

12-07-25 Before Bethlehem: Jesus, the Life and the Light

Week 2

Text: John 1:4-9.

Big Idea: Jesus brings life into our deadness and light into our darkness.

INTRODUCTION: “Lights, Life, and the True Light”

How many of you already have Christmas lights up on your house? How many have had lights up since the beginning of November?

Be honest—are you the “one string around the porch railing” type, or do you lean more toward Clark Griswold’s 25,000 twinkling bulbs?

It’s funny—every December, people climb ladders, hang lights, risk electrocution, and spend way too much money on electricity bills—all to push back the darkness for a few short weeks. Some of us drive around town just to see the best displays, right?

Why? Because deep down, we’re drawn to light. We crave it. We celebrate it. We decorate with it.

Our Jewish friends celebrate Hanukkah this time of year—a festival of lights that remembers God’s miracle of oil that lasted eight days when it should’ve lasted one. At its core, Hanukkah is about this same truth: when God shows up, darkness and despair don’t win.

But here’s the problem.

We live in a world that’s good at hanging up fake lights while stumbling around in real darkness.

Our neighborhoods sparkle, but our news is dark.

Our Christmas trees shine, but many of our homes are filled with tension, regret, or emptiness.

Our mantles glow with candles, but our hearts can feel cold and lifeless.

And that’s exactly why **John 1:4–9** is so powerful. John isn’t talking about twinkling lights or menorahs or decorations. He’s talking about something greater.

“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.”

That's not Clark Griswold. That's not a seasonal glow. That's Jesus Christ, the eternal Life and Light, breaking into our deadness and our darkness with a glory the world cannot extinguish.

Lights and Christmas seem to go together, don't they?

The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus doesn't just bring light bulbs into our world—He brings life and light Himself. And when He shines, no darkness can overcome Him.

Read John 1:4-9.

I. Jesus Gives True Life That Brings Light (v.4)

- **“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”**
- John uses the Greek word “zoe” (spiritual life), not “bios” (biological life).
- When we were born, we received physical life. When we are born again, we receive spiritual life. Both come from Him. When Jesus gives you real life, the light comes on for you.
- Jesus is not a life coach; He is Life Himself (cf. **John 11:25; John 14:6**).
- When spiritual life enters, light dawns.
- **Genesis 1:3 – “Let there be light”**—the first act of creation; John shows the new creation begins in Christ.

Matthew 17:2, “and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.”

Revelation 1:16-17, “He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. 17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.”

Theological Meat:

Jesus is the source of physical life (creation), spiritual life (new birth), and eternal life (resurrection).

His life illumines truth and meaning; apart from Him, we walk in shadows.

Application:

If Jesus is your life, your perspective changes—fear shrinks (**Psalm 27:1**), hope grows, courage rises.

II. Jesus' Light Shines and Exposes Darkness (v.5)

- **“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”**

- Spiritual darkness spilled into our world in Genesis 3 and can only be removed by the Lord who is life and light.
- The word, “**overcome**” means “to lay hold of, to seize or grasp.” It was used in the sport of wrestling to describe getting pinned. John is saying that it is impossible for darkness to pin light to the mat.
- Darkness by its very nature refuses to come into the light because darkness and light are mutually exclusive.
- If you have one, you cannot have the other. Those in darkness cannot readily understand the Lord who is life and light.
- Darkness, by definition, isn’t even a thing because it’s only the absence of light.
- Darkness cannot do anything to light, and you can’t add more of it to a room. Without light, darkness simply takes over.
- In the presence of light, darkness flees. The good news is when we lean on the Lord of light, we won’t remain in darkness.

Jesus said in **John 12:46**: “**I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.**”

- Darkness = sin, ignorance, rebellion (**Gen. 3; Rom. 1:21**).
- Light is present tense—always shining, never ceasing.
- Darkness cannot extinguish it; light always wins.

John 12:46 – “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.” NLT

Ephesians 5:13 – “But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them,” NLT

Theological Meat:

Darkness is not an equal force to light. It has no substance, it’s just absence.

Satan may rage, sin may blind, culture may stumble, but Christ’s light is unquenchable.

Application:

Are you walking in His light—or hiding in darkness?

The light will reveal your sin—but only to redeem your soul.

Challenge: Confess areas where you’re still trying to hide in the dark.

III. Jesus' Light Is Carried by Witnesses(vv.6–8)

- **“He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light...”**
- John the Baptist was not the light—he was a reflector.
- God’s way of letting the light of Christ shine is through human witnesses.
- God’s design: The Light of the World shines through His people.

Matthew 5:16, “In 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.”

Theological Meat:

Our role is derivative light—like the moon reflects the sun.

Witness is not optional; it’s essential.

Application:

Do people see the light of Christ in you, or just a “nice guy”?

Challenge: Live missionally—be bold in word, bright in witness, clear in confession.

This week: Invite at least one person to encounter the Light (Christmas Eve service, personal testimony, Scripture reading).

IV. Jesus' Light Is Available to Everyone (v.9)

- **“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.”**
- Jesus is the true light (Greek: alethinos = genuine, ultimate, real).
- The rabbis used the word light as a name for the Messiah, so when John used the phrase, **“true light,”** he was connecting Jesus to the promised Messiah as foretold in **Isaiah 9:2:**

Isaiah 9:2 , “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.” NLT

- The idea behind **“walking in darkness”** is someone stumbling as they come and go.
- While people are walking in the dark, all of a sudden a “great light” appears and shines into the deep darkness! We can’t find the light on our own, so the light comes to us.

Matthew 4:16, “the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined.” applies this directly to Christ.” NLT

Theological Meat:

Light is both universal in scope and personal in reception.

Darkness in Scripture often signals judgment (**Exodus 10, Mark 15:33**).

At Jesus' birth.... supernatural star shone.

At Jesus' death.... supernatural darkness fell.

In both, God declared: **"This is My Son - the Light of the World."**

One pastor's insight, "Christ is no simple spark in the darkness. He drives out the darkness. Jesus' not a candle in a cave, he is the sun burning away the gloom and shadows of evil."

Application:

Don't just say, "Jesus is the Savior of the world." Ask: Is Jesus my Savior?

Isaiah says, **"to us..."** Luke says, **"to you."** The Light shines globally, but it must be received personally.

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

Luke says, **"to you..."**

"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
Luke 2:11

The Light shines globally, but it must be received personally.

CONCLUSION: FROM DEADNESS TO LIFE, FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Jesus was not born just to brighten your holiday, but to bring life to your dead soul.

He was not born just to light up your living room, but to drive out the darkness in your heart.

He came not for sentiment, but for salvation.

Call to Action:

Believers: Walk as children of the light (**Eph. 5:8-9**).

For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

Seekers: Step out of the shadows and receive Him today.

PRAYER

John 12:46 – “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”

“Jesus, I confess my deadness and my darkness. I believe You are the Life and the Light. I turn from my sin and trust You as Savior, Christ, and Lord. Shine in me and make me a son or daughter of light. In Your name, Amen.”