



Isaiah 9:2-7 - 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. ³ You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. ⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

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. ⁷ Of 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.

Jesus Christ is the Light of the World



The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. Amen.

During Christmas time, there is light all around us. Think about it. Take a walk through the Festival of Lights display downtown during the twilight hours and you'll see a spectacular display. As you make your way home at the end of the day, take a glance at the houses in your neighborhood – once a darkened street, now glows with the warmth of thousands of little bulbs, painstakingly untangled, tested, and placed. You'll see fully lighted nativity sets, stars of Bethlehem hanging in the treetops, and patios adorned with enough wattage to guide an airplane safely onto a runway. There's light everywhere this time of year. Even in our church, what once was an open space on the left side of the sanctuary is now graced by a towering tree, decorated with beautiful ornaments and masterfully strung with bright lights. Over the past four weeks, we have been observing the season of Advent, preparing for Christ's coming. You may have noticed – at least our candle lighters did – that each week we lit one more Advent candle, until all were burning. Light is all around us.

But why do we need light? The question is so simple we probably never thought to ask it. Why do we need light? To drive away the darkness. Christmas lights hang on houses and pierce the darkness as a beautiful beacon of holiday cheer. Trees are brought indoors to brighten the dreariness of winter. Advent candles are progressively lighted to dispel the darkness and anticipate the arrival of the One who is the Light of the world. The time has arrived - Arise, shine, for your Light has come! Jesus Christ is the Light of the world.

Isaiah said, **“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.”** Jesus Christ is that Light. The gospel of Matthew says that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by living in Capernaum, a back-water part of the country in Galilee. To understand why this is significant, it might help to put Isaiah's words into context. After the children of Israel had entered the Promised Land, the tribes divided up the land into territories and each tribe lived in their respected place. The territories allotted to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were on the northern border of the Promised land. When enemies and conquerors came to attack Israel, these two tribes were the first to feel the effect. Foreign armies would roll through their land. Their people were the first to be oppressed, their territories were the first to fall. Theirs was a land of darkness. But Jesus came and changed all that. He is the Light which shines in the darkness.

So why is that important for us? We might not be brushed up on our Promised Land geography, but I bet you could confidently state that Manhattan, KS does not fall into the territory of Zebulun or Naphtali. Foreign armies might not roll through our backyards. Yet our world is a world of darkness in desperate need of the true Light. I don't think I'm telling any secrets here when I say that our world can be a pretty dark place. You wish it wouldn't happen with such frequency and certainty, but you turn on the news only to hear about another disaster, another attack, another senseless loss of life. It's a popular refrain for Christian people to lament the terrible condition of the world in which we live. Deterioration of the family structure, human sexuality used as an advertising ploy, corrupt business, and godless politics are just a few of the common grievances. There's no doubt about it – our world is nestled comfortably and hopelessly abysmal darkness. But to see the depths of human darkness, to gaze at the true ugliness and wretchedness of sin, to see how bad and how far-fallen it can get, we need to look no further than this heart right here. My sin, my shortcoming, my darkness in desperate need of the Light.



Darkness is the absence of light. By our sins, we have separated ourselves from the holy God. By nature, we were born in the darkness of sin. By our actions and misplaced priorities, we reveled in darkness, completely helpless to crawl out of that darkness and bring ourselves to the light. But the Light came to us. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, born into our darkness. In the little village of Bethlehem, the Son of God, the Light that shines with the eternal radiance of heaven itself, came to earth as a human baby, born in our darkness so that we may see his marvelous light. On that night of Jesus' birth, we hear the angels rejoicing. We might have expected the angels to weep at seeing the Son of God trade his heavenly throne for a human birth in a stable. Yet they rejoice because the Savior of humanity has been born – a Savior for you. Jesus is born in our darkness.

The dawning of this Light has profound effect. Isaiah puts it this way, **“You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder...You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.”** Jesus Christ was born into our darkness to shatter the yoke of sin and darkness that burdened us. Jesus came to free us from slavery to sin and ultimately death. He came to bring us joy – not a superficial emotional reaction, but joy that springs from profound certainty that a holy God and sinful humankind have been reconciled.

Even though Isaiah lived about 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet spoke with amazing detail and clarity that could only be inspired by God's Holy Spirit. As if Isaiah was standing at the side of the manger, he says, **“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.”** A Child is born, yet this is no ordinary child. The angels of Bethlehem proclaim him to be Christ, the Lord. Look at how Isaiah described him.

As our Wonderful Counselor, Jesus guides us with his Word. Of all the voices vying for our attention and allegiance, the words of our Wonderful Counselor pierce through the noise and nonsense of this world to proclaim the words of eternal life straight to your heart. To the passersby at Bethlehem, Jesus looked like any other baby. But at the same time, he is the Mighty God, come down from heaven to offer his life to pay for the sins of his people. The hands that placed the stars in the sky, now reach for and latch onto the finger of his mother. The God whom heaven and earth could not contain cloisters himself in the womb of a virgin. The light that Jesus came to bring shines with eternal brightness, because he is our Everlasting Father. The Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father takes a step out of eternity and into our world. The eternal Son of God takes on human flesh. Who can understand it?

We don't need to ascend to the heights of heaven to understand the mind of God. In fact, we can't. We don't need to know the mind of God to understand the love of God, which he shows so clearly on Calvary. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, born into our darkness to pay for our sins and our deeds of darkness. This Child described to us in Isaiah 9 would grow up to be the man of sorrows from Isaiah 53. **“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”** By his wounds, we are healed, forgiven, and at perfect peace with God.



Isaiah talks about the peace that Christ brings, **“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.”** In Isaiah’s time, the nation of Israel knew very little about peace. Things were looking bleak for them politically, as foreign armies waited at their doorstep to take them into captivity. The people knew little about spiritual peace because they had forsaken the worship of the Lord. True peace with God was a foreign concept to this idolatrous nation. Then what an astounding statement Isaiah makes: This Child is the Prince of Peace!

What about you? Is life so peaceful and bright for you right now? Are you shadowed by the looming specter of loneliness? Maybe the holiday season tends to bring strife instead of peace and the darkness of depression instead of joy. Remember, that through our Prince of Peace, we can know true peace. He comes to restore what fallen man had lost – a right relationship with God. He comes to conquer sin and darkness and to bring us light that shines with the eternal brightness of our heavenly home. This Christmas, as we welcome our Savior, rejoice in his light that drives away the darkness of sin and death.

So are you surrounded by lights this holiday season? Christmas trees come down sooner or later; those little light bulbs burn out on the strand; even our Advent wreath and candles get put away for another year. But the Light of the world still shines. Through faith in Jesus, we will share in the light that shines with eternal brightness, the heaven our Savior has won for us. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, the Light born in our darkness to bring us to the eternal brightness of life in heaven with him. *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory; the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father full of grace and truth.* Amen.