

“Its Lamp Is The Lamb” (Revelation 21:22-27)

Rev. Dr. Alfonso O. Espinosa

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Let us not forget that we are still in the holy season of Easter, today being the Sixth Sunday of Easter!

Pastor: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

People: **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, John the holy apostle in the *Gospel* of John, in his *epistles* like 1st John, and here again in the book of *Revelation* -- all written by the Apostle John - is always talking about *light* and *darkness*. Light and darkness for him and for us might be the most important metaphors in the Bible that teach us about the way of life that knows God and walks with God as distinct from and contrasted against the way of death that rejects and rebels against God.

And if there was ever a time that we need these rich metaphors to help us live, it is now. We seem inundated with our own sin, the evil in the world, and from the devil and his demonic forces to do one of two things:

EITHER

- (1) Reject God’s light altogether.

OR

- (2) Try to *change* God’s light to allow darkness into it. It doesn’t work. This “second option” is really nothing but getting back to the first option; it is just another way of rejecting God’s light.

I mention it, however, because experientially this is what the devil tries to make us do:

EITHER

- (1) Reject the faith clearly and in an outright fashion (often expressed in forms of atheism, or even through agnosticism or “none-ism” (being a “none,” as opposed to a Roman Catholic “nun,” means that one has no religion, belongs to *none*, including the Christian faith of course).

OR

(2) Continuing to claim to be a Christian, while trying to make a so-called “faith” accommodate the things of darkness. This is when a so-called “Christian” wants to have their cake and to eat it too.

If we do either, then Satan becomes our master. Never forget this Christian: *everyone* is religious or to put it simply, everyone has an ultimate allegiance and serves a higher power, everyone has a faith, and everyone has a master or a god. There is no such thing as ultimate fence-straddling. If a person says they don’t believe in God, then *that* is their faith: they have faith that God does not exist and when one considers the evidence for God, then indeed to *not* believe *requires* faith. If a person rejects Jesus Christ, they are still very religious and they very much follow a god who is not the True God.

I don’t think we consider these matters often enough. Our sinful flesh doesn’t want us to. But if we are not aware of the threat, how can we possibly defend against the darkness which is constantly and daily trying to pervade our souls?

Now we have to be careful here. Precisely because the metaphors are so powerful, we need to be as precise as possible in trying to understand them. For example, light is not always necessarily a good thing and darkness is not always necessarily a bad thing. Too much light directly above you at mid-day in the desert can represent that which saps your life and kills you by dehydration or heat stroke. There are times when married couples welcome the darkness to hold each other, to get away from the rest of the world and in darkness, their love is celebrated and cemented again. Some forms of light are bad and some forms of darkness are good.

I know for example one of the forms of darkness that is bad is when I have to get up in the middle of the night and I stub my toe into a piece of furniture that I could not see. Darkness is definitely bad in these instances! On the other hand, when I want to scare my kids, darkness is fun! You get the picture.

But in God’s Word, this is what we need to know about the categories of light and darkness:

Light

1. Shows the power and presence of God.

Darkness

1. Represents the powers that oppose God.

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| 2. Light shows or reveals Life, esp. Eternal Life. | 2. Darkness = Physical & Spiritual Death. |
| 3. Light means knowing God through faith in Christ. | 3. Darkness = ignorance & unbelief. |

(Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 143-144)

With this basic introduction to light and darkness, we are in a better position to approach Revelation chapter 21.

Revelation 21:22-25: ***“²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And 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. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day – and there will be no night there.”***

Dear Christian, please do not allow this Scripture to pass by you as an artistic nicety. We can't afford to do this as if this heavenly vision has no vital impact on our lives today. How could it not, especially since this last part *should* alarm us?!

Revelation 21:27: ***“But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.”***

If there was ever a verse in Scripture that should shake us from darkness, then you just read it. And yet at the same time, it is terribly alarming (which is why the Law can't deliver us)! By nature we are sin-sick and unclean and in our sin – in our ongoing fleshly rebellion against God (and you know how you rebel against God, at least you *should* know as you put your life up against the Ten Commandments) – we are squarely put into the category of what is detestable and false.

We are in the bad habit of trying to pretty up, dress up, and perfume up our sin. We rationalize constantly why it is ok to sin this way and that, while trying to maintain that it's ok, because God is going to forgive us anyway.

This is not the way to go and such thinking is sheer deception. This is the precise deception of darkness that wants to swallow you up and when we keep allowing the darkness to make itself at home in our hearts, then it is not light that abides in us, but darkness.

Elsewhere, St. John in 1st John 2:9-11 put it like this: ***“Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”***

I think the example that St. John chose to use is so fundamental to our considerations. Why are we willing to sin against others (be it our own spouse, our co-worker, or the person that we share in sin with)? It is because we don't love people. We don't do what is best for other people. We do what we want for ourselves. This is the state of darkness and it is terrifying.

To make matters infinitely worse is the mention of the Lamb's book of life. How in the universe will our name *possibility be in **that** book? How can it be? That book is for people who are of the light, but in our sin, we are of the darkness...again, these words in Revelation make us tremble (I guess there are some scary parts in Revelation after all right)?*

But do not despair. Listen and pray for the Holy Spirit to open your ears, your minds, and your hearts by the power of the Word of Christ. Actually, even now, even still, Revelation gives us the message of salvation and victory over darkness! Listen!

Revelation 21 is not an artistic nicety. It proclaims a profound truth that is your salvation dear Christian; a profound truth which guarantees *that light* which swallows up your darkness! Listen!

The profound truth is this: ***“[Heaven's] lamp is the Lamb.”*** Your place in heaven, your salvation, your deliverance from darkness dear Christian is the fact that the ***“lamp is the Lamb.”***

The context of Revelation 21 mentions the temple. This is vitally important. In heaven there is no temple in the traditional sense. Instead the temple is God and His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And now let's make the connection: As long as you are connected to the temple of God dear brother, dear sister, God will keep you in His light that overcomes your darkness. ***The key is to stay connected to the temple.***

When the “temple” was still but a movable tabernacle in the desert, the Israelites always saw God's light attached to it. At night, darkness could not overcome God's tabernacle as God provided a pillar of fire which demonstrated God's light never, ever leaving His people. When the temple was built in Jerusalem, watchmen kept light always burning in the

temple...the people of Israel always knew that if they were connected to the temple of God, then they had God's light. It was that simple.

Then the temple came in the form of God in the flesh. Jesus Christ was the temple among His people as He came to live for you, to die for you, and to rise for you so that the light of God defeated and chased away the darkness of your sin! In Christ, your darkness is overcome by the forgiving and welcoming light of God!

Jesus is the temple and within Himself the light of God is radiant. Think for example of what occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration when ***"[Jesus'] face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light (Matthew 17:2)."***

But remember Revelation's emphasis: this temple of light – the lamp of heaven – is Jesus the Lamb! This light is to keep before you at all times His wounds, His hands, and His feet. To keep before you what keeps you in the light of God: namely the blood of the Lamb. To keep you clear that to know God is to know that Jesus has saved you from all of your dark sin. The blood and the light of Jesus covers your sin and chases your darkness away. So listen to what Jesus says to you this new day; on this new beginning of light for you:

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." – John 8:12

This is the key to your life and salvation Christian. Stay in Jesus' light...and darkness will not overcome you. Stay in the light and you will always know why your name is written in the Lamb's book of life: it includes those who stay in His light. Period.

We have this cat in our family, actually Elizabeth's cat who lives with Andrew and Elizabeth in La Habra. The cat's name is "Ziggy." I call him "Siegfried/Ziegfried" and also "Ziegmeister"...he's a really cute cat! Anyway, pretty much to this day he gets into pin-lights. When you put that light on to anywhere on the floor, the cat is zeroed-in on that light like a F-16 Tomcat on an enemy MIG. He follows that light wherever it goes. If you put the light up on the wall or ceiling, the cat is literally trying to figure out a way to get to it. Ziggy is *incessant when it comes to following the light!*

Here's the thing: we know who the temple of God and the light of God is: it's Jesus. Follow the light of the world *incessantly* and you will always have your sin and darkness covered by His blood and you will by the Spirit, more and more want to follow Him, not because you got to, but because you want to. You will more and more see Him as your lover, as your best friend,

and as the author of true peace and fulfillment in your life, not just here and now, but for eternity in heaven.

Follow His light. Let's be like Ziggy the cat...let me show where this light will lead you. Think of the Psalm verse: ***"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (119:105)."*** Let's follow it [pastor will guide your eyes with his flashlight]. The light will take you through life and it will lead you back to God's temple and especially to this altar...where this bread and this wine with the Word of Christ attached to them will be the body and the blood of the light of the world given to YOU! And as you receive these again today know that you are being filled with light and the forgiveness of sins and that your darkness is being chased far, far away! In this light of forgiveness your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, because He is your temple, He is your light.