

Text John 3:19-21

¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Introduction (500)

The world is a dark place

Do you think the world is a dark place? Dark in the sense of evil?

Sometimes there appears to be a facade of good but it does not take much to reveal the true colours of this world. Look around and what do you see? Look back in history and what do you see?

Evil and darkness is everywhere.

Specific Darkness

Genocides. Abortion. Child slavery. Children soldiers, exploitation of the vulnerable. Family violence.

And then with the LGBTQ agenda the world glorifies sin and parades it all around us and encourages all to participate. Even condemning any who don't participate.

But think also of the bullying in the playground and how cruel children can be to one another.

Think of the lies which attack biblical manhood and biblical womanhood which is destroying families and individuals. Children growing up with distracted mothers and absent fathers.

Sinful humans make the world dark

Evil, sin and lies characterize our world. It characterizes the world we live in and it characterizes the world of the past. The world is a dark and evil place.

The world is a dark place because it is made up of people who are inherently selfish and seek their own pleasures.

The world is a dark place because the hearts of people are full of evil.

Ligh shining in the world

So what happens when a light shines in a dark place? What do the living things do? They can do one of two things.

The ones who love the dark flee and try to hide from the light.

Think of what happens when you kick over a rotten log. A host of insects scurrying to find cover and darkness. One catch of the light and they run in fear. That is one response

But others are glad to see the light.

Think of a person lost in a dark forest at night. When a light shines it means rescue and relief. When they see the light, they are drawn to it. They want to follow it because it means safety and shelter.

Passage overview

In this passage we learn that the light has come to this dark world. And what a contrast of responses the light has received:

Some reject the light and hate the light. They try to find more darkness to hide under when it shines.

Others receive the light and rejoice by the coming of the light. They live to reflect that light knowing that the light is a sign of safety and rescue.

Jesus is the light in this dark world. And there are two responses to his coming and his message.

Some hate the light and shrink back whenever it is shone on them.

Others cling to the light knowing it is their only hope in this dark and evil world.

Passage Outline

So today, as we study God's word, we will see One light in a dark world and the two possible responses to the Light.

To help us divide this passage of Scripture and help us understand the responses to the light we will divide it into three points:

The Light Revealed (19a)

The Light Rejected(19b-20)

The Light Received (21)

So let us begin our study, looking first at the light revealed.

Part 1 – The Light Revealed (v18) – 1200

Exposition (600)

Jesus is the light John 1:7-9 (200)

Throughout verse 19 to 21 John keeps referring to the Light, and then there is also this contrast with darkness and evil deeds.

But who is this Light and what does it mean that "*the Light has come into the world*" ?

Look back to John 1:7-9 to see who John means when he says the light. And try if you can to grasp the significance of that.

John 1:7-9

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷This man came for a witness, to bear witness of **the Light**, that all through him might believe. ⁸He was not **that Light**, but was sent to bear witness of **that Light**. ⁹That^[b] was the **true Light** which gives light to every man coming into the world.

Jesus is the Light. And he has come into the dark world.

Jesus the second person of the trinity, who was with God in eternity past and who is God.

Jesus who is co-eternal and co-equal with God.

Jesus who created the world and is sustaining the world.

This is the Light who has come into the dark world.

God incarnated into human flesh, dwelling as a man amongst his creation.

We must not loose the weight of what it means that Jesus came into the world.

We must not forget the extent of his condescension and magnitude of his humility.

Jesus, the second person of the Godhead came to this dark and evil world.

Jesus has come into the world. He is the light of the world.

Revelation of Truth (200)

And Light, in this context, is referring to revelation from God. God declaring truth to his creation.

Truth that makes some people uncomfortable and angry, but truth that guides others.

Think of Ps 119:105:

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.*

So the phrase that says “*the light has come into the world*” in verse 19, is saying that Jesus has come to proclaim truth about God and about man. He is the ultimate revelation of God.

General revelation

Yes, before Jesus came the people know some things about God and about man, but it was general and less defined. From creation people can know that God is powerful, wise and immaterial. From creation we even have the law of God written on our hearts which condemns us and hints at God’s holiness.

Revelation of Jesus

But Jesus made things clear and explicit. The truths Jesus taught are a light which shines into our lives and shows us who God is and Who man is.

Jesus shines right into our hearts and declares that not only murder is an offence to God, but unrighteous anger is too.

He declares that not only is adultery wrong but looking with lust is worthy of condemnation too.

It is a piercing, revealing light, which shines into the depth of our dark hearts.

But the truth of Jesus not only exposes sin but also shines a path of safety and salvation.

Illuminating the path of salvation and eternal life (200)

The light coming into the world is a beacon of hope. It is like a lighthouse in a storm. It does not just show the treacherous rocks,

but can lead you to safety. To follow the instruction of the light house means life. To ignore the lighthouse means shipwreck and death.

Jesus shows us a way to be made right with a holy God. At the cross of Jesus, the beacon of light shines to all who will look to it and believe.

The work of the cross

At the cross he displayed that the sin of sinners has been paid for. At the cross he took the sins of sinners and paid the punishment in their place. At the cross he died for sinners so that they may live.

The cross is the lighthouse in this dark world. Shining forth the justice of God, the mercy of God and the way of salvation. The work of Jesus on the Cross is the light of salvation in this dark world.

Application (600)

The light has come (200)

It is no small thing that "*the light has come into the world*".

Just pause and think for a moment. What if Jesus had not come to the world 2000 years ago? How would things be today? Where would hope lie? There would be no hope in this dark and evil world. There would be no hope for the destructive behaviours we see around us. No hope for our own sinful heart.

Marvel that Jesus did come

But Jesus did come. The light has come into the world. Take some time to marvel at that. To dwell on the significance of Jesus coming to declare truth and shine light to this dark world.

Marvel that God chose to act favourably towards humans. That God had compassion on humans and chose to send his son on a rescue mission. That we are not left in a dark forest with no hope of escape.

God did not have to, but he chose to reveal his truth to us and to rescue us. He chose to send the light into the dark world.

You can know Truth about Man (200)

So we can thank God that we do not need to guess the nature of man or guess the solution for man. When Jesus came to earth he clearly declared the state of man. We can know what is going on in the heart of man. We can actually know this with confidence. It is not a guessing game.

Countless books have been written to try to decipher and guess the nature of man and why we act in certain ways.

But when the light came into the world it shone clearly and revealed the truth about the human heart.

We don't need to guess or undertake countless studies about the nature of man. We don't need to analyse the behaviour of men and come up with a fancy theory to understand the human condition. We don't need to look else where or be swayed by the latest "study" or research.

Jesus is the light which reveals truth about who we are. And all the truth we need to know about the state of our soul is written in our Bible.

We can know the path of salvation (200)

But not only is it possible to know the truth about our own hearts but it is also possible to know how we can be saved.

When Jesus came to earth he came to rescue sinners. Are you a sinner today in need of rescue?

Do you feel the dark world around you closing in and wish for escape.

Do you feel your heart inside you is consumed with sin that plagues you? The lust, the jealousy, the hatred, the fear, the selfishness, the pride.

Do you feel the weight of guilt? Do you want to be rescued by the light of the world or perish in the darkness?

Jesus can rescue you

Jesus is the light of the world. Only he can rescue you from your sinful heart and the sinful world. Through his life on earth and his death on the cross he made a way for sinners like you and me to be accepted to heaven.

Believe in the work of Jesus and you will be saved. To not believe is to remain in your condemnation.

Don't wait

It is never too late while you have breath in your lungs. But you cannot make that choice too early, because you do not know when your last breath will be.

So turn to Jesus, even today, Believe in his name and turn from your sins.

Some will reject the light and but others will receive the light. Which will you do?

But what does it mean to reject the light and what does it matter?

Which brings us to our next point of our study. The light rejected. Please look at verse 19 and 20 again.

Part 2 – The Light Rejected (1200)

Exposition (600)

¹⁹ *And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

Immediate context vs 18 (150)

In verse 18, just before this passage, Jesus presents a simple distinction. There are people who believe in Him and there are those who do not. Those who believe are saved. Those who do not believe are condemned.

Look up to verse 18:

¹⁸ *He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.*

Reject only hope

And here, in verse 19 Jesus explains that condemnation further. The condemnation revolves around the rejection of Jesus. The rejection of Jesus outweighs all other reasons for their condemnation.

Breaking the law of God requires just punishment, but there is a way to escape that punishment. But if you reject the only hope to save you, then you are truly and utterly condemned and there is no hope.

Hate the light (150)

We read here that men love darkness and hate the light. This is the state of the natural man. The unregenerate person. Anyone who has not been brought back to life through the work of the Holy Spirit loves darkness and hates the light. These verse are describing an

unregenerated person. What is the response of an unregenerate person to the truth of Jesus. Their response to truth about themselves and truth about salvation?

Well they love darkness and hate the light. They love evil and hate truth. The unregenerated person prefers to live without the knowledge of their sin. They hate any mention of changing their lifestyle. They hate the thought of submitting to Jesus and to His word.

And that hatred leads to action.

Jesus hated

What happened when unregenerated people heard the teaching of Jesus and witnessed his miracles? What was their response?

They hated Him. They hated him with a passion. They hated him so much that they went to great lengths to shut him up and shut him down. They hated him so much that they had him murdered.

Christians Hated

And after Jesus ascended to heaven, the hate could not be directed to Him in person.

So it was directed to those who proclaim His Word with both their lips and their lives. Throughout history Christians have been hated. Hated simply because they proclaim truth. They proclaim light to unregenerate people who love the darkness and hate the light.

Their Deeds were Evil (150)

But where does this hatred come from? Why did the people hate Jesus so much that they had him murdered. Why have Christians been persecuted again and again throughout the centuries?

Study history for answer?

We can study the Gospels of and understand the power dynamics and the political turmoil which led up to the crucifixion of Jesus. We can also study church history and endeavour to understand the complexities of the situations associated with the persecution of Christians. And these are great and facilitating endeavours. But here Jesus shows us the core issue. The source of the poison which takes on so many forms.

Jesus gives the answer

Why did men hate the light and love darkness? The answer is almost too simple: Because their deeds are evil. See that spelled out in verse 19. It has nothing to do with a lack of knowledge, but a love for sin. This is the state of the unregenerated heart. They love darkness because their deeds are evil.

Hate the light because it exposes sin (150)

It makes sense that they hate the light because it exposes their evil deeds.

Like a child stealing a cookie for the cookie jar in the middle of the night only to have the light turned on showing his hand is in the cookie jar.

The light exposes sin.

No one likes to have sin exposed, much less the unregenerated person who has no desire to change. Those feelings of shame, conviction and humiliation are unpleasant at best but can be crushing to the soul. But these are all underpinned with pride and a hard heart, which will lead to anger and hatred at the one who has exposed the sin.

Hate being revealed

That is the motive for hating Jesus and hating his Word. That is the motive for people to reject the light. People don't want truth if it means they can't live the way they want to. Unregenerate people want to be free from any system of morality and accountability.

The Light shines on such people, but like insects under a log you have just turned over, they scramble back into the darkness as soon as they can, and if you are not careful, they will bite you in the process.

Application (600)

Rejecting Jesus is Decisive (150)

To reject the light is decisive. To reject Jesus is decisive. To reject Jesus is to spit in the face of the God of the universe. Regardless of your past sins that alone will condemn you.

Jesus is the only chance of salvation. There is no other way to deal with your sinful heart and the punishment your sin deserves. To reject Jesus is to reject the only offer to be saved.

Punching fireman

To reject Jesus is like punching a fireman in the face and slamming the window on him as he is trying to save you from a burning building. This seems Ludicrous, but that is the response of many.

A love for sin keeps people from the light (150)

But don't forget the reason people punch the fireman in the face. The reason people hate Jesus is because they love their sin.

When you think of that family member you have shared the gospel with again and again. Or that work colleague who seems to understand the gospel but has no desire to change.

Gospel clearly explained

You explained to them what sin is. They agreed with you that they are a sinner and would deserve Hell because of God's perfect justice. You explain to them the marvellous Work of Jesus on the Cross. How he paid for their sins and all they need to do is trust in that work and be saved. But then they shrug their shoulders and say something to the effect "that's nice, but not for me". "that's nice?!!!!" What is going on?

Not a problem with information

Why do they not commit to Jesus, trust in his work and join those who are saved from Hell? What is missing. Nothing is missing. The reality is that they love their sin.

They don't want to part with their sexual immorality,
they don't want to part from their drunkenness,
they don't want to stop living for their own pleasure and happiness.
They don't want to give up being lord over their own lives.

That is the issue.

The unregenerate colleague, friend and family member love darkness. They love their evil deeds That is why they want nothing to do with the light and with Jesus.

The light came and was hated, those who reflect the light will be hated too

So don't be surprised if some people end up hating you too. They murdered the source of light, will they do any less to those who are seeking to reflect the light with their words and their deeds?

Jesus tells us that his followers will be hated just like he was hated.

John 15:18-27 says:

If the world hates you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

So do not be discouraged if your faithful sharing and living of the gospel is not making you friends with the world.

In fact be encouraged if you are hated.

Shining is a small way

As Christians we will always be shining a light. It could be a small light when share what you did on Sunday morning or that you do not live with your girlfriend or boyfriend. Or that you are really not interested in drunken parties. These are small ways the light of Jesus shines into the lives of people. And even that makes them uncomfortable.

Shining big light

But imagine when you explain to them in plain language that sleeping with someone before marriage is sin.

Or that drunkenness is sin.

Or that homosexuality is sin

or that trying to change gender is sin.

That pride is sin,

that being obsessed with your own happiness is sin.

Now you are shining the light of Jesus right into their lives and they will hate you for it. They hated Jesus for it, and they will hate you for it. And that is what Jesus warned us would happen if we are truly reflecting his light.

Offended by truth nothing else

But make sure it is the truth that offends your family member or your friend and nothing else. The means, the approach, the tone, the

attitude you share the truth with should be steeped in love and grace. If they choose to be offended by the message that is their call, but our goal as the messenger is to share the truth in love.

Part 3 – The Light Received (1200)

But let us move on from those who reject the light and consider those who receive the light.

Please look again at verse 21:

Exposition (600)

²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

These verses describe one who is regenerated. One who has been brought to life by the holy Spirit. And it is a complete contrast to the unregenerated person.

What does "Does the Truth" mean? (150)

This person "does the truth". That is they live by the truth. They hear the words of Jesus and act based on that. They call sin for what it is and seek to act faithfully to what is required of them.

Good is defined as God defines good.

Evil is defined as God defines evil.

Live according to truth

They live out the truth as it is presented in the person and word of Jesus. This person runs their life by the Word of Jesus. He is the light who directs their steps. This person is directed by the light as he makes decisions about life.

Be it decisions in the moment when tempted to sin, or decisions which will change the direction of their life. This person's life is characterized by obedience.

Life characterized by light

This is not saying that a regenerate person will not sin. It is saying that the regenerate person is characterized by loving the light.

Loving Jesus and the word of Jesus which points them to the right path. Instead of being characterized by loving their sin and hating the light.

And so it follows that they are drawn to the light. They want to hear the words of Jesus. They want to do the commands of Jesus. The deeds of a regenerate person are characterized by good works.

Happy for light to shine

They don't mind if the light of truth shines on their deeds. These deeds are good and right and there is nothing to hide. There is no shame or guilt when the light shines on them.

Not only is there no shame in their deeds but they want their deeds to be seen. They want their deeds to be clearly seen because it brings Glory to God.

Deeds done In God (150)

Notice the end of verse 21 "*that they have been done in God*". The regenerated person wants their deeds to be put on display because these good works have been done In God.

Why is it possible for a regenerated person to do good works? It is only possible because God has given them a new heart.

God gives them the motivation.

God gives them the means and God gives them the strength to do these good works.

These Good deeds are done in God.

No boasting

The truth is that those who received the light are no better off in and of themselves. God did not choose to save them because they could do good deeds. Good deeds are only done by the Grace of God, in the strength of God. There is no boasting to be done in these deeds

A Balanced view of the regenerated person

So verse 21 really gives us a balanced view of a regenerated person. Their life will be changed. Drastically changed.

Their lives will be characterized by a love for Jesus instead of a love for darkness.

They will want to live by the truth instead of suppressing the truth.

They will not want to live to please themselves but to please God.

There will be a distinct change in their view of sinful activities and attitudes.

But that changed life is the fruit of the work of God in their lives and there is nothing they can boast about. They did not work hard and somehow gain God's favour. They do their good deeds in God's strength. They do their good works in the strength of God as described by the word of God

Application (600)

A love for the word

So take every opportunity you can to be exposed to the light. To be exposed to the word. That is how the light of Jesus shines on our lives today.

We know we are on the path of salvation, but we still live in a dark world. His word is the beacon we need to chart our lives by.

So keep persisting in your daily devotionals. This is never wasted time, but a time when Jesus can shed his light on your life in a very real way. This sets the course for your day.

And keep up your diligence to attend the mid-week studies and your commitment to the lord's day worship. These are means that God has chose to illuminate your path and direct your life.

In these times the light is turned on bright. Our changed lives are exposed, and it gives glory to God.

Persist in being different to the world

Our reaction to the light is so different form the world because our actions are so different from the world.

It can be hard to be distinct form the world. To say difficult truths and to not do sinful activities when everyone else is.

We will quickly be sidelined and ignored at best or hated and persecuted at worst. Are you ok with that? Do you expect that? How are you coping?

Who do you want to please?

Because it really comes down to who you want to please and be accepted by. By the world or by Jesus. If you fit in with the world you will hate the light. If you love the light you will not fit in with the world.

As hard as it is, it is good and right if you do not fit in with the world and your worldly colleagues and family.

In the moment of rejection

In those moment of rejection and hatred remember who you want to please. The world or Jesus. Also remember that Jesus will expose all sin and all sin will have to be given an account for.

So don't give up in standing out in the world. Keep standing strong

Don't give in to the pressures around you.

Persist in your good deeds.

Persist in following the light.

Yet we are no better off then the world

But don't let your good deeds or good decisions lead to pride.

Reality is that you are no better than the drunkards and sexually immoral people around you. No better than those who gossip constantly or continually disobey their parents.

Your actions may be different but it is not by your own efforts.

You have been transformed by God's grace. Not by your hard work and determination. You were just like them before God changed you.

Your good works or your abstaining from sin is purely by God's unmerited favour towards you.

All done for God's glory

Yes you are shining the light of Jesus in this dark world by living a changed life, but the source and strength of this changed life is all from God and for God's glory.

This underlying motivation is so important. As Christians the purpose of our lives is to do good works to glorify God. Not good works to elevate ourselves.

Think of Matt 5:16 where Jesus makes this explicit.

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.

There is absolutely no room for any glory for us when we realise that our changed life and our ability to do good deeds come from God.

We are simply a mirror. A mirror which reflects the light we have received from Christ into the dark world. And a mirror which shines any glory we may receive back to God.

That is why we were saved and that is joyous purpose: To do Good to Glorify Him.

Conclusion (500)

So as we bring this study to a close think upon the words of Jesus.

The light has come

The light has come, there is no denying that.

Jesus has come into this dark world and His life turned the world around. While his death made it possible for sinners to be made right with a holy God.

Some rejected

Now as we have seen, some reject the light because they love their evil deeds. And since they reject the only hope to be saved, they stand condemned.

Some received

Yet some receive the light, accept the gracious gift of Jesus freely given, and their entire life is characterized by a desire to live by God's word, doing good deeds to glorify God.

Which are you?

Which are you?

What is your reaction to hearing the word of God? When the light of God's truth shines in your life? Do you feel like you are being exposed and you wish it would stop? Do you hate the guilt and shame you feel when the word of God is discussed? Do you reject the light?

Or maybe when you hear God's word you rejoice. You see it as a guide in a dark world. You want your deeds to line up to what God commands us to do. You thrive by being in the light. And you realise God is working in you to give Him glory.

No middle ground

You are either one or the other. There is no middle ground. If up to this point you have rejected the light I plead with you to change your mind and accept Jesus as your saviour before it is too late.

But if you have received the light, let this be an encouragement to keep living in the light and glorifying God by your deeds.

Back to the dark world

We started by discussing how dark the world we live in is. So what is the hope for this dark world?

There is only one hope because there is only one light.

The light has come into the world and that is the only hope.

The real problem with this world is that people love the darkness instead of the light. They love their sin instead of truth. People's hearts are the source of the darkness in the world.

Only Jesus can change people's hearts. Only the work of Jesus on the cross can remove that love for sin. That is the hope for this dark world.

So if you want to escape the darkness and the condemnation, receive the light of Jesus. But don't stop there. Share the light of Jesus in this dark world. Pray that others would receive Jesus and not reject him. Keep shining the light of God's truth on the life of sinners around you.

Jesus has rescue you and me from this dark world and he can rescue many other sinners too.

So Pray that God would do a work in their lives. Pray that God would use you to shine His light and give Him glory.

Let us pray.