

Bible and the Headlines: Season of Light

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September 3, 2025

Labor Day 2025 is now behind us. The holiday marked the cultural end of the long days of summer and the descent into the dark days of winter. Some of the weekend's headlines showed mankind's fight against the coming darkness.

Reno's CBS affiliate 2News Nevada on Aug 28th reported on the state's contribution to Labor Day festivities with, "Someone 2 Know: Bentley Meeker, Helping Light Burning Man Temples." Mr. Meeker is a long-time participant in the week long gathering that culminates with the conflagration of the Man. In years past, his "temples" have provided illumination during the six nights before the main event. Meeks said, "I believe that there's a certain soul recognition that we have around certain kinds of light." At the 2025 Burning Man, Meeker limited his lighting creativity to his own campsite.

The Albuquerque Journal covered New Mexico's version of Burning Man in its August 30th article, "From Gloom-Burning to a Marriage Proposal, Life-Changing Moments at Zozobra 2025." Before the ignition of the 50 foot tall Zozobra, participants write their 'glooms' (sorrows) on slips of paper placed inside the effigy. A New York visitor described their missive, "I'm going to be burning self-doubt and hesitation." In addition to Zozobra's flames, there were lasers, drones, and fireworks lighting up the night.

On a much smaller scale, the Jerusalem Post on August 31st featured, "Ancient Innovation Uncovered: Some of the Oldest Lamp Wicks in History Found in Israel." The article explained that ancient clay lamps are often found, but their wicks, made of "organic materials", do not survive the millennia. The wicks (and lamps) were found in a Bronze Age tomb. The archeologists stated, "Fire in burial rituals was common across the ancient Near East, symbolizing the human soul." These ancient lamps may have been burning as the tomb was sealed into darkness.

The struggle between light and darkness is found in both Testaments of the Bible. In Ecclesiastes, the Teacher tells us, "Light is sweet, and it is pleasing for the eyes to see the sun. . . and let a man remember the days of darkness, since they will be many, when all his works become meaningless" (Ecc 11:7-8). God showed His victory over the darkness when He revealed to the prophet Isaiah, "The people who went in the dark have seen a great light, and for those who were living in the land of the deepest night, the light is shining" (Isa 9:2). This promise was fulfilled in Jesus. The Gospel of John describes Jesus, "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

The readings from Isaiah 9 and John 1 are usually read at Christmas which happens near the winter solstice, the longest night of the calendar year. Maybe we need to start reading from Isaiah and John at Labor Day instead. These promises from God contain more power against the darkness than a giant burning man.