



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* Knights of Malta *

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Chancellor's Update

Why They Can Not Find Jesus ?

From the gospel of the third Mass of Christmas Day (The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers), we find the answer.

v. 5. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.

9. AUGUSTINE, *Tr. I*, in *John*: Although this life is the light of men, yet the foolish of heart cannot comprehend that light, because they have grown blind through sin, so that they cannot perceive it. Lest therefore they should think that there is no light, because they do not see it, there follows: *and the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* For though to a blind man standing in the sun, the sun is indeed present, but he is absent to the sun; **so the foolish heart is truly blind to wisdom, though it is beside him.** But while thus present to the blinded, it is absent to his eyes; not because it is absent to him, but because he is absent to it.

ORIGEN, (PG 14 col. 150): Darkness of this kind is not of the nature of man as Paul says: *For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord* (Eph. v. 8).

Origen, *Hom. 2 in div. locis*: Or, differently; The Light shines in the darkness of believing souls, beginning from faith, and approaching to hope. The deceit and ignorance of worldly hearts cannot perceive the Light of God, shining in their flesh. But this is spoken in a moral sense. The physical explanation of these words is this.

Human nature, even if it had not sinned, could not shine by its own powers, for it is not naturally light, but a partaker of light. It is capable of wisdom, but not wisdom. As the air itself does not give light, but is named from the word of darkness, so our nature, considered in itself, is a dark substance, but capable of and a partaker of the light of wisdom. And as the air, while it is partaking of the sun's rays, is not said of itself to give light, but to share in the light of the sun, **so the rational part of our nature, while it possesses the presence of the Word of God, knows things that are intelligible, and its own God, but not through itself, but through the implanted divine light.**

The light, therefore, shineth in darkness, because the Word of God, the life and the light of men, ceases not to shine in our nature, which looked at and considered in itself is found to be a sort of unformed darkness. And since this light is incomprehensible to every creature, *the darkness did not comprehend it.*

CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. 5*: First the Evangelist taught us of creation, then he tells us of the spiritual gifts the Word bestowed in coming to us. Hence he said: ***and the life was the light of men.*** He did not say the light of the Jews; the Gentiles also came to the light of this knowledge. He did not say *of angels*, since his words were only concerned with the race of men, to whom the Word came announcing good tidings.

ORIGEN, *II in John*: They ask why the light of men is not called the Word, but the life which comes forth from the Word. To this we answer. Because the life of which we here speak, is not that common to rational and irrational creatures, but is united to the word which is formed in us through partaking of the Primary Word, so that we may discern the seeming and not true life, and desire the true life. First then we

partake of that life, which with some indeed is but a disposition to, not actually, the light; those namely, who are not eager to seek after that which pertains to knowledge. With others this becomes truly the light, those who, according to the Apostles, *are zealous for the better gifts* (1 Cor. xii. 31), namely, the Word of Wisdom.

CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. 5 in John*: Life having come to us, the dominion of death is ended; and the Light shining in our midst there is no darkness. That Life will remain forever which death cannot overcome, nor darkness this Light. Hence follows, and *the light shineth in the darkness*. He calls death and error, *darkness*; for visible light does not shine in darkness, but apart from it. The preaching of Christ has shone out in the midst of the error that rules the world, and caused it to disappear; and Christ dying has changed death into life, so triumphing over it that He has led back those who had been held in bondage. **Since neither death has overcome this Life, nor error this Light, for its splendid proclaiming is everywhere on the earth, he therefore adds:** *And the darkness did not comprehend it.*

ORIGEN, in *John, tom. 2*: We must also know that as the light of men means two different spiritual things, so also in regard to darkness. For we say that a man that possesses light, does the works that are of the Light; and that to know means to be as it were illuminated by the light of knowledge. Contrarily, we call evil actions darkness; and likewise that which appears as knowledge but is not.

As the Father is Light, and in *Him is nothing of darkness* (1 Jn. i, 5) so also is the Savior. But because He took upon Himself *the likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom. viii. 3), not incorrectly is it said of Him that in Him is a certain darkness; He having taken our darkness upon Him that He might dispel it. This Light therefore which has become the light of men, shines in the darkness of our souls, and enters in where *the ruler of this darkness* wars with the human race (Eph. vi. 12). The darkness persecutes this light, which is plain from the things which the Savior and His children sustain; the darkness contending against the children of light. But since the Father is their defender, the darkness will not prevail.

The darkness does not comprehend the light, either because it cannot through its own sloth overtake the swift course of the light, or because should it lie in wait for it approaching, it is put to flight by the oncoming light.

We must note that darkness is not always taken in an evil sense, but also sometimes in a good sense, as: *He made the darkness his hiding place* (Ps. xvii. 12); in that the things that pertain to God are unknown and unknowable. Of this excellent obscurity I may say, that it moves towards the light, and lays hold of it: because what was darkness, because unknown, is changed into the light of knowledge for him who has learned.

AUGUSTINE, *City of God* 10, 29: A certain Platonist said that the commencement of this holy gospel should be written in letters of gold and set up in the most conspicuous place in all the churches. BEDE: For the other evangelists describe the birth of the Lord in time, but John has given testimony that the Same was in the beginning, saying: *in the beginning was the Word*. Others record that of a sudden He appeared among men; John that He was forever with God, saying: *And the Word was with God*. Others show that He was a man; John that He was True God, saying: *And the Word was God*. Others show that as man He walked for a time among men; John that as God He was with God, and from the beginning, saying: *The same was in the beginning with God*. Others make known the wonders He wrought in man; John teaches that by Him God the Father made every creature, saying: *all things were made by Him: and without Him was made nothing that was made.*

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