

# Light of the World – Age of Enlightenment

Thomas Robinson, *Light of the World 4*, May 6, 2018

## Ephesians 5:6-17

<sup>6</sup> **Let no one deceive you with empty words**, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> So don't let those things take over part of you.

<sup>8</sup> For at one time **you were darkness**, but now **you are light** in the **Lord**.

**Walk as children of light,**

<sup>9</sup> for the **fruit** that the **light** bears

is in every bit of **goodness** and **justice** and **truth**,

<sup>10</sup> as you discover **what is pleasing to the Lord**.

<sup>11</sup> Take no part in the **fruitless works of darkness**, but instead see them for what they are.

<sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

<sup>13</sup> But when anything is **exposed by the light**, it becomes visible, for what truly becomes visible is **light itself**.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore it says,

***“Awake, You sleeper, and rise from the dead,  
and the Messiah will shine on you.”***

<sup>15</sup> Watch accurately then **how you walk**, not as **unwise** but as **wise**,

<sup>16</sup> making the **best use of the time**, because the days are evil.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore don't become **unthinking**, but **learn to grasp what the will of the Lord is**.

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## Galatians 5:22-25

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

<sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

## Philippians 4:4-9

<sup>4</sup> Celebrate with joy in the LORD always; again I will say, rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to all people. The Lord is nearby: <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Messiah Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> And then, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, reflect on these things. <sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me – practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

## Romans 12:1-2

<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, through God's mercies to you, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your worship that fits with God's message (*logos*).

<sup>2</sup> Do not let yourselves be shaped by this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, in order that you may recognize and approve what is God's intention – which is for what is good and pleasing and mature.

## Light of the World in Our Modern Age

We live in a world that has a powerful vision/myth/story of its development. Humans were long in the darkness of superstition and religion, believing things without reason, constrained by threatening myths of judgment, reaching its depths in the “dark ages” and “middle ages,” the age of faith. But then the “Renaissance” brought the rebirth of classical pagan thought and the “Enlightenment” ushered in the “Age of Reason.” Humans attained maturity and autonomy. We realized that there is no God to judge or constrain us, that we are tiny in a vast, mindless universe. We are radically free to choose anything or nothing. We create ourselves. We die, and that’s the end!

The development of this “back-story” of the modern world grew from reaction to the misuse and abuse of “Christendom” to which the Reformation also reacted – both Protestant and Catholic. But this “Enlightenment” has become the foundation of our secular world and has itself come under deep challenge in post-modern “criticism.”

It began in a period when Christian scholars such as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Leibniz, et al. were using new instruments, new mathematics, and laying the foundations of the development of the modern scientific method. The Enlightenment story claimed science as a quest for deliverance from darkness, and some Christians reacted by rejecting science. Secular orthodoxy and religious fundamentalism battle to this day.

## The Latest Technology and the Depths of Existence

It’s important to see what’s at stake in these modern developments. Science & technology have brought so many good things– medicine, phones, exploration, etc. We’re all in.

It’s important to see that the Bible has no commitment to any particular scientific view of the world – Ptolemaic, Copernican, Relativity, Quantum, dark energy, string theory. Scripture calls us to a commitment to truth. God has made the world discoverable.

The fundamental challenge between Jesus as “Light of the World” and the modern age of “Enlightenment” is that Jesus reveals a truth about the nature of reality and of human beings that is not within the realm of scientific discovery of the world’s complexity and operation. It goes to the nature of existence itself, beyond all human discovery.

Jesus, of course, knows that the universe is not mindless and meaningless: That all contingent existence, our whole perceptible universe, depends on a self-existent reality, God. Many have perceived as much. The Light of Jesus reveals the heart of that God in his profound self-giving Love, the Love that is the basis of all existence, sub-atomic, life, galaxies, multiverse, the Love so deep that God dies for his creatures.

## Waking Up to My Identity

That Light changes my perception of freedom and autonomy. Freedom is not unrestrained choice in a meaningless universe bounded only by human power-structures. The whole universe is a creation of a God of Love. Freedom that doesn’t take that reality into account is distorted, misdirected. Real freedom and true autonomy come only when I know who I really am. I am the beloved creature of a God of love, within whom I exist.

That Light of Love gives direction and purpose to my existence – “goodness and justice.”

Paul says that realization, that light/truth, is like rising from the dead. The true light is Jesus, what God has done in him. He shines. We become light in him, questing for truth ...

Wake up, Sleeper! Everything that’s really true is from that God of Love, illuminated in Jesus.