



WOW: Word Of the Week

Illuminate
December 1, 2021

In recent years, I have returned again and again to the importance of Chapter 1 of the Gospel of John as an Incarnation text that tells the Christmas story in a unique way. Light has come into the world—illuminating the darkness and enlightening every person.

I remember Christmas cards with manger scenes on them—Mary and Joseph, the baby Jesus asleep on the hay, animals standing by, perhaps some shepherds -- a peaceful scene declaring “peace on earth.” With the increasing secularization of the Christmas season, cards with manger scenes are not as popular as they used to be. Perhaps just as well! Such cards captured only a microcosm of the true story of the Incarnation.

If one could capture the details related to Jesus’ coming to earth, the result would not be peace and good will. At the birth of Jesus, Israel was under military occupation by the Romans. Corrupt puppet rulers sought self-advancement and laughed at justice. The rich abused the poor. Religious leaders were more interested in their own comfort and power than in God’s plan for the world.

Jesus was born into a dark world. And yet, the Gospel of John declares about Jesus, *“Everything that was created received its life from him, and his life gave light to everyone. The light keeps shining in the dark, and darkness has never put it out.”* (John 1:3-5)

Jesus came to illuminate the world of darkness. The NASB says that human beings are enlightened by his coming. A small light can pierce the deepest darkness. Often the darkness of the world around us seems deep and never-ending: multiplied forces tear apart the fabric of our world, nation, society, and families. Family disunity, illness, and personal emptiness disempower the desires of our hearts to connect, care, cope, and change. We see our present failures better than we see the future possibilities.

Jesus has come to illuminate the path, to make known God’s truth, and to give life. Jesus is uniquely able to bring light to every darkness.

*If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,”
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you. (Psalm 139:11-12)*

Every time you talk about Jesus, live out the truth of the gospel, initiate a spiritual conversation, or help others, you are shining light into a dark world, illuminating the darkness. God entered a dark world at the birth of Jesus. The light still shines and the darkness cannot grasp it or conquer it.