

A Light Has Dawned

December 9, 2018

DAY 1: Living in darkness

1. One of the great prophecies of the Messiah's coming is found in Isaiah 9. One of the images Isaiah uses is that of light and darkness.

Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

2. Isaiah describes people "walking in darkness." What do you think he means?

3. Isaiah also says that those living "in the land of the shadow of death..." What do you think he means by this image?

4. Are the two images related? How?

John 1:5 (RSV) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

5. The apostle John uses the same darkness imagery to describe our world, and the image of light to describe the coming of Jesus.

6. What affect can Jesus have on darkness?

7. As you reflect on your life, when have you experienced darkness?

8. How did Jesus, the light, make a difference?

DAY 2: Human darkness understood

When Isaiah says that the people were living in darkness, what does he mean? The bible uses the analogy of darkness to describe two traits of our human nature.

Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

1. There is an **evil** component to darkness.

John 3:19 (RSV) And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

a. Notice how John describes darkness. It is not “just” that we do evil. What else does he say about our darkness?

b. What strikes you about “loving” darkness? What is John saying about us?

2. There is a “knowledge” component related to darkness.

Proverbs 4:19 (RSV) The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

a. It is similar to foolishness. What we think will fix us doesn’t work for very long. We don’t understand the dynamics that drive us.

b. We cannot figure out what to do with our human nature. All our “solutions” fall short of fixing human nature.

Isaiah 8:21 Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God.

²² Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

3. Isaiah goes on to describe the effects of darkness on us. These are watershed verses, giving us keen insight into the fallen human heart. Below, list each component Isaiah notes.

4. What strikes you darkness? Is there something you see in yourself where the light of Christ can still help you?

DAY 3: What is the light? WHO is the light?!

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

1. The Christian message is the most realistic message about life and our human nature.
 - a. There is darkness. It lies within the human heart.
 - b. Human efforts to deal with darkness will not work.
 - c. But, there is hope.
 - d. We must turn to God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Isaiah 9:2 "...on those living in darkness, a light has dawned."

2. What is this light that dawns? Is it knowledge? Understanding? A new ethic? Philosophy?

*Isaiah 9:6 For to us **a child is born**, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

3. The light isn't a philosophy or knowledge. The light isn't wisdom or a new ethic. The light is a child! The light is embodied!

John 8:12 (RSV) Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

4. The light that God gives is Jesus Christ. He is the One who can dispel the darkness that lies in our human heart!

5. What strikes you about today's devotional?

DAY 4: Messiah is the way, the truth, the life

John 14:6 (RSV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.

1. Jesus is our "life."

a. Jesus is talking about more than physical life and death.

b. He is talking about spiritual life and death. Spiritual death is the inevitable results of living without God at the center of our lives. We cut ourselves off from the spiritual life we were meant to enjoy.

c. Spiritual death includes the futile search for personal meaning beyond "peace" and "affluence." Spiritual death includes addictive behavior, desires out of proportion to what they are supposed to be, a gnawing discontent that nothing can eradicate, guilt, shame, wondering "who am I?" and the frustrating pattern of being unable to change my nature.

2. Jesus is the "truth."

a. He shows us the truth about God, about human nature, about ourselves, about relationships, and about how life works.

b. He gives us understanding to see ourselves and God more clearly, and to be able to help the process of change from self-centered person to a God-centered, and other-centered person, just like Christ!

1 John 1:5 (RSV) This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth;

3. Jesus is the "way."

Psalm 119:105 Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

a. God's word lights our path, showing us where to walk,

b. And makes us alert to life's pitfalls and quicksand.

4. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Understanding the Light (Jesus)

*Isaiah 9:6 ...for to us **a child is born**, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

1. The astounding story of the gospel is that God sent His only Son to become a human being, without Jesus relinquishing His deity. In today's verses, Isaiah makes sure we understand that the Messiah is God, come in the flesh! He uses four descriptions of the Messiah that are all related to God's deity.

2. Next to each name, jot down what strikes you about Jesus.

a. Wonderful Counselor--

b. Mighty God—

c. Everlasting Father--

d. Prince of Peace—

3. As we finish up this week, what did you learn about:

a. The darkness in your heart?

b. The light that God sent for us?