

The Dawn of Messiah – *Isaiah 9:2*

Introduction – “It is noteworthy that the clearest promises of the Messiah have been given in the darkest hours of history” – Spurgeon. This verse in Isaiah comes during a very dark time in Israel’s history, but this was only a foreshadowing of a much darker time for Israel in its future. And so Matthew, according to the instruction he received from Jesus and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sees this verse, and Isaiah’s contemporary situation, in light of the gospel of Jesus. For the dawn of the Messiah is certainly the Light of the world.

The Text – *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.*

The Shadow of Death – The context in Isaiah’s day is the grim warning upon Israel and Judah that they will be invaded by Assyria. Many are following mediums and wizards rather than the testimony of Yahweh (8:19). Because they seek the dead rather than the living, they are told they will never see the light of day (8:22). Just as Isaiah prophesies in 9:1, Zebulun, Naphtali, and the region of Galilee in the far north are the first to be carried off into captivity (2 Kings 15:29) and the first to be resettled with Gentiles (2 Kings 17:24-27). The region of the Sea of Galilee is inhabited with Gentiles. Yet God promises that out of her will come forth a great light.

The Fishers of Men (Matt 4:15-16) – While Jesus had been baptized south in the Jordan River, he returns to Galilee because Herod had imprisoned John (4:12). This becomes the place of the beginnings of Jesus’ public ministry. The light dawns in the semi-Jewish north of Zebulun and Galilee; and this is another “condemnation upon the Judean king, Herod the king of darkness and, behind him, the devil” - *Leithart*. In this dark area Jesus calls His first disciples and proclaims to these fishermen that they will be “fishers of men” (4:19). The area that had suffered the most under the earlier attacks by the Syrians and later Assyria becomes the starting place of the greatest blessing to the world: the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Out of Darkness Comes the Dawn – It’s this way every morning. The darkest hour precedes the coming dawn. It may be that your life is in a time of great despair and grief. Is there any hope of light coming from such darkness? Galilee had been determined to be such a worthless place that no one expected a prophet to come from there (John 7:52). Unbelief, disobedience, thanklessness, unrepentance – these things drive a person deep into darkness, dead to the Words of God. The consequences of our sin can lead to despair; the setbacks caused by the devil can lead to hopelessness. How can anything good come of my life? “*The great God is good at a dead lift; whom everything else has failed, the lover of omnipotence can lift a world of sin*” – Spurgeon. “*Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon His God*” (Isaiah 50:10). Christ meets us where we are, not where we were supposed to be.

The Dawn of the Messiah – Jesus came into a world of darkness and He came as Light (John 1:6-13). Those who thought they were walking in the light were the ones most likely to reject Jesus. This included both those lost in deviant sins and the upstanding, self-righteous, religious-types who were building their own roads to heaven. The rejection of the Messiah brought about His crucifixion. But His death, burial, and resurrection were the instruments by which Christ ultimately goes from dawn to bright-shining Day (Acts 2:22-24). The Light was always to go to the entire world (Luke 2:32).

Lights of the Messiah (Matt 5:14-16) – Now, we are also the light of the world. God has determined to make the church a city set on a hill, one which cannot be hidden. All of history swirls around the purpose of the church and the work of the gospel. Scripture over and over gives us a picture of The City on the Mountain as the place of refuge. It is also the place of dominion and world conquest. It is the place of community, culture and society – where we really learn how to live. This City cannot be hidden. When the church acts sinfully and foolishly, she is like a woman hiding her lamp under a basket. Instead, our mission to the world around us is to “*let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*” (v16).

Clean Fellowship/Bright Lights (1 John 1:5-7) – As we walk in this light, we develop a community and sanctuary of fellowship and forgiveness given to us by our Savior. This comes in and around any darkness which the world and the devil may bring.

In the Midst of the Darkness – In days of political, societal, ecclesiastical darkness, what have we been taught to think and expect? With our eyes set upon the Light of the world, we can say in our darkest hours, “Perfect: we have them just where we want them.”