

**Believers with Truth Are the “Light of the World,” Matt 5: 13-16;  
 Politicians Use of the Term Believers as “Light-Giving Bodies,” Phil 2: 14-15;  
 Christ as the “Morning Star,” 2 Pet 1: 19**

“A city set on a hill.” This is a quote from our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, His discourse to His disciples in Matthew 5 and is found in verse 14, a similitude that compares the body of believers with the Word of God, each as a source of light:

**Matthew 5:13** - “You [ disciples, v. 1 ] are the salt of the land [ the preserving factor of Judea ]; but if the salt has become tasteless [ loss of its preserving power through shrinkage of its pivot ], how will it again so function? It is no longer good for anything [ loss of its preserving power ], except to be thrown out [ declassified as a client nation ] and trampled under the foot of man [ fifth cycle of discipline in A.D. 70 administered by Rome ].

**v. 14** - “You keep on being the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden [ As the lights of a hilltop city can be seen in the dark of night so also can the light of the Word of God be seen in the life of a believer in the darkness of the devil’s world ].

**v. 15** - “Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket but on a lampstand. And it gives light unto all that are in the house [ Jesus’ discourse to the disciples ].

**v. 16** - “Let your light so shine before mankind [ application of biblical principles by word and deed ] so that they may see your intrinsic good production and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

This imagery is directed to believers Jesus is delegating authority to communicate the message of the kingdom to the Jewish people.

Their testimony of His messiahship as the harbinger of the prophetic Davidic kingdom is light shining in the darkness of the world.

Their communication of truth is the “light of the world” and just as a “city set on a hill cannot be hidden,” neither can the light of the Word of God.

Lucifer is an excellent Bible student. He has picked up the phrase “city set on a hill” and used it to promote his counterfeit kingdom. The city he envisions is of a literal earthly community where his idea of an Utopian society will be enjoyed by all. To achieve this he must reeducate the masses into ignoring the innate diversity that defines the world’s peoples by first emphasizing it and then mounting a campaign to deemphasize it through shame, guilt, law, force, and intimidation. Once the masses have been converted through behavior modification, then he will be able to control the world to his liking, at least, that is his vision.

This phrase was first used in America by John Winthrop to inspire the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay to take on the responsibility of fulfilling the intent of the “city set on a hill” similitude in their colony. He encouraged the officials of the government to maintain moral purity and theological conformity in order to achieve this objective.

It was through his sermon, *A Model of Christian Charity*, delivered in 1630, that cited the Lord’s admonition to his disciples in Matthew 5:14.

Politicians have picked up on the phrase including Jack Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush to describe their visions for the United States. Reagan amended the phrase to a “shining city on a hill.” He concluded his presidency with the following quote from his “Farewell Address” delivered January 11, 1989:

The past few days when I've been at that window upstairs, I've thought a bit of the "shining city upon a hill." The phrase comes from John Winthrop, who wrote it to describe the America he imagined. What he imagined was important because he was an early Pilgrim, an early freedom man. He journeyed here on what today we'd call a little wooden boat; and like the other Pilgrims, he was looking for a home that would be free.

I've spoken of the shining city all my political life, but I don't know if I ever quite communicated what I saw when I said it. But in my mind it was a tall proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, wind-swept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace, a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity, and if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here. That's how I saw it and see it still.

And how stands the city on this winter night? More prosperous, more secure, and happier than it was eight years ago. But more than that; after 200 years, two centuries, she still stands strong and true on the granite ridge, and her glow has held steady no matter what storm. And she's still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home.<sup>1</sup>

Reagan's vision was for an America that could come together as a people to fulfill the promise of a free republic: one nation under God. This was an appeal for unity of purpose among the country's citizens. He had good intentions but such a goal is unreachable unless all concerned are believers in Christ and the light they shine from the hill is Bible doctrine.

Such was the fate of Winthrop's vision as well. The "city set on a hill" of our Lord was a simile that did not stand the test of time. Israel fell to Rome. What Winthrop envisioned in the seventeenth century has come to naught in the State of Massachusetts in the twenty-first. Reagan's "shining city on a hill" and George H. W. Bush's "thousand points of light" did not survive the Clinton administration.

The Lord's instruction to the disciples did not prevail because the Jews rejected His claims to be the Messiah, yet the application of His vision remains in the Church Age as it calls upon believers to provide light in the darkness of the devil's world, a duty mentioned by Peter in:

**Philippians 2:14** - Keep on doing all things [ related to the spiritual advance ] without discontent and argumentation,

**v. 15** - in order that you might become blameless [ free of human good and evil ], innocent [ execution of biblical integrity ], children of God in the midst of a crooked [ rejection of establishment authority ] and perverted [ reversionistic modus vivendi ] generation, among whom you keep on shining as light-giving bodies [ φωστήρ, *phōstēr*: a light-giving body ] in the devil's world.

Thus, the believer is the "city set on a hill." He emanates the light of the Word of God until the Lord Himself provides the perpetual light that shines in the true diverseless society of His millennial kingdom.

Peter describes the Lord's victory over human good and evil at His Second Advent as a "light shining in a dark place":

<sup>1</sup> Ronald Wilson Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation," January 11, 1989, [http://www.ronaldreagan.com/sp\\_21.html](http://www.ronaldreagan.com/sp_21.html) (Accessed August 01, 2009).

**2 Peter 1:19** - We keep on having a more reliable and certain word of prophecy [ Peter with James & John witnessed the Lord's resurrection glory on the mount of Transfiguration; the testimony of the Old Testament's prophecies are said to be more reliable than being an eyewitness to the event ] to which you do well if you pay attention as you would to a light shining in a dark place [ the Second Advent ], until the day dawns [ the glory of the returning Messiah ] and the morning star<sup>2</sup> [ φωσφόρος, *phōsphros*: a title Jesus Christ assigns to Himself in Rev 22:16 ] arises in your hearts [ perception of the reality of these events is gained through Bible study ].

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<sup>2</sup> The morning star announces the imminent light of a new day. At the Second Advent the earth will be shrouded in darkness: "Immediately after the Tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:29-30, NASB). See also: Isaiah 5:30; 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10; 3:15.