

Light Has Dawned: The Light We Need

Isaiah 8:19-9:2

12/6/2025

Test

Scripture

Isaiah 8:19-9:2 (NKJV) [19] And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? [20] To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. [21] They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. [22] Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness. [1] Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. [2] 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.

Introduction:

Illustration

When I moved to Missouri in the dead of winter, I knew we were in for some changes from California. Over the years, I've slowly adapted to the colder weather and learned to brace myself for the sudden shifts between rain, snow, sunshine, and wind (oh, the wind!). But even after all this time, there's one thing that gets me every single year: that moment when fall slips into winter and the time change makes it feel like midnight at 5:30. You know exactly what I'm talking about. Someone in the house asks, "What should we have for dinner?" and you're thinking, "Isn't it almost tomorrow?" Nope. It's only 5:30! And for whatever reason, that early darkness hits differently. The cold feels colder. The nights feel longer. Life feels a little more drained of joy, energy, and hope.

Now, I realize this sounds like a dismal way to start a Christmas series. Isn't Christmas about rejoicing, hope, salvation, and life? Absolutely. But when Christmas happened, the world was not in that state. The reason the light of Christmas was so bright is that the darkness of sin and despair was so thick in the atmosphere.

And the sad reality is that every life without the light of Christ is one stuck in a perpetual early sunset, sensing that things ought to be better, but never quite arriving there. That physical darkness mirrors something deeper, something spiritual. Something every honest soul has felt at some point: a heaviness, a confusion, a longing for clarity and purpose; an ache that the world isn't what it was meant to be... and if we're honest, neither are we.

This is why Christmas doesn't start with celebration; it starts with longing. It starts with a world in the dark, waiting for the first streak of sunlight to pierce the horizon. As one of our most beloved Christmas carols so accurately records:

Long lay the word in sin and error pining
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth

2,000 years ago, in a stone manger in the middle of nowhere, eternal Light crossed the horizon between time and eternity, heaven and earth. The Light of Life—the Light of the World—pierced our darkness and began a new day for humanity.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Christmas is when heaven's greatest light touched earth's greatest darkness.

And that's what this series is all about: Light Has Dawned.

Over the next three weeks, we're going to trace the Bible's great contrast between light and darkness—a theme woven from Genesis to Revelation, from "Let there be light" to "The Lord is its everlasting light."

Week One: The Light We Need
Week Two: The Light Has Come
Week Three: The Light We Bear

Today, we begin where the Bible begins, with honesty: with the darkness that lives not just "out there," but inside every human heart.

Every one of us has to beware the darkness—the spiritual darkness that seeks to cloud our vision and forward progress with God. Darkness can take many forms.

There is moral darkness: anything that seeks to move us from holiness to sin. There is spiritual darkness: any influence that seeks to move us from truth to error. There is emotional darkness: any feeling that seeks to move us from stability to chaos. There is mental darkness: any thought that seeks to move us from clarity to confusion.

And for every person, the solution is the light of life. The light of truth. The light of Jesus.

Scripture

[Psalm 139:12] (NKJV) [12] Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

Main Point

Point 1

The Darkness Around Us Is Real

Isaiah steps into a cultural moment in Israel that doesn't look pretty.

He writes to a nation that had rejected God's voice and turned to every other source of guidance: spiritual/religious counterfeits, political alliances, and human wisdom.

The result of their longing and chasing for an answer wasn't enlightenment. It was thick darkness; a people stumbling, desperate, restless, and spiritually blind.

Isaiah describes them as:

distressed and hungry looking to the earth for answers cursing, raging, confused dwelling "in the land of the shadow of death" -Isa. 9:2

It's one of the bleakest moments in the Old Testament, and yet, it's a mirror of our world today.

You know what's fascinating? We live in the most technologically advanced, information-saturated era in human history. We have answers to nearly anything at our fingertips. We have self-help books, podcasts, therapy apps, life coaches, and influencers promising us our best life now. And yet... depression, anxiety, loneliness, and suicide rates continue to climb.

Why? Because we're looking for light in all the wrong places.

We're asking Siri when we should be seeking our Savior. ChatGPT has become the new wonderful counselor. We're consulting algorithms when we should be opening the Word. We're drowning in worldly information but starving for heavenly revelation.

And here's the convicting part: the church isn't immune to this. How many people in here check their horoscope before they check their Bible? Scroll through social media for an hour, but can't find any focused time to meditate on truth or pray? We say we trust God, but our search history, check balances, and daily decisions often tell us a different story.

The darkness around us is real. But it's only as powerful as we allow it to be in our lives.

Application

The Bible tells us that the entire world is under the sway of the wicked one, Satan. Satan only traverses and transacts in the realm of darkness (He is a liar and there is no truth in him). Unfortunately for the world, he is the master of masquerade. He dresses darkness up in a package that looks like light. Paul the Apostle says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

The reason we see confusion, wickedness, pain, distress, hardened hearts, broken marriages, perversion, and abuses of every kind is because of a deep cloud of darkness that surrounds us.

The culture around us is dark, yet they have believed a falsely contrived light, a Satanic deception. It's a darkness that spreads into every corner of culture and society that isn't illuminated by truth.

Yet, the deception that this darkness is light is strong. We are feeding our children into it. We allow it to settle into our politics. And we often become complicit or apathetic toward its invasion of every corner of our society.

Scripture

Isaiah 5:20 (NKJV) [20] Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

When people walk in their own light or in the light of the world around them, they think they have a flashlight that works, but they are really buying into Satan's illusion. It's like they are walking around with virtual reality glasses over their eyes! And the sad thing is that the more we choose darkness, the more accustomed we become to it. Listen to what Paul describes for those who want to run from the light of Christ.

Scripture

Romans 1:21 (NKJV) [21] because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

The problems are not just the problems around us. The deeper problem isn't the dark world around us — it's the dark world inside us. Brokenness isn't just atmospheric; it's personal.

Main Point

Point 2

The Darkness Within Us Runs Deep

Isaiah's people were not merely victims of darkness; they were participants in it. They were:

Spiritually stubborn Morally confused Self-dependent Resistant to God's counsel

Illustration

Throughout the process of my back injury, I began to notice a constant grimace that I had when I looked in the mirror one day. I was in such constant pain that my face began to contort naturally. I started to wonder if I would have new muscle memory, and my face would always look like I was in pain! This is how things happen when you get into a pattern. Even spiritually, emotionally, and mentally, we can start to develop "muscle memory" patterns based on the pain we decide to carry. When you get into the pattern of walking constantly in darkness, you have a limp, and uncertainty, and "stumbling" that you may not even recognize, but it's become a part of the way you operate.

You would think that if someone stubs their toes enough, trips enough, stumbles enough, gropes around enough, that eventually they might recognize "I'm in the dark!" But here is another problem with the human heart. Not only do we buy the Satanic deception of false light, we create our own light and operate within what seems right to us, rejecting the source of true light.

Scripture

Isaiah 50:10-11 (NKJV) [10] "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. [11] Look, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle yourselves with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled— This you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment."

The summary of Isaiah's point: If people find themselves in darkness, they have two choices:

Trust in the Lord Make their own light

The outcome of trusting the Lord is peace, and the outcome of kindling one's own flame is destruction.

Scripture

[Proverbs 14:12] (NKJV) [12] There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Application

Kindling our own fire means to be led by the dictates and feelings of our own hearts. We create our own truth to live by, then wonder why it yields pain, broken relationships, and bitterness in our lives. We cast God out of our thoughts and then create the light we want. As societies, this has resulted in creating destructive systems like Marxism, Socialism, and Communism; systems that favor manipulative tyrants and despots at the expense of human value, freedom, and prosperity. The “light” that we have kindled says “My body, my choice” while silently destroying another person’s body, who doesn’t have a choice, and wiping out entire generations of image bearers of God. The “light” we have created says “love is love” and “live your truth.” At the same time, Satan stands back and laughs as people mutilate their bodies, medicate themselves to death, become slaves to addiction, make decisions to drive them to depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies, and continue in lifestyles that propagate abuse and trauma. And if that wasn’t enough, we’ve deceived ourselves into thinking that the pain we experience when we walk according to our own light is actually God’s fault!

As Christians, we need to beware this tendency in our own hearts. We will constantly be tempted to walk according to our own wisdom rather than submitting to the authority of God and His word.

Scripture

1 John 1:6-7 (NKJV) [6] If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [7] But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Main Point

Point 3

The Darkness Before Us Is Not Final

And then Isaiah does something stunning. In the middle of this darkness... he speaks a promise.

“Nevertheless, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” (Isaiah 9:1–2)

That word “nevertheless” is the hinge on which the gospel swings. It’s heaven saying: “The darkness is real, but it is not final.”

Illustration

In 1990, a seasoned caver named Gary Lutes took his two young sons into New Trout Cave in West Virginia. At one point, to move more easily through a tight section, he left their emergency bag behind; the bag with extra fuel, a lighter, and a candle. They went deeper into a section called “the Maze,” and then one boy’s light went out. Then the others started to dim. The boys later said they could tell the moment their dad realized they were lost. He started moving too quickly, jerking his head around, panicking while trying to find the way. And then their last lamp died, and the three of them were plunged into absolute darkness. No landmarks. No sense of direction. Just cold rock, darkness, and confusion. For five days they sat there in the dark, wondering if they were ever getting out. They began to hallucinate and conceded that they would most likely die. On day five, they heard two voices. They thought their minds were playing tricks on them. When they realized they were rescuers, Gary recalled, “their lights seemed like a high beam from a car shining in our eyes. I didn’t turn my head away. I looked at it. I loved seeing that light.” But do you see the power of darkness without light? What darkness does? You don’t just lose sight, you lose truth. You can’t tell which way is safe, which way is deadly, which way leads home. And spiritually, that’s the condition Scripture describes when it says we walk in darkness without Christ. But how do we respond to the light of Christmas? Do we love it, or do we turn our heads?

The reality is that, despite the darkness around us and in us, there is a light above us that, 2000 years ago, on the first Christmas, shone into our darkness and brought eternal light and truth into our world.

Here’s what I want you to hear today: Christmas is God refusing to leave us in the cave.

For centuries, humanity sat in spiritual darkness. We tried to make our own light—religion without relationship, rules without redemption, morality without mercy. And every man-made torch eventually flickered and died.

But then—“Nevertheless.”

God stepped into our darkness. Not with a flashlight. Not with a lantern. But with THE Light. His own Son.

And that changes everything.

Scripture

Isaiah 60:2 (NKJV) [2] For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.

Yet, for many, instead of seeing and welcoming that light as the rescue beacon, they act like some people act when a light switch is flipped on after they’ve been in a dark room... turn off that light!

Scripture

John 3:19-20 (NKJV) [19] And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. [20] For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Jesus tells us the truth of the human condition: We love our darkness.

People don't reject Jesus because of a "lack of evidence for God." People don't reject Jesus because He is just one of many potential ways. People don't reject Jesus because He's "Just not for them."

People reject Jesus because only the light of Jesus exposes their sin, reveals they are in darkness, and calls them to repentance. They would much rather suffer in their darkness than allow Jesus to expose their need for salvation, forgiveness, and transformation.

But here's where it gets personal. The light has come. Jesus has entered the world. The question isn't whether there's light available; the question is: what will you do with it?

Because Christmas isn't just a celebration, it's a confrontation.

Whether you know Jesus today or don't, every time we hear the gospel, we're faced with a choice: will we step into the light, or will we retreat further into darkness?

Jesus didn't come to make bad people good. He came to make dead people alive. But you have to be willing to let Him expose what's dead in you first.

And that's scary. Coming into the light means your sin gets exposed. Your pride gets challenged. Your control gets surrendered. Your excuses get stripped away.

But here's the beautiful truth: the Light doesn't come to condemn you. He comes to cleanse you.

The same light that exposes is the same light that heals. The same light that reveals is the same light that redeems. The same light that convicts is the same light that comforts.

Scripture

John 8:12 (NKJV) [12] Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Final Conclusion:

So let me ask you: Are you walking in darkness today?

Maybe you're here, and you've never truly stepped into the light of Christ. You've been religious, but not redeemed. You've attended church, but you've never surrendered your life.

Or maybe you're a believer, but somewhere along the way, you started entertaining darkness again. You've been living in the shadows, and you've forgotten what it feels like to walk in the full brightness of God's presence.

Today is your "nevertheless" moment.

The darkness is real—but it's not final. Not if you'll turn to the Light.