

More Than a Baby

The Light

Isaiah 9:2-7

December 8, 2019 am

HDBC

A few weeks ago when we brought the Christmas display out to the front lawn a few people realized that we actually have more than one baby Jesus. I quickly explained that we have had the baby stolen a few times. So, we have a backup. I would not want to build my theology around that, but it works for the display.

That baby is pretty important to the display. Even though it is small, it is the centerpiece of everything else out there. **Jan and I have nativities all over our house, from all over the world. The most important part of each display is the baby.** Without the baby there is no nativity. Without Jesus, there is no Christmas. So, it is appropriate that the baby gets a lot of attention.

But I'm afraid some people focus so much on the infancy of Jesus that they miss just who and what He really was. Yes, he was a baby, just as real as you and I were once babies. But he was so much more than a baby. I want to challenge you to look beyond the infancy of Jesus to see who He really is.

He was and is **More Than a Baby**. This Christmas I want us to explore this thought. If Jesus was more than a baby, what was He? The Bible declares that He was the **Light**, the **Savior**, and the **King**. Over the next few weeks we'll look at those three aspects of who Jesus is.

One of the first signs that we have entered the Christmas season is the appearance of lights. Christmas lights begin to pop up on houses, in trees, on businesses. I love it. This is absolutely appropriate, for lights are key part of the Christmas story. **Shepherds** were watching their sheep at night, when suddenly the sky was filled with the glory of God, as an angel announced the birth of Jesus. **Light from a special star** led wise men to the exact location of Jesus, enabling them to worship him and present him with gifts. **John declared** that Jesus was the light who had come into a the darkness of this world.

The first thing God ever declared to be good, was light. It was the first act of creation after God brought into existence the very substance of earth and the universe. It was covered in unacceptable darkness. God spoke light into being. He then declared that it was good. God brought light into the original creation. Jesus brought light into the fallen, broken creation.

Look at Isaiah 9:1-2. You are probably more familiar with verses 6-7 of this chapter. But verses 1-2 are very important. **Read the text.**

This is a prophecy about the coming of the Lord Jesus. This is part of the Christmas story. We know that because Matthew quotes these verses in describing the birth of Jesus (Matt 4:16).

1. The Darkness

In the Bible, darkness refers to both **evil and ignorance**. The light of God's revelation came in a number of ways. His creation declares his presence and His glory. Angels were sometimes sent to deliver messages of truth. But most of the time God used human beings to be his spokesman. Through them he revealed truth that could overcome ignorance. **The light of revelation could solve the problem of ignorance, but not evil.**

Even with divine revelation, the world remains a dark place. God dealt with the original darkness by speaking light into being. But there is another kind of darkness that invaded God's creation. It is spiritual darkness. That came with original sin. From the time Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, every generation of people have walked in spiritual and moral darkness. Physical light could not overcome spiritual darkness. It would take something much more powerful.

So, generation after generation of people experienced the devastation of trying to overcome the darkness that not only surrounded them but was found in their hearts and minds. The story of humanity is one of corruption, failure, deception, violence and every kind of evil. God even called out a particular people to whom and through whom He might reveal His will. He gave them ten primary commandments, and they repeatedly broke each one of them. Even with clear revelation of what was expected, the darkness prevailed.

Then . . . in the year that King Uzziah died, a prophet named Isaiah saw a vision of God, seated on a throne, high and lifted up. Angels were hovering around him, declaring His holiness in spoken words of worship. The foundations of the place trembled as smoke filled the area.

Isaiah was terrified! He knew that he was a sinner in the presence of the holy God. *Darkness in the presence of unapproachable light.* He expected to die, declaring his own sinfulness to God. Then, something happened that changed his life. One of the angels took a burning coal from the altar, touched it to his lips, declaring *your iniquity has been taken away and your sins are forgiven.* WOW! Not what he had expected. Light invaded his heart, driving the darkness from his soul.

But the darkness persisted in his nation. His people were in trouble. They had continued to dishonor God with their lives and to disregard his revelation. Now, they were on the edge of judgment. God needed a spokesman to declare his judgment on the people. Who would go? Isaiah quickly volunteered for the difficult task.

He would tell the people that judgment would indeed come. They would be conquered and taken into exile. Life was going to get worse. Deliverance would not be coming . . . at least not in the way they hoped. Isaiah's message was not encouraging but it was truthful. The immediate future was bleak. It involved judgment, suffering and defeat. Isaiah 8:22 captures it.

*Then they will look to the earth, and behold distress and **darkness**, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into **darkness**.*

What a depressing future. But what Isaiah told them next had the potential to change their outlook, even if not their immediate future. Deliverance was coming, but it would be in the distant future. Isaiah 9:2-7 is that future.

The light was indeed coming. He did not know when, but he knew it would come. The people would not forever walk in the darkness of ignorance and evil. The light which could overcome both was coming . . . in the form of a person, the Messiah. That person was Jesus, born in Bethlehem.

2. The Light

The great need for one walking in darkness is light. Light changes everything. It drives away ignorance and evil.

So much of the uncertainties and mysteries found in the old testament were dispelled with the coming of Jesus. As light illuminates, it clarifies. The same was true of Jesus. No wonder lights are such an important part of our Christmas celebrations.

Young mother found her daughter drawing a picture. She explained that it was a picture of God. Her mother pointed out that no one knows what God looks like. The little girl was undeterred. *They will when I get through!*

This was such an important part of Isaiah's message to his contemporaries. They were about to go through years of captivity and frustration. The days would turn into weeks and months, then years. They would wonder if it would ever end. Isaiah's answer? YES! Those who walk in darkness will **indeed** see a great light. The light will come.

This part of the message was not only meant to give them hope, but to create in them a longing for the light. It would lead them to pray, come, Messiah, come! Oh, how we need the light. They would grow so weary of the darkness that the coming of the light would be the most important thing in their lives.

Isaiah even told them that the Lord would give them a sign. A virgin would give birth to a son and his name would be Immanuel, God with us. This is what it would take to drive away the darkness. The light would be God's son. Think of the implications of this. God would be entering into His creation to fix what people had broken. God would not repair it from a distance. He would come and join with us.

In the fulness of time, God would send His son. He would be born in Bethlehem to the virgin Mary. The light of the star that would lead the wise men would only be a hint at the light that was born in the stable.

John (the apostle) **said this** about Jesus. *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* John (the Baptist) said he came to testify about the light, but that he was not the light. *There was the true Light, which coming into the world enlightens everyone.* The Light was Jesus.

Jesus confirmed this when he announced, *I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.*

There it is. The clear declaration that Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. He is the one they had longed for during those long years of darkness. He came to dispel the darkness of ignorance and of evil. He came to save, not to condemn.

However, many in his day preferred the darkness of their ignorance and evil to the light. They rejected his message and his mission. They preferred the ugliness of their own sin over the sweetness of God's holiness. They saw the light, but said NO. And, they killed him, thinking they could extinguish the light. They put his lifeless body in a cold, dark tomb, assuming that was the end of that. Three days later that tomb was filled with the light of life, as Jesus conquered darkness and death, offering the gift of salvation for those who would believe.

Timothy Keller captures the essence of what it meant for Jesus to enter into the darkness for us and for us to enter into salvation with Christ. Christmas is a time for giving and receiving. **There are some gifts that are hard to receive. Imagine opening a gift from a friend and it is a book about dieting? Or a DVD series on how to overcome selfishness.** To graciously receive those gifts you would have to really humble yourself. There has never been a gift offered that makes you swallow your pride more than the gift of salvation from Jesus.

Like Isaiah's contemporaries we have also walked in darkness and desperately need the light. In our darkness we have to admit that we are sinners and unable to save ourselves. Many are unwilling to do so.

The greatness of Jesus is seen in how far He came down to rescue us. Your spiritual salvation can only happen if you follow a similar path. Jesus descended into the ugliness and darkness of humanity to bring light.

C. S. Lewis captures the essence of the incarnation with these words.

In the Christian story God comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity; down further still. . . down to the very roots and seabed of the Nature He has created. But He goes down to the come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him.

One may think of a diver first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in mid-air, then gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay; then up again, back to color and light, his lungs almost bursting, till suddenly he breaks the surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. At Christmas we must not get swept into the error of only seeing Jesus as an infant. He was that. But He was more . . . He was the Light of the World!

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