

Dark Ages

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 8/22/2015

As I look out over the world – and more specifically our nation and the Israelitish nations – there is a division of peoples that is becoming more and more apparent in a terrible way. On one hand we see a diminishing number of people who love peace and order in their families and communities...While on the other hand we are witnessing a movement of disrespect toward God and law and order.

So many are rapidly becoming wild, lawless, unreasonable, untruthful and destructive like we've never seen before. It seems that there is a growing demonic and insane motivation in every action. Witness Hollywood, our government officials, deals with foreign powers – the wrongheadedness is everywhere.

What is driving our course toward the dark side? It is the **power of darkness**. That is a Scriptural phrase that we will run across a few times today – power of darkness. That would make a good bible study – “the power of darkness.”

Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Our world is becoming darker and darker by the day. The knowledge of God is being diluted and dissipated. As Jesus was being arrested the night before He died – He was very aware of the supreme sacrifice it took to eradicate the profound darkness of the world.

Luke 22:53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

God inspired Paul to look ahead to our day and prophesy exactly what would be going on. Paul saw that goodness and civility would fail as men began more and more to walk after their own lusts.

2Timothy 3:1 This know also, that in the **last days** perilous times shall come.

2Timothy 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

As Paul iterates this list of **moral depravity** – many specific examples pop into our minds...

2Timothy 3:3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, **despisers** of those that are good,

Look at how religious persecution is on the rise. Every vestige of society is being **polluted** – even by those who are sworn and empowered to protect and uphold our highest standards.

2Timothy 3:4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

That is the problem right there – men no longer love God.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

We learned tohu and bohu - without shape or structure - but we did not learn “*choshek*” which means **darkness**. It is important that we do not overlook it. Satan had caused and brought about that darkness. Darkness is the absence of Light. They are different. Light permeates. You can't project darkness like you can project light.

Spiritual Darkness is the absence of the Truth of God.

Genesis 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Messianic Prophecy - That is the first messianic prophecy in the Bible - Let there be Light, a reference to Jesus Christ who would bring enlightenment and salvation to all mankind.

Genesis 1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the **light** from the darkness.

John 1:5 And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

The enlightenment of Christ must influence a receptive spirit in man – or it will not be comprehended.

John 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. [the Baptist]

John 1:7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

John 1:8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. [Jesus Christ]

John 1:9 That was the true Light, which enlightens every man that cometh into the world.

Jesus was the very Light, that which, coming into the world, enlightens every man [without exception].

Eventually the Light of Jesus Christ will shine fourth on all who have ever lived. But, for now the world is in darkness. Have you noticed how the Bible begins and ends with this concept of Light being prominently displayed?

Revelation 21:23 And the city had **no need of the sun**, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did give light to it, and **the Lamb is the Light** thereof.

At that point He will be pure Spiritual light.

Revelation 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

Revelation 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

Revelation 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light.

We are truly enlightened – while the world remains helplessly in darkness:

In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 13 Jesus Christ was asked by the disciples why He spoke in parables to average individuals.

He said in Matthew 13:11 “because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”

There is a time order for calling and salvation – not everyone is being called at this time. Jesus continued in verse 15 to say that the average person’s heart, mind, ears and eyes were such that they couldn’t handle the truth at that point. The disciples however could understand and, as we might say, internalize it!

Matthew 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

Jesus Christ in the New Testament times brought **enlightenment!**

Matthew 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

John 9:4 I must work the works of Him [God the Father] that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, **I am the Light of the world.**

John 12:35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while ye have the Light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes.

John 12:36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light...

Light **dispels** darkness – but darkness can never dispel or chase away light. Jesus Christ, His teachings, His sacrifice, His life is the **Light** that came to replace the darkness which is void of God's Love. Another Messianic Prophecy here:

Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in **darkness** have seen a **great light**: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Isaiah 9 is quoted here in reference to Jesus Christ being the great light.

Matthew 4:13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

Matthew 4:14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,

Matthew 4:15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

Matthew 4:16 The people which sat in darkness saw **great light**; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Jesus Christ came in order to:

Luke 1:79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Job 2:11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came everyone from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.

They all thought that Job had some secret sin that he would not admit and repent of. Their testimony was full of **accusation** against Job. They were not helpful or encouraging to Job. But, young Elihu gave Godly counsel to Job:

Job 33:26 He shall pray unto God, and He will be favorable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for He will render unto man his righteousness.

Job 33:27 He looks upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not;

We see there an admission of guilt, and repentance toward God. The one who repents will:

Job 33:28 He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his **life shall see the light**.

“See the light,” usually means to ‘wise up’ – but not here – where it means to come into alignment and harmony with God's Law and Truth – that leads to salvation.

Job 33:29 Lo, all these things work God oftentimes with man,

Job 33:30 To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the **light of life**. [**light of the living**. KJV]

Isaiah 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us **of his ways**, and **we will walk in his paths**: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

There is a phrase that describes – His ways, walk in His paths, the law and the word of God... That phrase is to walk in the light of the Lord.

Isaiah 2:5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us **walk** in the **light of the LORD**.

Isaiah 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put **darkness** for **light**, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Isaiah 5:21 Woe unto them that are **wise in their own eyes**, and prudent in their own sight!

Later Isaiah expounds on this theme of “wise in their own eyes.”

Isaiah 50:10 Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in **darkness**, and hath no **light**? [That is a pretend Christian – a hypocrite] Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

Isaiah is saying that too many men obtain their faulty intellectual and spiritual wisdom from the wrong source.

Isaiah 50:11 Behold, all ye that kindle a **fire** [you light for your own light instead of the **light of the Lord**], that compass yourselves about with **sparks** [wrong doctrine, controversy, debate, competition outside God’s law and truth]: walk in the **light of your fire**, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in **sorrow**.

When people reject the light of the Bible – their only option is to follow their own human wisdom – which comes short – they are **walking** in the **light of your fire**, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. They are **wise in their own eyes**.

We will see a similar analogy in Matthew 5:15: “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel” – but Luke 11 here, goes further into making sure that our light comes from the **correct source**.

Luke 11:33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putts it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

Luke 11:34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

In other words, don’t fall for substitute gospels – as Eve did, because not everything that glitters is gold. Satan can appear very shiny and bright – and so can his ministers.

Luke 11:35 Take heed therefore that the **light** which is in thee be not darkness.

Do not be fooled: As Isaiah said – that will only bring sorrow.

2Corinthians 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of **light**.

2Corinthians 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

2Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath **blinded** the minds of them which believe not, lest the **light of the glorious gospel of Christ**, who is the image of God, should **shine** unto them.

Many men think they are so smart – while they are rejecting Christ the true source of enlightenment.

Luke 11:36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

The apostle, John, said of Jesus Christ, that He was the true Light.

John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the **light of men**.

John 1:9 That [Jesus Christ] was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.

Otherwise a man is walking in darkness:

There was a period of time following the decline of the Roman Empire that was known as the **Dark Ages**.

Because of barbarian invasions and a rapid decline of orderly society, the legal process fell apart resulting in economic depression and the decline of education and academic skills. The Dark Ages were marked by cultural backwardness and decay. It was a period of intellectual darkness that brought civilization to a screeching halt. Academic thinking, inventive progress, scientific writing, and cultural development dropped to an exceptional low point.

Today we are facing a much more serious threat that rivals those dark days of history.

Daniel 12:4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the **time of the end**: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. Though knowledge and travel have greatly increased today, we find ourselves on the more serious precipice of imminent devastation. We find ourselves being plunged into the morass of **moral darkness** – and many do not recognize the danger we are in.

Christianity and its principles are being summarily rejected out of hand in favor of an extravagant and reckless culture of excess and uncontrollable greed and dissipation. Without God's intervention we are beginning to spiral downward into a deep, dark vortex from which there is no escape. We are witnessing America's last days.

If this great nation does not return to the creator God soon, every good standard defining the attributes of America will collapse. Without God, no nation can stand. All who believe in good morals will agree that America is in a horrendous moral degeneration. As a result of this disintegration, we will face incredible challenges in the immediate future undreamt of.

Will the complete breakdown come in a sudden immense crash or an excruciatingly slow but sure demise? What will be the impact on the members of the Church of God as society around them crumbles and unravels? Here is what Jesus said about these days we are entering:

Mark 13:20 Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved alive: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days.

The world is entering a **new Dark Age**. One from which we will not emerge until Jesus Christ sets up His Father's Kingdom anew. It is not only the rise of radical Muslim jihadists from afar that will bring us down; ...it is the internal collapse of our Judeo-Christian societal values of Godliness and goodness that derive from a respect for law and order, ...and an appreciation for life itself.

Within God's Church, we each sigh and cry as we witness the **moral** foundations of our social order being severely eroded year by year. From a spiritual point of view, these are difficult days for all of us. We should recognize that we are in danger of these being **dark days**, for not only the nation, but for the **Church** brethren as well.

The Church of God has not fully emerged from its own **Dark Age** which came about when barbarians took over Pasadena after the death of Herbert Armstrong. Many of our brethren continue to languish under false assumptions as to what constitutes true Christianity. The horrid state of our nation worsens the problem. As society deteriorates, the people of God will be facing the greatest challenge of our lives. These are the last days.

The citizens of this once moral land must come to understand what happens when God is rejected and abandoned. Our American people and English brethren will learn what happens when God's spiritual rules, which are for our good, are not followed. Unless the people of modern Israel return to God in business, in education, and in government, our social order will deteriorate to the point of total breakdown. National defense will become insignificant, resulting finally in defeat. Our enemies will walk in and pluck-up our land and the surviving one-third of the population like a ripe peach.

We of God's Church will be called on, more than ever, to come to the aid of our brethren - not only physical aid, but also spiritual support. It will take our utmost in spiritual discernment because so many will be going along with the world. And yet, we of God's Church have a responsibility to set the highest example in our behavior and conduct.

Let us never forget that we of Christ's spiritual community are never to be in **darkness**, as the world is in darkness, because we are able possess the **Light**. I have capitalized **Light** – because it represents Jesus Christ Himself.

That **Light** is Jesus Christ, His principles, and the way of God that He brought to us. The true knowledge of God's way enlightens mankind and leads to eternal life.

John 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Christ's spiritual Church community is never in darkness, as the world is in darkness, because we possess the **Light**.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that **Light** is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

John 3:20 For every one that doeth evil hate the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

John 3:21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Brethren, we have been called out of this dark world into the glorious **Light** of Christ. It is the only way to live – because all else will bring sorrow and destruction upon itself. The true knowledge of God's way enlightens mankind and leads to eternal life.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Eph 5:7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

Ephesians 5:8 You were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of **light**.

Because we are **enlightened** by Christ, we are the children of light.

Colossians 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in **light**:

Colossians 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the **power of darkness**, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

This terrible world of Godlessness is about to fall because of its rejection of the only way that society can long prevail. Unbelievers think that they have everything under control – they are dead wrong.

1Thessalonians 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

1Thessalonians 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in **darkness**, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

1Thessalonians 5:5 Ye are all the children of **light**, and the children of the day: we are not [*children*] of the night, nor [*children*] of darkness.

Some people believe that peace at any cost is Godly. For some even a pseudo-peace is the source of their own righteousness. “Don’t make waves” is their motto – “don’t rock the boat” – “keep your nose clean” – but Jesus Christ who is the source of True **Light** tells that we must get involved when others bring false teachings and practices into God’s Church.

1Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, **warn them** that are unruly [insubordinate religiously speaking], comfort the feebleminded [timid – be merciful to those who have been brow beaten and have low self esteem], support the weak, be patient toward all men.

1Thessalonians 5:15 See that none of you render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow [strive to do] that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

Brethren, we are not to remain in darkness – but to put on Christ and His light. Can you imagine that? Jesus said:

Matthew 13:43 Then shall the **righteous shine** forth as the **sun** in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And that is the same thing that Jesus inspired the Prophet Daniel to say:

Daniel 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:3 And they that be wise shall **shine** as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

“Turn many to righteousness” – that’s our job as Christians. By our example: The true knowledge of Godly things **enlightens** mankind and brings eternal life.

Light has a strange quality – it can travel across vast distances of outer space – even for light years – and the darkness it travels through remains unchanged. Light has to shine of something to make itself apparent.

Does the Light of Christ shine on us and change us? Let’s recognize that we must go through this time of trial and testing by keeping our eyes on the True Light.

John 8:12 Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the **light of the world**: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 12:46 I am come a **light** into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in **darkness**.

We must come entirely out of darkness – the darkness of this **world** which is **spiritual** darkness. Brethren, how must we live our lives? When the days seem darkest, let’s realize that this is indeed the time to let our light shine on what is truly important – holding onto the truth, loving God, and loving our neighbor. We have a serious God-given obligation: The word of God enlightens us – shows us the way out of darkness, and to salvation.

Matthew 5:14 Ye [brethren] are the **light** of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Matthew 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house.

Matthew 5:16 Let **your** light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

That is not optional – it reads like a command. There is a good definition of darkness there in Matthew 6. “What is my light?” “What is the source of my light?” We need to ask ourselves, “To what extent does my light shine before men?”

Matthew 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of **darkness**. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Have you ever spoken to a person who’s light is darkness - they are so clueless to what is Godly they cling to the most irrational concepts. Sometimes, the brethren in God’s Church are not that much different from the cultures we find ourselves embedded in. As a result, as the world slides into oblivion, we find ourselves in a similar decline. We must be exercising God’s Holy Spirit, so that with the help of God, we are overcoming ourselves and the world.

1John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in **darkness**, we **lie**, and do not the truth:

1John 1:7 But if we walk in the **light**, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son **cleanses us** from all sin.

Jesus said this to His followers – not the world – but the saints:

1John 2:8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the **darkness is past**, and the true light now shines.

We will not receive the approval of the world, which only loves its own – but we are to witness to them by our lives. Jesus' words to Paul to make Paul a minister and a witness: We see a part of Paul's commission from Christ here:

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from **darkness to light**, and from the **power of Satan** unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being **enlightened**; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

Brethren, every one of us came out of darkness – we were each in our own personal **dark age**. How thankful and appreciative should we be that we have been called into God's Light?

Ephesians **5:8** For ye were sometimes **darkness**, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Do we have any idea how blessed we are to have received God's gracious gift – the Light of God?

1Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a very special people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of **darkness** into his marvelous **light**:

These are not the days to sit back and relax. More importantly, what should we be doing as Christians? Since it is God's intent to call all people in their time order, we must be especially careful to let our **light shine** before those not yet called. We are not better than they are; they have not yet had their minds opened to the perfect plan of God. The correct thing for us to do is to live by the principles Jesus Christ taught us. The clear instruction to us is this – we have an obligation to cause our light to shine to a world desperately in need of what we have been given.

God, in us, is the light that is supposed to be seen by others. It is God's Spirit that shines through us to others. Please notice that the light does not shine on us to brighten us, but it shines in order to glorify our Father, which is in heaven.

2Corinthians 4:6 For God, who commanded **the light to shine out of darkness**, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We are commanded to let our light shine. Are we doing that?

End: Dark Ages