

Arise and Shine Forth

1. We learn about the importance of light throughout the scriptures. There are different kinds of light: light that comes from a physical source and light from a spiritual source. Let us look at some of these types of light.

We know from the Bible that God created light, as it says in Genesis 1:5-7 (JST/IV¹): “And my Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, for I am God. And I, God, said, Let there be light; and there was light. And I, God, saw the light, and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness.” So, from the beginning of God’s creations light was an important aspect, as it was created on the first day.

In John chapter 1:1-4 (JST/IV¹) we also read about the beginning: “In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made. In him was the gospel, and the gospel was the life, and the life was the light of men.”

Question 1: What causes that there is light in men?

2. We literally need light to see, otherwise we are in the dark. In the scriptures there are some examples of literal darkness. In Exodus 10:21-23 we read: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They saw not one another; neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

Another example is in 3 Nephi 8:20-21 (4:18-19 RLDS): “And it came to pass that there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen could feel the vapor of darkness; And there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all.”

Question 2: What were the reasons in these scriptures for the darkness to come over the land?

3. There is opposition in all things (see 2 Nephi 2:11 / 1:81-84 RLDS)—virtue and vice, justice and injustice, truth and falsehood, holiness and sin. Darkness is the opposite of light. In the scriptures, darkness and light also refer respectively to evil and good, or falsehood and truth.

In John 8:12 Jesus says: “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

Joseph Smith taught: “We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin....” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [TPJS] page 51, English translation).

And in Doctrine and Covenants 93:29 (90:5a RLDS): “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.”

We learn here that light is communicated from heaven which, if we pay attention to it, broadens our understanding and teaches us to let go of, or come out, of darkness. In order to do so we need a level of intelligence which we can expand. Therefore, the more intelligence—or ‘light of truth’—we receive or gather, the more we are capable to get to know God and His mysteries. This is an important task.

Question 3: What are some of the ways to receive more light?

4. The Sealed Book of Moses 3:54 says: “Behold, you are well aware of this agitation in your mind, my servant Moses, and you know how difficult it is to recognize the feelings of light amidst this stupor of emotions coming out of darkness, which tends to prevent the children of men to identify feelings originating from light and truth....”

Question 4: How can feelings influence the brightness of our light?

5. In order to be able to discern light from darkness, all people are blessed with the Spirit of Christ so that "... we may distinguish good from evil and have a perfect discernment to separate the darkness from the light that fills our hearts, and thus choose to follow the path of clarity through the teachings of his gospel" (Acts of the Three Nephites 6:15).

In Moroni 7:16 (7:14-15 RLDS) it says: "For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it **is of God**. And: "That which **is of God** is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24 / 50:6b RLDS; bold added).

Question 5: What do we need in order to discern darkness from light and how can we brighten our light?

6. We have been asked to be a light to the world, as we read in Matthew 5:16. In order to do that, we need to receive or, be open, to light to be able to shine. We learn from these scriptures that, if we are not open to new knowledge or light, we can also lose the knowledge we already have. A heart that is hardened cannot receive more light. There are several scriptures that talk about this (see Alma 12: 10-11 / 9:17-21 RLDS; Words of Moroni v. 16; Acts of the Three Nephites 1:5).

And Joseph Smith taught: "There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the Gospel with full purpose of heart, which, if sinned against, the apostate is left naked and destitute of the Spirit of God, and he is, in truth, nigh unto cursing, and his end is to be burned. When once that light which was in them is taken from them, they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened..." (TPJS² page 67).

With the coming forth of The Sealed Book of Mormon, we are able to share more "light-knowledge" with the world. And as Saints of the Latter Days, we have been asked to bring "to light all the hidden things of darkness, *wherein we know them; and they are truly manifest from heaven.*" (TPJS², page 146; italics added for emphasis).

Question 6: What are some things from The Sealed Book of Mormon that have broadened your understanding?

7. As we are on our journey of discovering the mysteries of God, we gain more knowledge and, with it, more light. And through this, we become more enthusiastic about God's marvellous plan.

Enthusiasm is one of the names, or gifts, of God (Sealed Book of Moses 4:17) and is a power we can use in our missionary work, as a lot of people have lost their enthusiasm in this world of darkness. We should be able to light up every room we walk into, so that people will become curious about the hope that is within us, which should radiate from our countenance. In 1 Peter 3:15, we read: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer with meekness and fear to every man that asketh of you a reason for the hope that is in you." And in Isaiah 60, verses 1 to 3: "Arise; shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

Question 7: What are some of the ways that you share the light of your understanding with the people you encounter?

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith Translation/Inspired Version
2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*