exercising democracy (or something). Advocating for violence against those with whom we disagree is just making a strong statement. Alcoholism has been transformed into a sickness. If it is a sickness, it is one of the few sicknesses that can be cured through abstention! Homosexuality and licentiousness have become lifestyle choices, much like choosing black or red as a favourite colour. Aborting the unborn *in utero* is now presented as basic healthcare. Our forefathers would be incapable of understanding what was being said in this modern world. The predictions of Orwell's *1984* are being fulfilled in the speech patterns of our world today.

Tragically, even among the congregations of our Lord, words are twisted and distorted to mean whatever the one speaking wants them to mean. Salvation is what we experience now, just as judgement has been emptied of its sting. Believing no longer results in transformation. We call people to come as they are and remain as they are. What is important is that people feel good about themselves! We excuse the most heinous sins as aberrant behaviour rather than calling such wickedness what it is—*sin*! Unbelief is no longer disqualification for salvation; it is just a psychological deficit that can be corrected by ignoring the unbelief. Preachers no longer declare the Word of the Lord, they have become counsellors to help us to have our best life now. Preachers no longer declare the Word of God, they are cheap psychologists or sociologists giving advice on how to enjoy yourself. Our contemporaries, and far too many of us who name the Name of Christ, have decided that we want it all now and Heaven to boot after we have completed this life without the bother of becoming Christlike.

Peter warned readers not to distort what is written to mean what we want the Words of Scripture to say. He cautioned, "Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him. He speaks about these things in all his letters. There are some matters that are hard to understand. The untaught and unstable will twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures" [2 PETER 3:15-16 CSV]. The drive to twist Scripture into something that makes us comfortable should be a source of dismay, even horror, for each child of the Living God.

It is essential that we understand that Jesus came into the world not merely to show mankind the way to life—He came to be the way to life. The message of the Apostles was, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” [ACTS 4:12]. This is especially pertinent during this Christmas season. We must echo again the refrain that Jesus has come into the world as light. Only as one believes in Him can they have hope of being delivered from darkness.

I understand that the world grumbles at the constant refrain of the need to believe the message of life in Christ. Some months past, I was asked to provide the service of interment for a young man. One of the relatives of that young man mentioned that following a funeral service for another member of that same family he had overheard complaints from some in attendance. They complained because I had spoken of accountability to God and the need to believe while we have life. If we don’t speak of life in the Son of God at a funeral, when shall we speak of the life He offers? If we don’t warn those in attendance at a funeral of the consequences of failure to receive the Saviour, when should we speak of His judgement?

A minister on one occasion overheard a conversation as he paused before a window display during the Christmas season. The display included a crèche and a banner declaring, “Jesus is the Reason for the Season.” One woman passing by the display expressed her anger, “Why must they make Christmas all about religion?” That is the attitude of the world; and tragically, the churches seem often to take their cue from the world’s attitude. We are so sensitive to avoid offending the blatant anger against the message of life that we mute our joy at the knowledge that the Saviour has come! We don’t want to appear overly joyful.

Nevertheless, there is great joy when Christ is recognised. The Magi were overjoyed when they realised they were nearing the end of their journey to see the newborn King of Israel. We read in Matthew’s Gospel, “When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” [MATTHEW 2:10].

The message that the angels delivered to the shepherds at the birth of the Saviour spoke of “great joy.” Doctor Luke writes, “The angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people’” [LUKE 2:10].

When the women saw the empty tomb, we read, “They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples” [MATTHEW 28:8].

When the disciples saw the Master ascend into the heavens, they were overjoyed. Therefore, the Scriptures reveal, “While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God” [LUKE 24:51-53].

When the Gospel was first declared in Samaria, that preaching was accompanied by joy. “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So, there was much joy in that city” [ACTS 8:5-8].

When the first reports of the conversion of the Gentiles was delivered to the Jerusalem congregation, the report was received with joy. “Being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them” [ACTS 15:3-4].

Trials that come because of your love for Christ will bring great joy. Peter writes, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” [1 PETER 4:12-13].

Our lives as Christians are marked by great joy, joy that Christ has come to deliver us. We sing, “Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come!” We sing, “Joy Has Dawned!” We sing, “All My Heart This Night Rejoices!” We Sing, “O Thou Joyful, O Thou Wonderful!” We sing, “How Great Our Joy!” We who follow the Saviour sing of our joy because we are joyful. We sing of our joy because Christ has given us reason to rejoice. With Jude, we exult, “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” [JUDE 24-25]. Amen, indeed!

THE WORD OF GOD JUDGES US — “If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day” [JOHN 12:47-48].

The individual who believes in Christ as Master will find they are disposed to believe the Word of God. I recall an incident that took place during doctoral studies in a major medical centre. I had formed a warm friendship with a technician in another laboratory. That man had an inquiring mind and he would frequently find time to come down to my lab and ask questions. He indicated at one point that he was interested in becoming a Christian, but he saw one great stumbling block to taking that step. “Evolution disproves the Genesis account,” he said.

I was privileged to be God’s instrument to point Richard and his wife to faith in the Son of God. A couple of days after he had looked to Christ the Lord in Faith, Richard came into my laboratory again. “You know the difficulty I was having,” he began. “Well, something strange has happened. I find myself wanting to believe what is written,” he confessed. That is the issue exactly. When we are born from above, we want to believe what the Word of God says. And the more we look into the Word, the more we know of the One who gave the Word.

The Word of God judges mankind. We do well to remember the statement that cautions, “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account” [HEBREWS 4:12-13].

These words echo the earlier statement that was delivered through the great Law Giver. “I will raise up a prophet like you for them from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth and he will speak to them whatever I command. I will personally hold responsible anyone who then pays no attention to the words that prophet speaks in my name” [DEUTERONOMY 18:18-19 NET BIBLE].

Why do we emphasise hearing the Word? Why do we claim that knowing the Word is important? Why is obeying the Word important? The reason the Word is central to our faith and practise is that it is the Word of God—the Word that God has given to direct our lives, to guide our steps and to ensure that we do not turn aside from always seeking to please the Living God. As the Psalmist has said,

“Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.”

[PSALM 119:105]

It is startling to hear Jeremiah accuse the people of that ancient day,

“The wise men shall be put to shame;
they shall be dismayed and taken;
behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD,
so what wisdom is in them?”

[JEREMIAH 8:9]

When people have rejected the Word of the LORD there is no wisdom left that they can claim.

The concept of divine judgement disquiets us; we are uneasy at the thought that God would actually judge us. The natural man, especially, is uneasy at the thought. “Why should I be judged?” we question. “Haven’t I been as good as anyone else?” We struggle with the idea that our actions are not good enough to satisfy God. What does He want? What does He expect?

The unnerving fact is that we are being judged constantly. Friends judge our character by the conduct of our lives. Colleagues judge our reliability by the manner in which we fulfil our responsibilities. All who know us and who have heard us attest to our faith are judging the reality of what we claim to believe by the manner in which we live. Let me say quite plainly that we do not have the luxury of hiding some facet of our life from the eyes of those about us—they see far more of who we are than we might ever imagine. If we are followers of the Christ, our lives are displayed for the world to witness.

Paul spoke of what it is like to live out life in a virtual fishbowl because he was an Apostle. No doubt you will recall his words. Paul wrote, “I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men” **[1 CORINTHIANS 4:9]**. The Apostle was certain that he was living in a fishbowl; everyone could see the reality of his faith and the One he served by the conduct of his life. In a real sense, every servant of the Living God lives openly whether that servant wants to do so or not. As followers of the Lamb of God, your life is always on display, you are constantly being scrutinised by a watching world. This is why the Word is constantly judging us as we read what is written. God is grinding away the rough edges of our life so that He will be glorified in us; His Word is constantly judging us as though it was the spiritual emery cloth employed.

Isn’t it true that one major reason we don’t invest more time reading the Word is that we find that our masks are stripped away by what is written? And stripping away the masks we so carefully put on to deceive our world is painful! We read the words of Scripture and we recognise our need for mercy, our need for grace. We seek affirmation, and we discover that we are instead confronted by holiness, by righteousness. And that confrontation is always painful.

We imagine that we are so busy that we haven’t time to read the Word, carefully listening to hear the Spirit speak through what is written and responding to what we hear through speaking with the Risen Saviour in prayer. We are important, if only in our own estimate, and we haven’t time to waste reading. We’ll get all the Bible we need when we go to the services of the church next Sunday. In the interim, we wonder why God doesn’t heed us, doesn’t listen to our cries. Among the Proverbs is one which should give every professed child of God pause. God, speaking through the Wise Man, has cautioned each of us,

“Because I have called and you refused to listen,
 have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded,
because you have ignored all my counsel
 and would have none of my reproof,
I also will laugh at your calamity;
 I will mock when terror strikes you,
when terror strikes you like a storm
 and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
 when distress and anguish come upon you.
Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
 they will seek me diligently but will not find me.
Because they hated knowledge
 and did not choose the fear of the LORD,
would have none of my counsel
 and despised all my reproof,
therefore, they shall eat the fruit of their way,
 and have their fill of their own devices.
For the simple are killed by their turning away,
 and the complacency of fools destroys them;
but whoever listens to me will dwell secure
 and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.”

[PROVERBS 1:24-33]

“Whoever listens to Me.” Stern words from the LORD of Glory. Throughout the church world today are found people who rather than reading the written Word and believing what is written seek to hear the Living God speak through dreams and visions. God has spoken in this manner at times in the past, and He is assuredly able to do so if it pleases Him in this day; but for God to communicate with mankind through dreams and visions has always been the exception rather than the rule. Others are assured that God speaks to them and to the faithful through what they call a “word of knowledge,” through oral prophecies delivered as people speak ecstatically or through obscure statements uttered as though they were prophetic. We should always look askance at such puerile efforts, remembering the warning delivered through the Prophet Isaiah. “To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn” [ISAIAH 8:20]. God has given us His Word; it is enough to assure guidance for the faithful.

With all my heart I believe God has revealed Himself through the Word He has given. He has revealed His will so that none of us need ask, “What does God want of me?” God has shown us what is good and what is right in His Word. Do you recall these words from Micah?

“He has told you, O man, what is good;
 and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
 and to walk humbly with your God?”

[MICAH 6:8]

When he wrote these words, Micah was iterating what had been revealed through Moses long years before. You will recall that Moses taught the people, “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good” [DEUTERONOMY 10:12-13]?

The sum of the matter is that we have received the Word of the Living God. That Word is true and trustworthy. Peter spoke of a time when he and other disciples heard the voice of the Living God. He wrote, “We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain” [2 PETER 1:16-18].

Having spoken of an experience that is superior to any that any living mortal could claim, he then continued, “We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” [2 PETER 1:19-21].

The Word that we have received and know to be the Bible is authoritative; it is precisely what the Living God wanted us to have. It is given so that we might have a perfect revelation of the mind of the True and Living God. Those men who wrote Scripture were superintended by the Holy Spirit so that what was written was exactly what is necessary for our understanding of the character and the will of God. This Word is a perfect revelation of the mind of God.

LIGHTING THE DARKNESS — “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness” [JOHN 12:46]. One of the damning affirmations of the Word is recorded early in John’s Gospel. In JOHN 3:19-20 we read, “This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”

It is pretty startling to read, “People loved the darkness rather than the light.” And to read the reason for their love is actually depressing, “their works were evil.” I was startled to discover that the love for the darkness that characterises our fallen world is an *agape*-type of love. We are not speaking of a preference; we are witnessing a love that has no concern for the consequences, a love that actually asks nothing in return. The love people have leads them to hold to darkness even when the darkness is destroying them! That is serious love!

The Bible has quite a bit to say concerning darkness and light. I suspect that we read the various statements without actually thinking about the implications of what is written. As one example, Paul contrasts the condition of those who are lost, whom he says are in darkness, and those who are saved, whom Paul identifies as walking in the light. He writes, “In the[] case [of those who are perishing] the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone 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].

The opening words of John's Gospel reveals the light that penetrates the darkness. Perhaps you will recall the passage to which I refer when I begin to recite the familiar words. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" [JOHN 1:1-5]. Christ Jesus is the Creator, and He is Himself very God. Moreover, the light that shines in the darkness is not light as we perceive light—it was the self-existent light that characterises the Living God.

Wherever God is, there is light. This is emphasised as John writes, "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" [1 JOHN 1:5]. God is identified by one writer as "the Father of lights." In JAMES 1:17 we read, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Today, God is light; the Son of God is the light of the world. There is coming a day when God shall provide light for all. John saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down. He describes that city for the people of God, and we should read his description which is given to prepare us for what is coming. Among the aspects of the city, the Revelator wrote, "I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there" [REVELATION 21:22-25].

The God who created light for our physical need is the same God who gives us light by which we are to walk in this world. Indeed, Christ Jesus is the light of the world. The beautiful part is that the light of God will be our light throughout eternity. It is the glory of God that lights the New Jerusalem, and the lamp of the city is the Lamb, Jesus, the Son of God. This is nothing less than the fulfilment of the prophecy penned by Isaiah long years before the birth of Christ the Lord to a virgin. Long before Jesus came into the world the first time, Isaiah wrote:

"The sun shall be no more
your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give you light;
but the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.
Your sun shall no more go down,
nor your moon withdraw itself;
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be ended."

[ISAIAH 60:19-20]

The Psalmist wrote of this same theme when he wrote,

"It is you [O LORD] who light my lamp;
the LORD my God lightens my darkness."

[PSALM 18:28]

I confess that I don't understand all that is revealed concerning the light of God, but I know what it is to walk in the light. I know what it is to dwell in the presence of the Light of the World, even if only for a brief while. It is enough for me to know that righteousness, holiness, goodness, grace and glory will mark eternity, just as the Saviour sheds light on our path today as we walk with Him. That gives me confidence to continue in the path of righteousness.

Though the Son of God was not born mid-winter as we celebrate, it is perhaps appropriate that we recognise that at the darkest point of history, God scattered the dark night of our broken world by sending the eternal light to shatter the darkness. Knowing this, I am encouraged; I am encouraged because the world is a dark place today. No doubt the world was a dark place when Jesus was born, but I am confident that the world is exceptionally dark today. Evil seems to be unchecked in our world and wickedness appears to be in ascendancy while righteousness is in retreat. It is precisely at such a time that God sent His Son, and does it not appear that it will be at such a time that God sends His Son the second time.

In the Letter to Hebrew Christians, there is a most encouraging promise. There, we read, "[Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" [**HEBREWS 9:26-28**].

So, Christmas causes me to hope. I anticipate soon hearing the clarion call to meet the Saviour in the air. Together with all the saints, I shall soon be united with Him; and Christmas is the evidence that this promise will be fulfilled. Amen.