

DARKNESS

Jeff McCrary

Throughout history darkness has served as a symbol of fear and dread. Thick darkness was the ninth plague of judgment God brought upon the Egyptians. In the prophetic books of the Old Testament darkness often described the coming Day of the Lord (**Amos 5:18,20**). The Day of the Lord would be a time of judgment not merely for the nations but for a rebellious Israel as well. The Day of the Lord in Joel's era was at hand and featured "darkness and gloom," further clouds, and deep blackness (**Joel 2:2**). Of course, this was figurative language used to describe what would, in reality, be times of war, earthquakes, oppression, and distress. Darkness was, in fact, used in a general sense to depict times of distress and suffering (**Isaiah 5:30; 50:3; Jeremiah 2:6**). The great day of God's judgment envisioned by Joel was also a day pointing to the time of Christ (**Joel 2:31; Acts 2:16-21**). At Christ's first coming the distressing and devastating aspects of Christ's crucifixion were depicted by this prophetic utterance, "*Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.*" (**Matthew 27:45**).

The Hebrew word *choshek* is usually translated "darkness" and was often used figuratively. But the word also referred to night as opposed to day which was "light" (or). "Obscurity" was also indicated by the word as when it was used to describe "dark" sayings difficult to discern. It referred to the darkness of Sheol at death (**1 Samuel 2:9; Job 10:21**) or to dark, secret, and hidden places (**Isaiah 45:3; Job 12:22**). In the story of creation, "darkness" covered everything until God spoke and light appeared (**Genesis 1:1-3**). The threat is always present that unless God upholds His creation it may return once again to a time of chaos and darkness (**Colossians 1:17**).

The use of "darkness," *skotos* in Greek, continues in the New Testament. Matthew, quoting Isaiah, notes that in Christ those who are in spiritual darkness have seen a great light (compare **Matthew 4:16** and **Isaiah 9:2**). The darkness of not knowing God has been overcome in Christ, for the light of God in Christ shines for us into the darkness and overcomes it (**John 1:5**). Although we were once in darkness, now we can rejoice in the moral, ethical, and spiritual light of being in Christ (**Ephesians 5:8**). Finally, it is possible for us to know and relate to Jesus Christ and God in whom there is no darkness at all (**1 John 1:5**).

We live in dark times today. Throughout our lives we have witnessed the growing ignorance of God and righteousness in our culture. Church buildings are becoming vacant and deserted, not because the group has outgrown them and moved to bigger ones, but because the small number left can't pay the light bill any longer. While this reality is sad, it is sad for those who do not know the Lord and have not the hope of eternal light through Jesus.

"You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness... But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." (**1 Thessalonians 5:5, 8**)

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." (**Philippians 2:12-15**)

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (**Matthew 5:14, 16**)

May God bless us to open our eyes and see His light!