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Expository Sermon

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*I WANT TO WISH YOU A VERY BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR. MAY THE CHRIST OF
CHRISTMAS ALWAYS BE THE LORD OF YOUR LIFE*

ADVENT - THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS HAS DAWNED

Scripture Reading – John 1:1-18. John 1:4-5, 9.

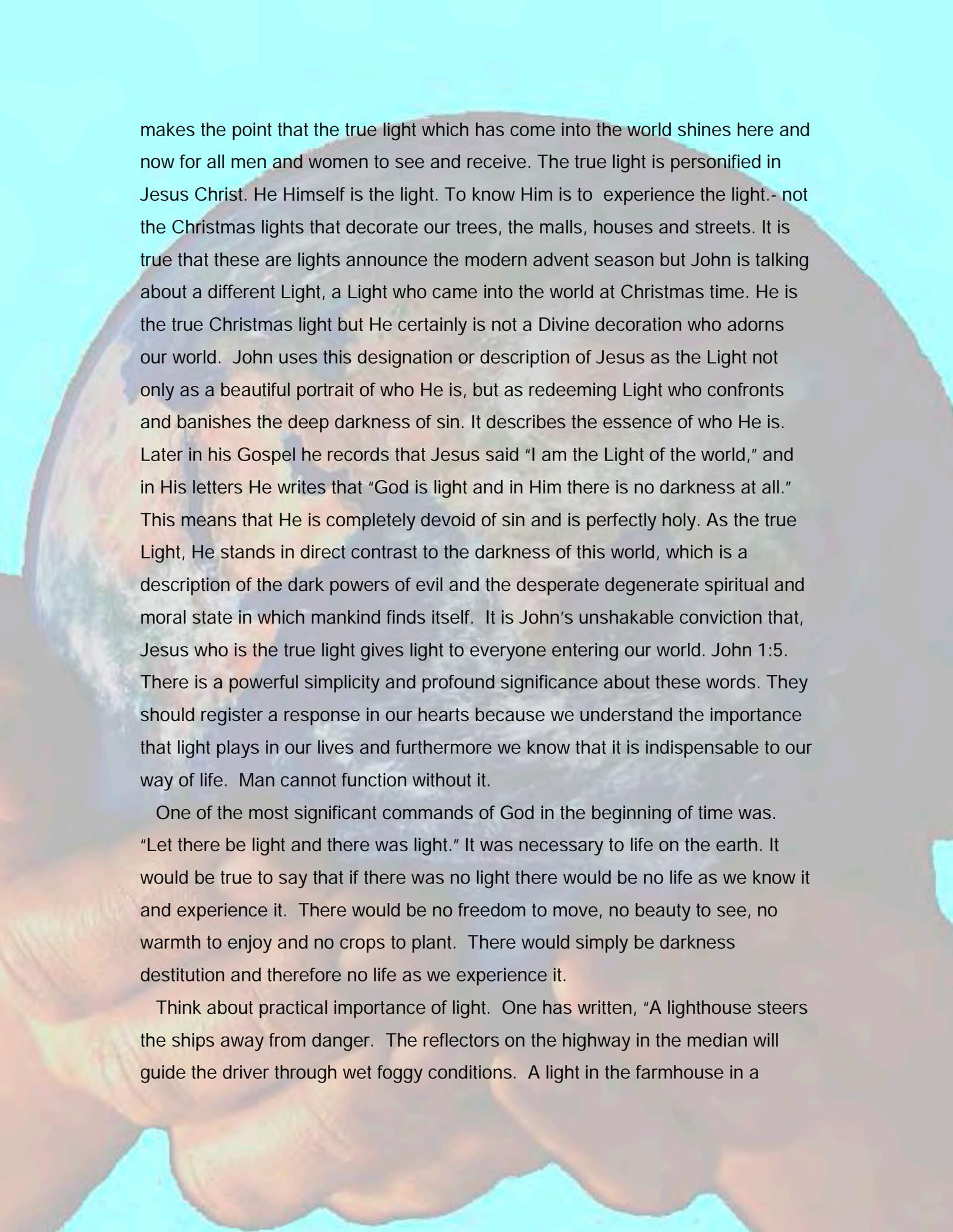
Introduction

Jesus is the Light. Jesus Himself made that claim and John's message confirmed and testified to it. This truth comes to us with greater emphasis during the Advent season. It is a simple yet beautiful description of who Jesus is. There are several truths that he lays down concerning Jesus as the true light. In John 1:5, 9.

i. He writes, "The Life was the light of men." John 1:3.

ii. It is this Light "that shines in the darkness." John 1:3. Then he emphasizes that Jesus is

iii. "The true lightgives light to every man." John. 1:5. The N.R.S.V reads "The true light which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." John



makes the point that the true light which has come into the world shines here and now for all men and women to see and receive. The true light is personified in Jesus Christ. He Himself is the light. To know Him is to experience the light.- not the Christmas lights that decorate our trees, the malls, houses and streets. It is true that these are lights announce the modern advent season but John is talking about a different Light, a Light who came into the world at Christmas time. He is the true Christmas light but He certainly is not a Divine decoration who adorns our world. John uses this designation or description of Jesus as the Light not only as a beautiful portrait of who He is, but as redeeming Light who confronts and banishes the deep darkness of sin. It describes the essence of who He is. Later in his Gospel he records that Jesus said "I am the Light of the world," and in His letters He writes that "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all." This means that He is completely devoid of sin and is perfectly holy. As the true Light, He stands in direct contrast to the darkness of this world, which is a description of the dark powers of evil and the desperate degenerate spiritual and moral state in which mankind finds itself. It is John's unshakable conviction that, Jesus who is the true light gives light to everyone entering our world. John 1:5. There is a powerful simplicity and profound significance about these words. They should register a response in our hearts because we understand the importance that light plays in our lives and furthermore we know that it is indispensable to our way of life. Man cannot function without it.

One of the most significant commands of God in the beginning of time was. "Let there be light and there was light." It was necessary to life on the earth. It would be true to say that if there was no light there would be no life as we know it and experience it. There would be no freedom to move, no beauty to see, no warmth to enjoy and no crops to plant. There would simply be darkness destitution and therefore no life as we experience it.

Think about practical importance of light. One has written, "A lighthouse steers the ships away from danger. The reflectors on the highway in the median will guide the driver through wet foggy conditions. A light in the farmhouse in a

blizzard will guide the lost individual to safety. While this is true in the physical dimensions of our lives it is equally true in the spiritual dimensions of life. God knew that man needed His light as personified in His one and only Son. Jesus is the genuine light. It is who He is. John makes clear that that true Light that gives light to everyman was coming into the world. Phillips Brooks caught this truth in his beautiful carol "O little town of Bethlehem. He sees in the dark streets of the little town that there shines the "Everlasting light.....the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to night." This is the word of hope given to a world that is engulfed in darkness. It is only the true light that gives us this hope. The life of Jesus according to John is the Light of man. As the Christmas light He shines redemptively here and now. It is He who shines in the darkness and we receive Him and that light will dispel the darkness that envelopes our lives. Now what does John say about this Light in these verses? Note first will you that,

1. THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS IS REVEALED. John 1:15.

In verse 9 he says, "The true Light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.....v.14. "We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son." Now John explains who the "True Light is." He is the Light who has come to shine in the darkness that envelopes our world. Sins darkness has invaded the human race and the true Light is the only force that can dispel the darkness. So we ask "who is the baby who lies in a manger?" "Why is He the True light?" John is extremely concerned that we understand who He is. Of the four gospels it is He gives us the most detailed description of who Jesus is. He does this in the context of this designated passage of scripture by explaining,

a. The Nature of His Person. John: 1:1,3, 15. It is true that He is a Baby with all the weakness and vulnerability of a baby. But who is He? Is He just an ordinary child who had the misfortune of being born in a stable? Why is He so special? John tells us why as he reveals

i. Christ's Deity. John 1:1. John tells us that this baby is God in Human flesh. He opens his gospel with the announcement that "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.....and the Word became

flesh." He is the incarnate God. Charles Wesley wrote "veiled in flesh the Godhead see..." This Baby was no ordinary baby. He is the incarnate God that is why He is called Emmanuel meaning "God with us." John simply states this as truth - truth which is fundamental. To John the baby in a crude manger is God in human flesh. But John moves on to assert

ii. Christ's Authority or power. John 1:3. Christ's authority is founded on his Deity

We look at this baby in a stable, weak, fragile and totally dependent on Mary and Joseph for care and protection. We might ask "how then can you talk about His power and authority?" He is a tiny helpless baby. But John with an unwavering strong conviction makes clear that **"through Him all things were made and without Him nothing was made that had been made."** John 1:3. And the writer to the Hebrews confirms this truth in chapter 1:3, "...in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and **through whom He made the universe."** This describes the authority and power of Christ. What follows this truth is,

iii. Christ's Eternity. John 1:1, 15. He is eternal. The words of John make this clear. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" This Baby had lived before time in eternity. He had existed at

the time of the beginning of all things. John the Baptist testified of Jesus, "He who comes before me surpassed me, because He was before me." Jesus is timeless! He transcends time! He was there at the beginning. "He is the same yesterday today and forever." He is the Divine Life! Eternal light! The Timeless Word! John talks about the Deity, the Authority and the Eternity of Christ and he is deliberately emphasizing the truth that Jesus Christ is God. These are fundamental Christmas truths. This is what makes Christmas such a cataclysmic event. These are truths to which we should tenaciously hold because the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is being attacked in and out of the church. There is segment in the church that seems to play down the importance of these truths. Some do not want to hear them. Others do not believe them. The result of which, is a disturbing, anemic and erroneous teaching which is both disruptive and

destructive to the Christian faith. Furthermore, while they are neglecting these truths and even denying, the church is being infected and polluted by heresy, so weakening and ultimately destroying its dynamic witness and redemptive impact in a dark world. While most still believe Jesus was the Son of God, forty two percent of them say He committed sin while was on earth. Mark following words carefully - if we attack and demean the Deity of Christ, the foundation of our salvation and the superstructure of the Gospel message will crumble into dust, extinguishing the message of hope. This thinking results in a flawed powerless Christ who then becomes darkness to men. This false teaching is not only unscriptural but blatantly false. The message of John is that this Babe is the eternal God who is the true Light of the world. It is only as Jesus is "very God of very God" that He is the authentic redeeming light of the world. But John also emphasizes,

iv. Christ's Humanity. John 1:14. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

This Babe in a manger is God become man in the flesh. Jesus is not only "very God of very God," He is also "very man of very man. Charles Wesley wrote so well that **"Our God contracted to a man, incomprehensibly made man."** I know that this is a mystery. The birth of this baby is a mystery and we should not be surprised at that, because the incarnation is God's doing. We should expect a measure of mystery when God acts and moves to fulfill His purposes. The hymn writer says it well when he wrote "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." One thing is clear, however, this Babe is God giving Himself to us and for us in order to become the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is God wrapped in human flesh, but what is He doing in a manger, and more importantly what is doing here at all? Leslie Savage wrote, "A Baby's hands in Bethlehem were small and softly curled, but held within their dimpled grasp, the Hope of the world." And so why was this Babe here at all? If He is God what is He doing in a dirty stable with the animals? One has asked, "What is a great and majestic God doing in a place like this?"(Paraphrased) What He is doing is revealing Himself as the "True Light that gives light to the world." He

came to dispel and defeat the overpowering darkness of sin. John 1:9. In this way John outlines the nature of the person of Christ. Who Christ is determines what He is able to do redemptively for a sinful dark world. But now John moves on to talk about,

b. The Nature of His Purpose. John 1:4-10. What was He about in this world? What was the intent of His coming? The words in John 1:4-5 makes this clear.

"In Him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." There are at least four truths that stand out in verses 1-9 in John 1.

i. Jesus is the true light...He gives light to every man." John 1:9

ii. The World is in darkness. John 1:5.

iii. Jesus came to our world. John 1:9. The true Light came into the world. This is an obvious yet significant truth, but His coming is indispensable to the redemption of sinful men and women.

iv. The world was made by Him it did not recognize or receive Him. John 1:5, 9.

As the Light of the world, Jesus came to reveal who we are and what we are. He shows us the true color and state of our lives. Jesus who is the light of the world stands in stark contrast to the condition of the human race. He reveals the deadliness, the darkness and the destructiveness of sin. He shows us who we are and what the condition of our lives is. It leaves no part of our lives hidden. It illuminates and reveals. Darkness is a description of sin that has wrapped itself around humankind, and controls and confuses the minds and souls of men and women. When we are in the dark we are lost. We cannot find our way in the darkness. Paul tells us that sin has darkened the minds of men and women.

Jesus came as a baby to be the Light who would dispel and drive out the darkness and transform the lives of men and women. Jesus confirmed this truth when He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John: 8:12. The light of Christmas is designed to perpetually shine in and through our lives. In this dark world it is necessary receive and follow the true light. We are lost without it. Making

decisions in the dark can lead to some regrettable circumstances. Back on the days before electricity, a tightfisted farmer was taking his hired man to task for carrying a lighted lantern when he went to call on his best girl. "Why," he exclaimed, "when I went a-courting I never carried one of them things. I always went in the dark." "Yes," replied the hired man wryly, "and look what you got." Men and women have refused and resisted the light and look where it landed them. Man cannot make the right decisions or exercise true discernment in the dark; neither can he move in the right direction in the dark. The world is in a mess and is frantically trying to find solutions to it but without success. The truth is he cannot extricate himself from the confusing darkness without the light. And man is living in darkness that is why the Light of the World came to men in the form of a baby. The Light of Christmas is revealed. Note also that,

2. THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS IS REJECTED. John 1:5, 11.

There is note of tragedy in the Advent story found in verse 11. "He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him." Two words seem to say it all. "He came." Who came? God in Christ came. This truth is incomprehensible. "The Lord of Glory came!!!" He came with focus and distinct purpose. Love was the compelling force that brought Him to this planet. His purpose was designed for our salvation. He came "BUT" that little word "BUT" changes the complexion of things. He came to His own "BUT His own did not receive Him." While it is a mystery that He came, there is also a certain amount of mystery that after all He did for the human race there are those who still refuse to receive Him. This is, **a. A Disturbing Response in their Rejection of the light. John 1:11. "His own did not receive Him."** What it is so profoundly amazing is that His coming was born in the fountain of love, motivated by the force of love, and compelled by the purpose of love. The scriptures clearly teach that His coming was not born in the obligation of duty but in the constraint of grace and the compulsion of love, and yet there are those who still do not receive Him. He certainly did not owe it to mankind to come to this earth. His coming was a willing act of the extravagant love and the measureless mercy of God. -- an act that was designed to bring light

and salvation to the darkened minds and hearts of men and women. Yet even though He gave himself so sacrificially, He was rejected by His own. John wrote in chapter 3:19-20. that the gift of Light has been rejected by many. Jesus said, "this is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." Evangelist Gypsy Smith said that once a group of Gypsies were forced to cross a swollen stream, a great number of men were drowned. One young man made a desperate attempt to save his mother who kept clinging to him. Several times he pushed her away, saying, "Let go mother and I can save you." But she would not listen to him and was lost. At the funeral, the son stood by his mother's grave, and said over and over, "How hard I tried to save you, but you would not let me." These will be the tragic words of Jesus one day in eternity at the judgment seat concerning so many, "How hard I tried to save you, but you wouldn't let me." Jesus came to His own, but his own would not receive him. They would not listen to Him. This is a disturbing response. Note further,

b. The Distinct Reason for their Rejection of the Light. John 1:3,10-11. John tells what the reasons are.

A. The Blindness of Men. John 1:4, 10. John wrote that Jesus who is the light, "shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." V.5 In verse 10 he points out that the world "did not know or recognize Him." Man in sin is darkness. Paul wrote that the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the Glory of Christ who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. Dr James Montgomery Boice asks the question, "What happened when men fell into sin?" When man sinned how far did he fall? He outlines some responses that have been given to this question. I want to highlight three of them. The first theory is

i. That men fell forward. This theory has been influenced by the theory of evolution. Just as man is supposed to have evolved from lower to higher forms of life, so has his understanding of God and his morality has moved upward. There is a fundamental difficulty in this theory. Experience and history have

proved this theory as false. For instance when stones were used as weapons of war, men may have killed an individual now and then, but today we have developed weapons to destroy men and women in the thousands. This is not an indication that man has fallen forward. This thinking is as erroneous and irrational as is Darwin's theory of evolution. The second answer is

ii. That men fell over the edge, but got caught on a shelf half way down. They will admit that man is a fallen being and he is "dead in trespasses and sins." But if you press them closely, you will find that even though man is dead spiritually, he is capable of doing something for his salvation. Dr Donald Barnhouse once said "you might as well say that although such a man is in his coffin, he nevertheless has one arm outside of it working for himself." This is not a Biblical view. Paul clearly stated you cannot work for your own salvation we are saved by grace through faith. Note his significant words in Ephesians 2:8 – 9. "For by grace are we saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast. The Bible makes clear that

iii. That when man fell into sin he fell all the way to the bottom. There he lies hopelessly lost, blind to spiritual truth and unable to help himself until God reaches down, and by the authority of the Cross and the power of His grace, He lifts him up and transforms him to make him a new creature. The Word of God makes quite clear that men and women who live in sin are living in darkness, and are blind to the truth. They reject the Light because of that blindness. But the Light is also rejected because of the,

B. The Willfulness of Men. John 1:10-11. John says that this "Light came to His own but His own received Him not." Receiving Jesus as the Light involves a choice. Man chooses to reject the Light. John in his third chapter v.19-20 writes these words, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the Light and will not come into the light for fear his deeds will be exposed." The key words "will not come into the light." Coming to the "Light is a choice to be made." It is painful decision for when the Light comes our evil deeds will be

exposed. Diagnosis is painful, but it is necessary if the problem is to be resolved. The willfulness in man chooses to retreat from the Light. Jesus "came to His own, and His own received Him not." It is blindness and willfulness that causes men to reject the Light. John then talks about what happens when

3. THE CHRISTMAS LIGHT IS RECEIVED. John 1:11-13.

What John says is vital. "To all who receive Him, to those who believe on His Name, He gave the right to become the children of God, Children born not of natural descent, not of human decision, or of the husbands will, but born of God." The word right means authority or power. These are probably some of the most important words in scripture as they touch our relationship with God. The Word teaches us Jesus died to reconcile sinful men to Him. The Lord Jesus Christ gives us the authority to become the children of God. This is possible because the Christmas light shines has come to our world. John describes what happens when we receive the light of Christmas. First

a. Adoption Takes Place. John 1:12. This answers the question as to what changes in our relationship with God when we receive Him. The scriptures plainly tells that "those who receive Him and believe on His Name., He gave the right to become the children of God." We are adopted into Gods family when we receive Him into our lives.

By whose authority are we to become the children of God? Montgomery Boice tells of how on one of the military campaigns of the emperor Napoleon, when Napoleon dropped the reigns of his horse in order to read papers, the horse reared up and nearly unseated him. A corporal of grenadiers, a very lowly soldier, leaped forward and caught the bridle of the emperor's horse so that in a few seconds he had brought the animal under control. Napoleon turned to the corporal and said "Thank you captain." "Of what company sir?" asked the corporal who had just been called a captain? "Of my guards," answered Napoleon. In an instant the young man threw aside his musket, and walked across the field toward the headquarters of the general's staff, tearing off his corporal's stripes as he went. He took his place among the emperor's officers.

Someone asked what he was doing, and he replied that he was now the captain of the guards. "By whose authority?" they asked him. "By the authority of the emperor," the young man answered. The change of his rank depended on the authority of the commander involved. If one of the soldier's friends had called him captain they might have laughed together, but it would have ended there. The title given to him would have meant nothing. But when the emperor gave the order, the corporal seized upon it instantly, and was received as a captain by the staff. By whose authority can we become the children of God? The privilege depends on the highest authority in the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ who is King of Kings and Lords of Lords, before whom one day every knee shall bow and call Him Lord. And we can be bold to seize our position as children of God because it is based on His authority. You may have read the story in the Reader's Digest of a contributor who told of an Aunt Ruby and Uncle Arnie who had adopted a baby boy after five years of trying to unsuccessfully to conceive. To their surprise, a short time after the adoption, Aunt Ruby discovered she was pregnant, and later gave birth to a boy. One day when the two boys were eight and nine years old, the teller of the story was visiting Aunt Ruby, and a woman in the neighborhood came to visit. Observing the children at play, the woman asked, "Which boy is yours Ruby?" "Both of them," Aunt Ruby replied. The caller persisted, "But I mean, which one is adopted?" Aunt Ruby did not hesitate. In her finest hour, she looked straight at her guest and replied "I have forgotten." When the Lord Jesus Christ adopts us into His family we are told about our Heavenly Father's forgetfulness. He chooses to separate our sin as far as the east is from the west, and to forget our sinful past, and give us the full rights of children of God. He treats us as if we had never sinned. When we receive the Light of Christmas, adoption takes place. When we receive the Light of Christmas adoption not only takes place but,

b. Regeneration takes Place. John 1:13. By regeneration we mean that we are born again by the work of the Holy Spirit. John explains it for us chapter 1:13.

We are adopted into God's family because we are "...children born not of natural

descent, nor of human desire or a husband's will, but born of God." We as children born of Human parents began life as members of a family by being born into that family. Our earthly lives began at birth. Jesus said "flesh gives birth to flesh." If we want to be a cat we must be born a cat. If we want to be lion we must be born a lion. We are human because we are born that way. We become children of God when we are born again of the Spirit of God. This new birth into God's family is not of "natural descent," or "human desire" or a "husband's will." This is not the work of man it is the work of God the Holy Spirit in the heart. Jesus said that the flesh gives birth to the flesh and the Spirit gives birth to the spirit. Therefore Jesus said to Nicodemus "you should not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again.' John 3:6-7. He continues, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." We do not become children of God by imitation, but by adoption. We do not become part of God's family by reformation but by regeneration or by being born again. Reformation is the result of regeneration not the basis of it. Reformation is the fruit of being born again, not the fountain of it. Reformation is based on human effort, but regeneration is the result of the power and work of God the Holy Spirit in the heart. Mankind is deeply sinful, and no amount of human effort will change that condition. What man needs is a radical change of life to become a child of God. This can only take place when we are willing to confess and repent of our sin and by faith accept the Lord Jesus Christ into our lives, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts to make us new creatures, for He, and He alone can makes new creatures in Christ. Sinful man does not need to be patched up by a Divine tinker. God is not involved in band aid repair jobs. He is in the business of changing lives. The sinful soul needs a new heart – a changed life and only God can do this. This is why that Light of Christmas came to this earth.

Conclusion

Photography began with Louis Jacques Daquerre, who produced the first daguerreotype. That was 150 Years ago! How quickly photography has become a vital part of our lives. Upon producing the first photographic image, the

inventor cried out, I have seized the light. Genuine Christians have a different cry which is the "light has seized me." Has the Light of the world seized as you have laid hold of Him by faith. Can you say "The Light of Christmas is my life?"

