

PRESENT TRUTH

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For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Living in the Shadows

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Introduction

When I was growing up in rural Mississippi there was a phrase used by many that referred to people who were “living in the shadows”. This meant that they were also probably “shady characters” too or they wouldn't be “living in the shadows” to begin with. This meant that there were people who were on the fringes of society, that didn't want the light shined upon them, and lived in such a way as to avoid notice and any examination of their doings.

But, that is not the meaning that I am applying to this phrase. I want to apply a biblical perspective on what it means to “live in the shadows”. It seems to me that a large portion of the believers, at least here in America, are living in the shadows and it is a problem that seems to be growing.

Biblical Perspective

When we read the New Testament carefully, we can see that much of what God did with the children of Israel and the Old Covenant was a shadow of what was coming; that is, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. (Hebrews 10:1 NASB)

who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." (Hebrews 8:5 NASB)

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- *things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.* (Colossians 2:16-17 NASB)

From just these few scriptures we are told of several things that are shadows of heavenly or spiritual things.

1. The Law is a shadow of good things to come;
2. The sacrifices are shadows of the perfect sacrifice to come;
3. The Tabernacle and Temple are shadows of heavenly reality;
4. The dietary rules are shadows of what is to come;
5. The festivals, new moon, and Sabbaths are shadows of what is to come.

It is the object which casts the shadow that has substance not the shadow. The shadow without the substance is of no value. The shadow only has some of the characteristics of the substance. We can never fully understand or embrace the substance by only looking at the shadow. However, when the substance is available and we can embrace it, then the shadow becomes of little value—our understanding has been broadened far beyond the shadow, which has been superseded by the the substance.

Shadow Living

Any believer who is concerned about keeping any form of the Law or who tries to follow dietary rules that say do not eat this or that or who thinks that it is necessary to keep any festival day or Sabbath day is actually “living in the shadows”. All of these things have been brought forward into Christ. We forget what the Lord told Peter in Acts 10:15. "What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy."

Recently, I received an email from someone who considers himself a teacher. He categorically declared that the Bible says that we as believers must keep the Passover—that it is a requirement. I responded with I Cor. 5:7 where Paul said “...For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.” We know that Christ's sacrifice was perpetual; therefore, we are in perpetual celebration of the passover. The Lord's supper is our remembrance of this. He didn't answer my response. He prefers to live in the shadow rather than the substance.

We have been taught that we are to “keep the Sabbath” and this has come to mean Sunday and church attendance. However, the writer of Hebrews makes it plain that the Sabbath in its substance is not a day.

So [there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God](#). For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. [Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.](#) ([Hebrews 4:9-11 NASB](#))

Again, we are being taught to live in the shadows and not the substance.

So, why do believers want to live “in the shadows” of the old provision when we have the substance of Christ, the fullness of provision?

There are several reasons why.

1. **Lack of understanding.** Our eyes have to be opened to the truth by the Holy Spirit. If we are operating by our natural “soulish” eyes instead of our spiritual eyes then we only

see the shadows and cannot discern the reality. [*For further study on this topic see the [Present Truth issue "Dark Light"](#) and the [Present Truth issue "With Open Eyes"](#).]*

2. **Fear.** We are more comfortable dealing with the shadows. We feel like we understand them and the rules associated with them. We like to have concrete steps to follow without thinking about them. We are just like the children of Israel who stood afar off at Mt. Sinai when God came down to speak. They told Moses, "you talk to God and come back and tell us what He said". We want the shadows as an intermediary between us and reality. [*For more on this see the teaching article: [Mount Sinai and Pentecost](#).*]
3. **Lack of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.** Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes He will guide us into all truth; that He will receive from Jesus and show it to us [*John 16:12-15*]. Paul tells us, "*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*" (1 Corinthians 2:12-14 NASB)
4. **Doctrines and traditions of men.** Some of us have been deeply taught the doctrines of men and of tradition. Jesus said, "*Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.*" He was also saying to them, "*You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.* (Mark 7:8-9 NASB) *thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.*" (Mark 7:13 NASB)

And the list could go on. We have various reasons why we prefer the shadows to the reality. However, God has called us out of living in the shadows and into the glorious light of the Kingdom of His dear Son.

but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7 NASB)

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (Ephesians 5:8 NASB)

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (James 1:17 NASB)

We must stop living in the shadows and embrace the light of the Lord—the substance of reality.

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