

II. Advent in Biblical Perspective
Isaiah and the Coming of Christ
“Post Tenebrae Lux—Out of Darkness, Light”

Isaiah 9

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This is God’s Word. It’s the truth. Isaiah 9:1-6a which says [1] *But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.*

[2] *The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.*

[3] *You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*

[4] *For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.*

[5] *For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.*

[6a] *For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given...*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

In Matthew 4 there is the arrest of John the Baptist while simultaneously Jesus starts His public ministry up in Galilee. Jesus had been to the River Jordan, baptized and ordained into His ministry as Prophet, Priest and King. He had already been to the wilderness where by the Spirit of God and the Word of God had endured the temptations of Satan. The word comes back to Jesus that John, the forerunner to Jesus has been arrested and here Matthew reaches back to Isaiah 9, quotes it in Matthew 4:15-16 and tells us it is fulfilled.

“Those who have walked in darkness have seen a great light,” where? In Naphtali and Zebulun. The way of the sea in Isaiah 9:1 refers to road that ran through that area for it was a trade route. It was the Galilee of the Gentiles. Why was it called that? It is there that in the depth of darkness a Light has shone. To understand why Matthew is quoting we need to make sure we understand how Isaiah is ministering when he gives this prophecy. By the way Isaiah is quoted all over the New Testament concerning the Messianic promises and that is why I have chosen to go to Isaiah this Advent season so that we can see where these promises comes from concerning Jesus and what is happening. To understand them they were given in a real historic situation.

Isaiah is someone who is real and not a person who is made up. Isn't it interesting that if you wait around long enough some things just get a little more evident? For instance, for hundreds of years the church was told that there was no evidence of a Pontius Pilate in history and that it was only in the Bible. Not long ago they discovered a stone at a place where the governor's mansion was at Caesarea by the Sea and the stone said 'Pontius Pilate.' There is a place where Herod the Great was buried called the Herodian and this past year they found another signet ring from Pontius Pilate. Also this past year near the steps of the Temple Mount where Jesus walked they found another signet ring that said 'King Hezekiah.'

In our last study I told you that Isaiah's father's name was Amoz and Isaiah lived during the rule and reign of four kings in the line of David – Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. A couple of months after they found the signet ring of King Hezekiah, ten feet away from it they found a clay seal with the name Isaiah on it. If you just give archeology, history, science, etc. long enough they will climb the mountain of knowledge and find that the Bible has been there all along – that God's Word is true.

Let's go back to our text. In Isaiah 9:1 it says that there will be no gloom which means there was gloom. What else is this verse telling us? Galilee (of the nations) belonged to the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun which was also known as the land on both sides of and beyond the Jordan. When was this land plunged into darkness and gloom? This is anticipating the Light of the Messiah when Jesus was born therefore 800 years previous was when this land began to plunge into gloom and despair. When the Bible talks about gloom, darkness, despair and death it is referring to what sin produces. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and where does sin flourish? It flourishes in the kingdom of darkness. It brings gloom, darkness, despair and death but promises everything else but this is what sin brings.

Let's go back further than 800 years. A thousand years before Matthew wrote this in Matthew 4 when this prophecy is fulfilled, was the division of the kingdom and 200 years before that was the united kingdom. They had a united kingdom under Saul then David then Solomon but then after that it's divided – Jeroboam and Rehoboam – and there are ten tribes (Northern Kingdom) in rebellion that become known as Ephraim or Israel and then two tribes that remain faithful with the royal line of David – Judah and Benjamin (Southern Kingdom)– which exist for the next 200 years. In those 200 years comes in the Southern Kingdom the kings Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz who are all rebellious. With King Hezekiah there will be a little bit of a revival but in Isaiah 7 we see Isaiah ministering in the days of Ahaz which we looked at in the last study.

In Isaiah 6 God rolled back the heavens and Isaiah will be rejected by the kings and the people. People will be hardened against the call of the Lord so Isaiah needs a right vision of who God is as He fills up the temple in this vision and the angels are worshipping. The thresholds are trembling. The smoke of God's presence is declared and as Isaiah sees this he says 'I'm an unclean man with unclean lips.' God says 'I'll redeem you' as He brings the burning coal to the lips of Isaiah and says 'Your sins are atoned for, now who will go with that message?' Isaiah says 'Here am I Lord send me.'

This is when the Lord sends Isaiah to King Ahaz. Ahaz is fearful and feels threatened. When Ahaz was fearful the people were fearful. Ahaz is fearful because there are two kingdoms that have united in a conspiracy to defeat this little two tribe nation called Judah that exists around Jerusalem. These kingdoms say they are coming down in a siege and Ahaz had gotten wind they were going to replace him with someone else on the throne but Ahaz decides he needs a savior. He doesn't look to the Lord but to the king of Assyria and promises to be a servant to the king.

Isaiah comes to Ahaz and says ‘God has promised. Don’t be fearful of these kingdoms for they are like little fire stumps. They’re nothing for in 65 years they won’t even be in existence. Put your trust in the Lord who promises to deliver you.’ Ahaz doesn’t listen to Isaiah but is willing to submit his people to the paganism and servitude of a pagan king in a pagan nation rather than put his trust in the promises of God that are delivered through the Word of God by the Prophet of God, Isaiah. God very graciously says to Ahaz ‘Just ask for any sign and I will give it to you.’

When you ask for a miracle to help you in your faith that says you have a weak faith and not a strong faith. Ahaz comes back by telling Isaiah that he isn’t supposed to test the Lord as it says in Deuteronomy 6:16 where God got angry at the people when they kept asking for miracles in the wilderness. Ahaz actually is saying that he isn’t going to test the Lord because he doesn’t want to believe since he already has his savior in the king of Assyria. Instead of faithfulness that banishes fear, out of his fearfulness he banished any faithfulness. But he gets a sign anyway for Isaiah says to him ‘Your immediate sign will be that the king of Assyria will not deliver you but devour you’ and that is what all idols do. If you are reading this today and you haven’t put your trust in Christ, you have put your trust somewhere but it will not deliver you and it will ultimately devour you.

Isaiah also told Ahaz that the result of him not putting his trust in the Lord will also result in there no longer being a nation of Israel and nor the line of David to sit on the throne. But out there one day a virgin will conceive and bring forth a King. We will later see that the virgin is of the line of David and the adopted father, Joseph, is of the line of David, but this One is not just from the line of David but One greater than David. It is the King of Kings, Immanuel – God with us, God among us, God one of us, God for us. If God be for us then who can be against us (Romans 8:31). Over the next 200 years will come the fulfillment of the destructions of the two nations – Israel and Judah – and they will be no longer with no Davidic kings to reign after that.

There will be 800 years to pass from the time of that prophecy and then Immanuel is born in the city of David, Bethlehem. He will go down into Egypt and then He will be raised in His childhood in Nazareth of Galilee. It is there He will locate His public ministry as Messiah. Now here is what this is telling us. This is the place where God’s judgment, discipline, unbelief and sin has brought darkness – the land of Zebulun, Naphtali, the way of the sea, Galilee of the Gentiles.

It was called Galilee of the Gentiles because beginning with the prophecy of Isaiah came the destruction, first through Assyria who would destroy the ten Northern tribes and then they would be no more. Assyria is defeated by the Babylonians who are also in the north. The Babylonians will further decimate the area of Galilee and go all the way down to Jerusalem where at three different times they will take captives from there known as the Babylonian Captivity. The Babylonians will be destroyed by the Medo-Persians whom God will use to send a small remnant back but no nation will be reestablished. A smaller temple will be built with governors, prophets and priests – a remnant – will be there for 200 more years. Then there will be 400 years of silence from the Lord.

Then comes Jesus in this region that has produced darkness, despair and gloom, right in the darkest place for up there they even have demon possessed people. Up there are the synagogues of Satan. There was a remnant but people wouldn’t have gone there. Can anything good come from Nazareth (John 1:46)? It was in that place where the midnight of darkness was for 800 that the Light began to shine. Now the former times are displaced with the latter times. What do the latter times look like up there? We see this in Isaiah 9:2 which says [2] *The people*

who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. Christ has come!

This area had become so pagan that many of the cities had changed their names to those resembling Greek names which had overtaken the area after the Medo-Persians. Israel had not only surrendered militarily, politically, socially, relationally but even religiously as they left the faith of their fathers and embraced the pagan religions of all those who came before and now Rome as a vassal territory. It is in that place that the Light begins to shine. Where does Jesus go first when He starts His public ministry? He goes to Cana of the Galilee and does His first miracle, turning the water into wine and the Light is shining in Galilee.

Then Jesus goes from Nazareth to Capernaum on the northern shore of Galilee and makes that His home town. Then He goes to the cities around Galilee like Bethsaida and Chorazin. He preaches, teaches and does His miracles. The Light is shining but they are not hearing it. If the things done as the Light was shining in Capernaum, Bethsaida and Chorazin had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah they would have repented but you would not (Matthew 11:21-23).

This Light even shines in Decapolis, a place where Satan is so welcome that pigs are nurtured in rebellion against God's Word and men are living in tombs among the dead, naked, filthy, and unclean with supernatural intimidation. As the Light shines there is the conversion of the demoniacs. A great Light has come to the place of great darkness. Whenever the light begins to shine darkness begins to dissipate.

Isaiah speaks of this in the past tense where gloom has dissipated yet this is written 800 years before Jesus comes. This is what we call the past prophetic or prophetic past and prophetic future. Why does it do that? Whenever God makes a prophetic promise in His Word, it's done. What is prophecy? The Word of God with prophetic promise is simply pre-written history. Jesus is coming again and that's a fact for God has promised it, just as He did the first time He'll come again at the right time. There is a Judgment Seat and you will be there. God's Word is true. We all stand before God who made us for His glory. We have either continued in a life of opposition and rebellion to Him or we have heard the Good News that God went to a cross with His Son to die an atoning death and now you can be right with God, glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

The Light comes because it is promised and that means it's assured. That's why it is written as a fact of history. The fact that this light shines it multiplies a nation but the nation was gone yet God has a new Israel and that new Israel is going to come from all the nations. When Jesus comes it is the fulfillment of His coming and in Him all the nations of the earth will be blessed so He is multiplying His people from all the nations when He comes. The light is shining in Galilee but it's not going to stop there. It will go from Galilee to Jerusalem and then north, south, east and west. Then people will say 'these people who have turned the world upside down' have come here also. Then it goes to Europe, America then Africa, Asia and all over the world. The nation is multiplied from all the nations and that brings joy as we see in Isaiah 9:3.

That joy of salvation brings an anticipation to worship with His people. They want to sing and be glad to overflowing. They live under the eye of God. They love to worship and their joy is also multiplied because of harvest where men and women from all the nations are to be brought to Christ. They can't wait to hear and find out what this Kingdom of Light is doing as it moves with the Gospel of Light to dispel the darkness in nation after nation. Let's look further at what Isaiah is saying in Isaiah 9.

Isaiah 9:4 says [4]*For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.* What is he saying in this verse? If I were to say ‘Alamo’ most people would think of the war of the independence of Texas. When I think of D-Day I think of the men who got up on those cliffs and Hitler was done. This is a similar picture Isaiah is giving here. Isaiah is saying ‘Remember Egypt’ when God delivered the Israelites out of the bondage of slavery. Isaiah is saying there is One coming that will defeat, not Pharaoh but Satan, for He will break not the bondage of chattel slavery but the bondage of sin. He will go to the root of our darkness that comes from our sin and He will set us free.

It will be like the day of Midian. When did the Israelites fight the Midianites? Gideon is called of God to fight the Midianites with 32,000 in his army but God says that is too many. So God takes them through a series of things where 32,000 become 300 and that’s the size of the army they will win with. Gideon sees all these Midianites but he believes the Lord and goes and the Lord intervenes and they win the battle. Isaiah is bringing this to their mind. He tells Ahaz that he thinks he can’t do this because he doesn’t have the king of Assyria on his side or the emperor of Rome but on this day I’ll take the 300 and reduce it to One – a Child will be born – and when He goes into the battle it is greater than the preview of the Exodus or the absolute retreat of the Midianites. And it will be decisive.

Isaiah 9:5 says [5]*For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.* When the warrior goes into battle he has his armor and when he is wounded the blood will flow on all the accoutrements in warfare. This One that I’m sending will do battle and He’ll win the victory. He will deliver you from your sin. I will provide your Redeemer and you will have peace – peace with God and the peace of God. On that day so sure is your peace because of His victory that you can burn up all the accoutrements of war. We don’t need to re-crucify it or have Him come again to fight the battles. When He goes to the cross and wins the battle it’s won. The victory is secured. He’ll come again for the consummation of that victory but not to fight for it was won at the cross.

This Immanuel has come and it has cost God His Son. God is now with us, for us and He fights the battle for us which is a victory forever. You will no longer need the battle garments anymore. We stand in the train of His victory. So with that context and Matthew quoting this prophecy from Isaiah, here is something I would leave you with as a takeaway to think about.

The takeaway is Post Tenebrae Lux which means out of darkness, light. I borrowed this from the Reformer’s wall which is where this is inscribed. In the 16th century during the Reformers the church was corrupt – it was deceived and it was deceiving. The church had lost the Gospel. The church wasn’t a light to the world but it was a part of the darkness. Why did the Reformers adopt this saying? They went to Isaiah 9 which says out of darkness comes the light. In a culture whenever individuals reject the Lord, not only is the individual plunged into darkness but the culture is plunged into darkness if it walks away from the call of grace, but there isn’t any place so dark that the light can’t overcome it.

What is terrible is when you are in a culture that calls darkness light and light darkness. How great is that darkness! You don’t try to convince people of darkness just send the light for wherever the light shines darkness is dispelled and the light comes forward. This is what Isaiah is telling us. When Jesus came He fulfilled this prophecy in Isaiah. Remember the seed that was promised to Eve in Genesis 3:15? That was not for Cain, it is Jesus – Immanuel. Remember the seed that was promised to Abraham? It was an Isaac, a Jacob, it was Jesus. Remember the promise to David that there would be One greater than him that would sit upon his throne? It wasn’t Solomon, it was Jesus.

The promise to Ahaz from Isaiah was that the virgin would conceive and bring forth a King that would be a Warrior who would win the victory. He is the Light that dispels the darkness of sin. It was not anyone born in Ahaz's family and it wasn't even Hezekiah. It is Jesus. It is this Jesus who is the Gospel of Light and as the Gospel is proclaimed the Kingdom of Light advances and the darkness dissipates. When Jesus comes He goes to the midnight of darkness in Galilee and the Light shines. Then He goes to the darkness of Gethsemane and then three hours later to the darkness of Calvary. For those three hours darkness envelopes the entire region and the torment and thirst of His suffering is there on the cross but that's not touching the darkness He ultimately confronts.

The darkness He confronts at the cross that was poured out upon His soul and we see in Matthew 27:46, [46] *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?"* that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There the felt presence of His Father was removed, and all of the wrath of God for all the sins of all His people was and the darkness of Hell was poured out upon Him. There He won the victory. There we can burn the battle accoutrements when He goes into the darkness of the tomb. Bursting forth on that glorious day, up from the grave He arose and our victory is proclaimed. It is victory for Immanuel, the Warrior King – salvation for His people.

The fact is the Light appeared in Galilee, deepened in Gethsemane, was confronted and defeated at Calvary in the darkness of that moment, previewed and experienced with the physical darkness for three hours on and in His soul but it is there that the wrath of God was not just satisfied but exhausted. There is no more wrath of God for His people for it has been drank to the bottom by Christ. All of the wrath of God, against all of His people, for all of their sins, for all of eternity and all of their hell, Christ drank and the wrath of God has been exhausted. The justice of God has been satisfied and in you who know Him, the grace of God is now being magnified.

We have a glorious Savior, Immanuel and now you know why. In that glorious moment when Joseph and Mary bring the King to the temple and Simeon takes the baby he says in Luke 2:28-32, [28] *he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, [29] "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; [30] for my eyes have seen your salvation [31] that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, [32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*

This the One whose light searched out the nations of the Gentiles from Galilee around the world, [19] *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:19-20).

I don't know where you are right now and perhaps there are some reading this that are seeking. Praise God! The darkness of hell which is absolute isolation that Jesus defeated means that there will be no relationships in hell so those who say 'I'm just going to hell with my friends don't understand what it will be like. That is why the Bible uses 'darkness, darkness,' "the blackness of darkness," "the outer darkness," "the isolation of darkness" to describe hell. Even the felt presence of God that you are enjoying right now that keeps your sanity will be lost in hell. Don't go there.

There is One who has swallowed up that darkness for you and will dispel it with the light of His love and grace for you. He dismisses God's justice because He satisfies it. He has removed God's wrath because He has swallowed it up for you to the last drop. So why will you die in darkness for eternity when you can know Him who will never leave you nor forsake you

and who will bring you to be with Him. He is the glorious Warrior, the glorious King. We almost want to shout ‘hail Caesar’ but we don’t for its Christmas and a Child has been born for you, not for Mary and Joseph, for you that you might live. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, by Your Spirit speak to our hearts. Perhaps there are some reading this that You are calling from darkness to the Kingdom of Light, to the light of the Gospel to know that Jesus went to a cross to defeat all of our enemies – sin, death, hell, Satan, the grave and the darkness of sin – so that we can everlasting life in Him, joy abounding and an increasing of this Kingdom throughout the world. So that we can see what You doing and we know the battle has been won for soul. The Savior now rules and reigns and all authority has been given to Him on heaven and on earth. God our God would You so move that those who don’t know You today would come to You now, You who came for them. You came to bring the Light of salvation and to defeat all of our enemies, even our sin that we might have the triumph of our Redeemer, the salvation of the redeemed and a relationship with Him for now and all eternity. Immanuel, God with us, for I pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Power Point

LIFE TAKEAWAYS FROM ISAIAH

The Former Times

The Latter Times

Post Tenebrae Lux–Out of Darkness, Light

The rule and reign of sin’s darkness has been irrevocably defeated by Immanuel, our victorious King – the Son of David greater than David – Immanuel – God with us...