**The World in Darkness**

**Introduction**

We have learnt about the metaphors of light and darkness. We learned that light primarily denotes eternal life and secondarily denotes everything that is positively related to it such as God himself who is the primary source of light and Jesus and the Holy Spirit who are the primary agents of light. We also saw that light represents the truth and knowledge of God which is necessary to be righteous which God requires to give anyone eternal life.

Darkness on the other hand primarily represents death, and secondarily represents Satan, his demons, ignorance of the truth of God and knowledge of his will which all result in sin and transgression which results in death.

Now it is a fact of the Gospel that the whole world lies in darkness, under the dominion of death, and sinful influence of Satan and having no hope of eternal life. The Gospel not only teaches this fact, but also that Jesus came to save us from this darkness. These facts are often however taken for granted and not properly understood yet they are key to a proper understanding of the gospel. Today, therefore, we want to take a closer look at these facts beginning with how the world became dark, for it was not always so, and what this really means and what its sad implications are.

**The History of the World in Darkness**

The darkness in the world is the result of men’s choice of sin and rejection of God’s truth on one hand and on the other hand, God’s rejection and withdrawal from men.

1. In the beginning men had light *(they knew God [Rom 1:21] and his will [Rom 1:28])*. God did not create the world and man in darkness *(ignorance of who he was, of his worship and of his will)*.
   1. Adam and Eve *(and even the animals, the serpent certainly [Gen 3:1,5]****[1]****)* knew God. God spoke to them and they spoke to God [Gen 2:16; 3:9-19].
   2. Eve knew God for she acknowledged that it was Yahweh who had given her children [Gen 4:1,25]
   3. Even after they had been driven out of the garden, Cain and Abel knew God and they knew that they were to worship him [Gen 4:3-5] and they also knew his will—what was right and what was wrong—for God spoke to Cain about doing what was right [Gen 4:6].
   4. God spoke to Cain [Gen 4:6-7, 9*a*,10-12] and Cain spoke back [Gen 4:9*b*,13-14], very evidently, they knew God in a very personal way
   5. Even Cain’s descendants evidently knew about God, or at the very least knew that he did not approve of murder for Lamech, Cain’s great-great grandson, made reference to God’s punishment of Cain [Gen 4:24]
   6. The name of Yahweh was also proclaimed as men increased in number [Gen 4:26]
   7. The names of the descendants of Seth also reflect acquaintance with Yahweh.
2. Men rejected the will of God and chose evil [Gen 6:5]

In spite of the fact that they knew God, his worship and his will—what was right and what was wrong—men sinned greatly against God.

1. First Adam in the Garden disobeyed an express command of God [Gen 2:16; 3:6,12,17], though he was not deceived [Gen 3:13], and then
2. Men, Adam’s descendants after him, corrupted the earth [Gen 6:11] and
3. Starting with Cain [Gen 4:8,10], men filled the earth with violence [Gen 4:23; 6:11].

It is important that we understand that this was not because nature had been corrupted but was a matter of choice. This is most clearly portrayed in the fact that Adam sinned before the earth had been corrupted and so his transgression was clearly a choice. Also, men like Abel, Enoch, and Noah were flesh and blood, yet they did what was right in God’s sight.

1. On account of men’s sins and rejection of God’s truths [Rom 1:21-28], God let all nations *(men)* go their own way [Act 14:6; Rom 1:21-28], thus giving them over to darkness.

God no longer revealed himself to men and soon men forgot the truth about God and were plunged into a time of ignorance [Act 17:30], thus, sin *(darkness)* flourished in the world.

We can see then that men once had the light but rejected it and so God took the light from them. By letting men go their own way, God gave them over to the sinful desires of their hearts [Rom 1:24,26,28] which had always been there but had been subdued somewhat by the Holy Spirit. He removed serious restraints on them. Now consider how sinful the world would become for even when they knew God, they sinned, how much more will they now sin that they don’t know him [Luk 23:31]!

\*This rejection of man by God was on account of men’s rejection of God’s truth (i.e., basically idolatry) and their sins [Rom 1:21-28].

1. Up till this time, the Spirit of God was with men as he had been from the very beginning of creation [Gen 1:2], but men rejected him [Gen 6:3*a*]. God then decided to withdraw his Spirit from man within 120 years [Gen 6:3*b*] of his decision. This was the primary means by which God let men go their own way—they were free to do as they pleased, his Spirit would no longer struggle with them.
2. God divided men into nations [Gen 11:8-9; Act 17:26] and divided the earth, man’s inheritance, among the nations [Deu 32:8-9] putting men and their inheritances under angelic authorities as their guardians and trustees [Gal 4:1-3,8]. God however, reserved the nation and people of Israel for himself keeping his revelation alive among them that his light may not completely go out in the world.
3. The ultimate consequence of rejecting men was that men would be without light and thus without hope of eternal life which is obtainable only for those who walk in the light of God, i.e., the righteous [Eph 2:11-12; 4:18-19]

***What the World Being in Darkness Means***

1. It means that men are living in ignorance [Eph 4:18-19] of the truth and knowledge of God. This ignorance leads to sin and thus men have no hope of eternal life.

To have eternal life we must know the will of God concerning his worship and how we are to conduct ourselves and must walk in them. Knowing the will of God requires God teaching us and as we can see at the dawn of the human race, God did relate with man and man had knowledge of his will.

The darkness of ignorance, the near total loss of the knowledge of God and his will is the result of men not making proper efforts to retain the knowledge of God [Rom 1:28-31], they failed to pay attention to the things of God [Isa 42:19-20], and so it soon became forgotten.

*God reverses this through the gospel committed to the church*

1. That the world is in darkness means that God had withdrawn his Spirit from men [Gen 6:3]. The fact that God can take his Spirit from man is witnessed in the stories of Samson and King Saul. The fact that God withdrew his Spirit from mankind is evidenced in the fact that he says he will pour out his spirit on all flesh [Joe 2:28] which implies that the Spirit was no longer on all flesh. Again God refers to mankind without His Spirit as thirsty [Isa 32:15; 44:3; Joh 4:13-14; 7:37-39]

*God reverses this through the Lordship of Jesus Christ who gives the Holy Spirit*

1. That the world is in darkness means that the world is under the dominion of the principalities and powers—the rulers of the darkness of this world [Eph 6:12]

*God reverses this by bringing us into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ*

***The History of the Separation between God and Men***

This is actually a fact of Scripture that at some point in human history, God withdrew himself from men. Thus men, having no light, were in darkness. This meant that men did not know what God’s will was.

Now it is very important to establish from the scriptures, in what way*s* God withdrew from mankind. This is important lest we become open to strange ideas.

1. God withdrew his Spirit from men.

The Holy Spirit is the presence of God [Psa 51:11; 139:7], therefore, God withdrawing from man majorly means that he has withdrawn his Spirit from him.

In Genesis 1, we learn that the Spirit of God was hovering upon the waters of the earth just before creation [Gen 1:2]. Some many years after, about 120 years before the flood, we read of God saying his Spirit will not contend with man forever [Gen 6:3].

The point is this. God’s Spirit did not cease from the earth after creation, it evidently was with men. However because of men’s wickedness God withdrew his Spirit. God effected this decree immediately after the flood.

God’s withdrawal does not mean that the Spirit of God ceased to exist on earth in all totality. Rather, just as, though predominantly dark, the night has lights, i.e., the moon and stars, so too, the world still had the Spirit in it but it was no longer everywhere as before.

We have an example in king Saul who had the Spirit of God at the beginning of his career, but after repeated disobedience had the Spirit of God withdrawn from him.

1. God removed his restraints on us. Since the world wanted to do evil, God let her go her own way. The restraints of God come from his Spirit and from his servants the prophets [Isa 29:10] whom he sends. God

*the Cause of Separation between God and Men*

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God…[Isa 59:2]

The reason, and in fact the only reason, why God withdrew from man was because of sin. God is holy and righteous and cannot bear with iniquity. The sin here, as everywhere in this subject, has to do with our hearts, it refers to the practice of sin. It is not about man’s sinfulness by nature, in that case God wouldn’t have revealed himself to anyone at all, including Abraham, Moses etc.

He had a covenant with Israel *(which he didn’t have with mankind)*, and in spite of this covenant he cast Israel and Judah out of his presence on account of their sins [2Kin 23:26-27; 24:3-4].