

# The Day The Lights Came On

## *Meaning of the Cross*

600 years before Jesus was born the Prophet Isaiah was able to foresee God sending light to people in darkness. This is what he said. **"The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." (Matthew 4:16)** When Jesus came 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)** later on he said **"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (John 12:46)**

When Jesus said he was the light, what did he mean? Was he like some sort of human snap light? You know those things they sometimes give you at an outdoor Christmas event. Snap it and there is a chemical reaction and the thing glows in the dark for hours. Did Jesus have this glow about him, as some medieval artists have portrayed? Jesus wasn't talking about him being a physical light bulb, but the spiritual light we need to deal with our spiritual darkness. Jesus came to bring light to people who were living in spiritual darkness. He knew that there is evil within each one of us that we cannot control by our own efforts. We prefer to hide our sin, rather than bring it into the light. Listen to what the Apostle John said:

**"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved 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 that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (John 3:19-21)**

As Jesus went about preaching, teaching, healing people, casting out demons, the light of God began to shine in peoples hearts, and the darkness was pushed back. People could see the **effect** of the light, but for the three years of Jesus ministry on earth, the spiritual dynamics of what God was doing couldn't be seen. The **results** of his light could be seen in changed lives, restored relationships, healed bodies and people set free from the grip of the evil one. But it wasn't easy to see what was happening in the spiritual world. But on that first Easter, things were different.

At the Cross, what had been happening in the spiritual world, became clear in the physical world. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the sky suddenly went black, and darkness remained for three hours. That darkness was one of a number of supernatural events that took place at the moment that Jesus died that left many people in no doubt that something big was happening in the spiritual world. There was a violent earthquake that shook everyone up. The big heavy curtain in the Temple, that separated the holy of holies, was ripped in two from top to bottom. No human being could have done that. No human being could have stopped the sun shining for three hours in the middle of the day. At the Cross there was a huge cosmic battle in the spiritual world, and it's effects were being felt on earth. All the powers of darkness were doing their utmost to destroy Jesus. All the evidence at the Cross pointed to the fact that the powers of darkness had triumphed. It was like a game of chess, where one player believes he has beaten the other, but in fact there is still one more move.

That's how it was at the Cross. The Devil thought he had won, but God had one more move. Darkness had not triumphed after all. The Devil thought that Friday was the end of the week. But he hadn't counted on Easter Sunday. As John put it so clearly at the beginning of his gospel **"The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5 RSV)**

On the first day of the week, after the powers of darkness had done their worst on the Cross, Jesus broke free from the power of death and rose from the dead. Easter Sunday morning is a day of light. Easter Sunday is the morning the Son came up. That's **Son** not **Sun**. All the stories of the resurrected Jesus are set against a background of light. The dawn of a fresh new morning. Angels in dazzling light sitting by the folded grave clothes. Luke says that their

clothes gleamed like lightning. The presence of the angels was so bright the women fell to the ground in fear.

The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate demonstration that the Kingdom of Darkness is on the run, and the light of Jesus is shining. That light has so much power, it easily dispels the darkness. Darkness never overcomes the light of Jesus.

For over 40 years, Romania was brutally ruled by the Communist Dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu. People who preached a message of light in that dark country were often carted off by the secret police, tortured and then shot. Pastor Laszlow Tokes led a little church in the city of Timosoara. He preached the gospel so boldly that his small church quickly grew to around 5000 people. The secret police tried to stop him, but you know and I know that darkness cannot stop the light. At first the secret police confiscated his ration book so he couldn't buy food or fuel for his family. But that didn't stop him speaking about Jesus. Then in December 1989, they decided to arrest him and send him out of the country, because they couldn't shut him up from talking about the risen Jesus. Word got out amongst the Christians that they were going to arrest him, and a crowd of people surrounded his church. Members of all churches came together and stood shoulder to shoulder in protest. All day the police tried to disperse the crowd, but they just wouldn't budge. Just after midnight, a 19 year old Baptist student named Daniel Garva pulled out a packet of candles, lit one, then passed it to his neighbour. One by one, burning candles were passed through the crowd. The crowd stayed all that night, and all the next. Eventually the secret police broke down the church door, beat up the Pastor and paraded him and his wife through the crowd. Word got around the city, and soon the city square was packed with people demonstrating against the government. The next night tens of thousands of candles were lit. The police couldn't manage the protest. The Army was called in and the soldiers were given orders to shoot. Hundreds of people fell dead and wounded, but the news spread to other cities throughout Romania. Within days the whole country was experiencing revolution. Within a week of the start of the revolution the godless dictator of Romania was dead. That Christmas, for the first time in over 40 years, the people of Romania celebrated the birth of Jesus in freedom. One tiny pinprick of gospel light in Romania was enough to start a revolution that drove out the powers of darkness.

Six years after the revolution Lyn and I were in the Transylvanian mountains of Romania. We stayed with a lovely Godly Romanian Christian lady who had lived through 40 years of persecution and hardship under the communists. I asked her what it was like for her when she heard Ceaucescu had been shot. Fibia looked at me and smiled. Then, with a twinkle in her eye she said "We went out on the streets and danced!" I understood what she meant. I'd seen it before in individuals. I'd seen the light of Jesus come into the hearts of people who have been in spiritual darkness and a revolution takes place. When the light of the gospel overcomes the power of evil and darkness, it makes you want to dance.

For 2000 years, Christians throughout the world have had a greeting to celebrate Resurrection Day. It's not a greeting you say quietly. It's one to be shouted from the rooftops. It's to be said with a smile on your face, because it is borne out of the light of Jesus in our hearts. As I finish this morning I'm going to greet you with that resurrection greeting. If you know the light of Jesus in your heart, then you respond with "He is Risen Indeed!"

**He is Risen – He is Risen Indeed!**

*David McChesney, Westlake Church in Nyon, Switzerland*