

The Transforming Power of Light Numbers 8:1-4

Slide 1

When you were a small child, how many of you ever believed that there was a monster hiding under your bed? I did when I saw *Creature of the Black Lagoon* as a child.

Today, I don't believe there are any monsters under my bed, but there are still times I'm afraid of the dark.

And so, this morning I want to talk to you about the differences between darkness and light, and how you can overcome the "grown-up kind" of fear of the dark.

It's amazing how many verses in the Bible deal with this subject. Darkness and light are metaphors God uses throughout the Bible, and one of those places is found in the eighth chapter of Numbers.

Last week, as we looked at chapter 7, the Israelites still had not started on their journey to the promised land. Well, we're in chapter 8 today and they're still getting ready.

You may wonder why. Well, there's a lot of preparation that needed to take place before you moved over a million men, women and children across 100's of miles of desert.

Thankfully, God said He'd personally go with them. But, because He was holy and they weren't, He needed to make sure that they didn't get too close or His holiness would vaporize them in an instant.

So, today I want to look inside the Tabernacle at one particular piece of furniture. Now, you have to understand that every piece of furniture God told Moses to build had a purpose and a reason.

The piece of furniture we're going to examine this morning is the Lampstand.

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The "lampstand" looked something like this picture. It's actually called a 'menorah.'

It was made out of pure gold, and it was approximately 5.5 feet tall and weighed about 94 pounds. I checked the price of gold, and it would be worth about \$2.5 million at today's prices!

The lamps on each branch burned pure olive oil and would have cast a soft glow throughout the entire room. Since the room was walled with planks surfaced with thin sheets of pure gold, the effect would have been stunning.

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The purpose of the lampstand was to give light to the priests in order for them to go about their duties. There were no windows in the tabernacle

But the lampstand was more than just an appliance, it also conveyed a message.

God specifically instructed Moses and Aaron to set up seven lights on the lampstand, in such a way that they faced forward focusing their light to the front.

Numbers 8:1-3, *“The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to Aaron and say to him, ‘When you set up the lamps, see that all seven light up the area in front of the lampstand.’” Aaron did so; he set up the lamps so that they faced forward on the lampstand, just as the LORD commanded Moses.”*

Now why was God so precise? Well, God has a reason for everything He does.

And the reason He specifically required the light to shine forward was because of what the lampstand symbolized... God Himself!

The seven lamps represented the completeness and perfection of God's presence. The light that came from the lampstand represented God's favor and His blessing shining forward into the darkness!

I don't know if you realize it or not...but

- God doesn't want to ruin your life; He wants to bless it!
- God doesn't want to send you to hell; He wants to get you to heaven!

God's not trying to restrict you or give you a bunch of rules that you have to follow, and make your life miserable; He wants to free you.

You may ask, "*Free you from what?*" He wants to free you from darkness. He wants to free you from bondage and slavery to self!

The truth of this is found when you understand the nature of darkness and light. See, if God is light, then what's darkness? It's the absence of God!

Let me put it another way, darkness is what exists apart from God. In Genesis, it tells us that God created light. He didn't create darkness! That's because darkness is what existed without God.

So, let's take a few minutes and compare the characteristics of darkness to light.

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First, darkness equals chaos while light equals order.

In the ancient world, darkness was a problem. It represented the forces of chaos, disorder, and confusion, which it still does today.

In Genesis, we see God hovering over the formless, empty, chaos of the earth. Genesis 1:2, "*Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*"

So, when God says in Genesis 1:3, "*Let there be light,*" the Bible's telling us is that God has POWER over the forces of darkness, death, and chaos!

Are you in chaos this morning? Are you confused about life? Confused about what life is all about and where you fit in it all? Is your life a mess?

If that's the case, then you need to know that the further you get from the light, the greater the chaos in your life!

The further you're from God, the greater the chaos in your relationships, the greater the confusion in your heart, and the more messed up your life becomes. That's what darkness does.

If you're in darkness this morning, then disorder, confusion, and disarray are ruling your life and only God can change that because "light" represents order and peace.

The second God said, "*Let there be light,*" darkness didn't have a chance! Light put chaos to flight! An example of this is illustrated every time you walk into a room in your home at night and turn on the light.

When you turn on a light in your house, do you hear grunting and groaning like there's a wrestling match between darkness and light?

NO! Light wins without a fight! It's instant! No contest! Well, that's how it is when the light of God comes into our life, darkness has to go! Light is unconquerable!

See, all the darkness in the world can't extinguish the tiniest flame! That's why the bible says in John 1:5, *"And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not put it out!"*

Lighthouses are a good example. Regardless of the weather, they keep shining. Lighthouses offer hope, safety, and sanctuary from the chaos of the pounding waves.

This is a beautiful image of God. Ephesians 5:13, *"But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light."*

When the light of God shines on my life, it brightens my life and guides me out of that pit of despair. Which leads to the second difference between darkness and light...

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Darkness equals lostness, while light equals guidance. Have you ever been on a guided tour of Carlsbad Caverns?

At one point on the tour, the Park Ranger turns off the lights, and the cave turns pitch black. It's scary. You literally cannot see your hand in front of your face.

People who're lost in the darkness of this world are running scared! They don't have a clue where they are, or where they're going in life.

Darkness is stumbling around in life, tripping and stubbing your toe on the furniture, wondering why things don't work out.

It's frustrating, because you're getting beat up, but don't know why. So, you start asking yourself, "When am I going to get a break?" But no break comes.

The Bible says in John 12:35b, "*Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going.*" People who are in darkness are just drifting with no clear objective.

The one who walks in the dark doesn't know where he's going. Have you ever felt like that? If so, that's because you're in the dark!

While darkness communicates blindness, light is a metaphor for vision, sight, truth, knowledge, and wisdom. Physically your eyes can't see without light.

Walking in the light is like finding the switch in a dark room. As soon as you turn it on, you can see all the furniture that you were about to trip over.

When light shines in your life, you realize that your main problem is that you don't have a relationship with the "God of light", Who knows everything.

It's understanding that sinful actions have consequences which lead to deeper confusion and darkness.

Walking in the light is knowing that there's a reliable source Who'll always give you the right advice and never steer you in the wrong direction.

So, is there any place in the world you can get that kind of advice? Yes. It's called God's Word. It won't steer you the wrong way.

The Bible says in Psalm 119:105, "*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*"

It's the only reliable guide for life. It's like a flashlight. It keeps you from stumbling. It helps you to see things clearly. God's Word brings light!

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A third characteristic is that darkness is a metaphor for hiding. Evil lurks in the night. Anybody get those big water bugs in your house?

I don't know how, but as careful as you are, somehow they still get in. If there's one in the house, as soon as I turn on the light they freeze for a second and then runs straight for me! Freaks me out!

But they're not attacking, they're running from the light. Cockroaches prefer darkness to light, because of the nature of their activities. Light has the ability to reveal the truth in all it's ugliness or beauty.

Each of us are a cockroach at heart! The Bible says in John 3:19-20 that, *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people 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 their deeds will be exposed."*

I know many people like that! Instead of moving towards the light, towards the truth, they run from it, scared, resisting the truth. We don't want anybody to tell us that what we're doing is wrong.

We don't want to deal with our unforgiveness or our emotional hurt, we prefer the dark because we're afraid of being exposed for what we really are. So, we scurry for a dark corner.

In fact, if we even suspect that we might be exposed to the light, we run. We run from the Bible, the church, pastors, or that Christian we know at work. Our true nature is exposed by our response to the light.

Ephesians 5:12-13, *"It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light."*

So, if we're in the light, as God is in the light, there are no shadows, no hidden places, no secrets to be hidden any longer!

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Lastly, we learn that darkness equals death and light equals life. Death is always a place of darkness. That's why we wear "black" to a funeral. Is there anything darker than death without God?

Just as darkness is the absence of light, eternal death is the absence of God. That's what 'hell' is all about. It's separation from God for eternity. A very dark place!

Remember that 'menorah' we talked about at the beginning of this message. Remember what it represented? The "light of blessing" that God wanted to shine on the people of the world.

How does He do that in real life? I mean, how does that work in our lives? The answer is found in John 8.

But, before we look at that passage, let me share with you the background of what was going on at the time.

People from all over Israel had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the *"The Feast of the Tabernacle"* or *"Feast of Booths"* and on the last night of this Feast was a ceremony called *"The Illumination of the Temple."*

During this ceremony, huge menorahs, seventy-five feet high, were lit in the Temple to remind the people of the pillar of fire that guided Israel in their wilderness journey.

It was a big deal! All night long their brilliance, illuminated the entire city. Spectator stands had to be constructed to handle all the people as they gathered to watch this remarkable spectacle of lights.

Now imagine, as you're watching this incredible scene, a man walks into the courtyard and stands in the center of these blazing menorah's.

Everyone stops talking and there's silence. All eyes are on Him. People are wondering "Who is this?" and then they begin to realize that it's none other than Jesus of Nazareth!

Slowly He points to the menorahs. His voice rings out like thunder and He shouts these words found in John 8:12, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

The people were probably startled and shocked since "Light" was synonymous with God Himself, and now this man was saying what God said in Genesis 1 when He created the world.

Jesus was equating Himself with God!

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Conclusion

Just as boldly as He walked into the middle of that courtyard so many years ago, He wants to walk into the middle of your darkness this morning.

He's saying to YOU, *"I am the light of the world. I am where you're going to find true life, nowhere else. Follow me!"*

It's like the parents of a little girl who, shortly after her birth, developed jaundice. The doctor told them that it was a potentially devastating disorder, but fortunately there was an easy cure for it.

He said, *"All you have to do is put the baby under a special light. The skin absorbs this light and it stimulates the liver to function properly."*

Now the parents could have responded by saying, *"Wait a minute! That's sounds too easy! Put her under a light? That's it? I've got a better idea. What, if instead of that, we just scrubbed her with soap and dipped her in bleach? I'm sure if we scrubbed her hard enough we could get her skin coloring back to normal."*

The doctor would've said, *"You don't understand. There's only one way to cure jaundice."* The couple could have replied, *"I don't like this "only way" thing. How about if we just ignore it and pretend that everything's ok?"*

The doctor would have said, *"You're going to jeopardize the life of your child if you do that. There's only one way to cure jaundice. You're hesitant because it sounds too easy. But look at the credentials on my wall, look at my medical degree. I studied medicine for years. I've cured countless babies of jaundice. I know what I'm talking about. Trust me based on my credentials."*

Would anybody accuse those parents of being narrow minded if they trusted that doctor when he said there's only "one way," "one treatment" that would cure their little girl?

Would it be "narrow-minded" for them to pursue that course of treatment? It's not arrogant to act upon the evidence. The truth of the matter is we all have a terminal illness called sin.

The reason that those of us who are Christians cling to Jesus is not because He is the great physician, but He's the LIGHT of the world! He's the only One that can cure.

We can try to scrub away our sins by trying to do good deeds, but it's not going to work. We can ignore it and hope it just goes away.

But it won't disappear. We can sincerely think there's another way of dealing with it, but we'd be wrong.

The truth of the matter is, only the Great Physician offers the treatment that'll erase the stain of our sin.

Thankfully, He is the LIGHT of the world, and so when we turn to Him, and walk into His light we'll be cured of that death causing disease.