

The Light of the World

January 2, 2011

Jesus said: "I am the light of the world" (*John 8:12*). His declaration has deep roots in the sacrificial system of Moses, where a light was kept burning in front of the altar of sacrifice at all times (*Leviticus 6:9*).

In *Leviticus 1:2*, we hear God instruct the Israelites how to bring an offering. The word "offering" in Hebrew means "drawing near." The sacrificial offerings were for the purpose of drawing near to God, and He would in turn draw near to the people. Literally, you were to bring your best animal and approach the altar, where scripture tells us "a fire came out from before the Lord" to consume your "drawing near" (*Leviticus 9:23*). When God drew near to the worshipers, revelation, prophecy, healing and power came forth to guide the nation of Israel. This was the whole point of Tabernacle and Temple worship. If the sacrifices became insincere or artificially religious, or, worse, if the people drew near to other gods, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob withheld revelation and blessing, and the people suffered! God's "wrath" was literally His "blazing up."

In those days the only light men could actually see came from fire, so the Tabernacle template established a close association between the fire of God and the light by which men see. Recall that He led the Israelites through the desert as a pillar of smoke by day and a fire by night.

What does this mean for us today? We, too, are to bring our "best animals" – i.e., ourselves and the material aspects of our existence – into the presence of God, which we do through repentance and worship. Worship can also be translated as "service." Jesus said God is looking for people who worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (*John 4:24*). When we serve God sincerely, He becomes a Presence (cloud) in our lives by day and a Light (fire) to direct us during our darkest times.

Fire is also an instrument of God's judgment in both the Old and New Testaments. *Too much* divine fire is a dangerous thing for mere mortals! *Revelations 20:14-15* tells us that death and hell will eventually be cast into a lake of fire, where anyone not written in the "Book of Life" will also be cast after the second judgment. What does it take to be written in the Book of Life?

This is where Jesus enters in. He was there at the beginning of Creation (*John 1:1*) as God's Word (*Logos*) made flesh. You might say He represents God's *Living Logic*, which is quite different from the logic of men. His thoughts are not our thoughts (*Isaiah 55:8*). In His mercy, God incarnated His *Logos* as a man, Jesus Christ (*Yeshua haMashiach*, if you prefer His Hebrew name), to show us the Way to enter into the Book of Eternal Life. Indeed, Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (*John 14:6*). He died on the cross and after three days rose from the dead. When we accept this and sacrificially lay down our lives to follow Jesus, we enter into the Presence of God and receive His light, blessings and purposes for our lives. With His eternal light in us, we become light in this world and enter at death into the eternal Light of God's Glory. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven," said Jesus (*Matthew 5:16*).

Abba, may everyone who reads this discover Your True Light and become, themselves, a source of eternal light to a dark and dying world!