

## Introduction

### **A. Opening Activity: Experience the Darkness**

Have you ever been truly in the dark? I don't mean just nighttime—I mean complete, disorienting darkness where you can't see your hand in front of your face. Maybe you've been in a cave when the guide turned off all the lights. Maybe you've experienced a power outage in the middle of the night.

What does that kind of darkness do to you? It makes you vulnerable. Uncertain. A little afraid. You lose your sense of direction. You become acutely aware of how dependent you are on light for even the most basic things—moving, navigating, living.

Now watch what happens when I light just one candle.

Everything changes, doesn't it? Even this small flame pushes back the darkness. You can see faces now. You have your bearings. You have hope.

### **B. The Advent Journey We're Beginning**

Welcome to our three-part Advent study: "The Light of the World." Over these next weeks, we're going to trace one of the most beautiful themes in all of Scripture—the coming of Light into darkness.

The word "Advent" means "coming" or "arrival." We celebrate this season because the Light came. But here's what we often miss: before we can truly appreciate the Light, we must understand just how deep the darkness was.

Today, we're going to do something uncomfortable. We're going to sit in the darkness for a while. We're going to explore what the world was like after the Fall—the spiritual blindness, the moral chaos, the hopelessness, the death. We need to feel the weight of it.

But we're not going to stay there. Because even in the Garden of Eden, moments after sin entered the world, God made a promise. A Light was coming. And for thousands of years,

God's people held onto that promise, waiting in the darkness, scanning the horizon for the first rays of dawn.

## II. The Fall: How Darkness Entered the World

### A. Paradise Lost (Genesis 1-3)

#### 1. The Original Light

Let's go back to the very beginning. Open your Bibles to Genesis 1:3. What is God's first creative act after declaring that the earth was "formless and void" with "darkness over the face of the deep"?

**Genesis 1:3** – *"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."*

Light is God's first gift to creation. Before the sun, moon, and stars were made (that happens on day four), there was light—the glory of God himself illuminating all things. John picks up this theme in his Gospel when he writes: *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men"* (John 1:4).

In the Garden of Eden, humanity lived in unbroken fellowship with the Source of all light. Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day. There was no death, no suffering, no shame, no separation. Just light, life, and love.

#### 2. The Choice That Changed Everything

But then comes Genesis 3. The serpent enters the garden with a simple question that contains the most destructive lie ever told.

#### **Genesis 3:1–7 ESV**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her,

and he ate.<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Notice the irony: the serpent promises that their eyes will be opened, and they are—but what do they see? Their shame. Their nakedness. Their need to hide.

They chose independence over obedience. They chose to define good and evil for themselves rather than trust God's definition. And in that moment, darkness entered the world.

### 3. The Consequences of Darkness

The immediate effect is devastating. Look at [Genesis 3:8-10](#)

#### **Genesis 3:8–10 ESV**

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup> And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

For the first time in human history: **fear, shame, and hiding from God.**

But the consequences go much deeper. God pronounces judgment in [Genesis 3:16-19](#):

- **To the woman:** Pain in childbearing, conflict in marriage
- **To the man:** Toilsome work, frustrated labor, sweat and thorns
- **To both:**— *"For you are dust, and to dust you shall return"* **death enters the world**

But the spiritual consequences are even more severe than the physical ones:

- **Broken fellowship with God** – They're expelled from the Garden, separated from the Tree of Life
- **Broken relationships** – Adam blames Eve, Eve blames the serpent
- **Broken purpose** – What was meant to be joyful stewardship becomes painful toil
- **Broken creation** – Even the ground is cursed because of human sin

## B. Darkness Spreads Beyond Eden

The tragedy doesn't stop with Adam and Eve. Sin spreads like a disease, infecting every generation.

### 1. Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16)

The very next chapter, we see the first murder. Cain kills his own brother out of jealousy and anger. God warns him in Genesis 4:7: "*Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.*" But Cain doesn't rule over it—it rules over him.

### 2. Escalating Evil (Genesis 6:5)

By Genesis 6, just a few chapters later, look at how bad things have gotten:

*"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**"*

Read that again. Every intention. Every thought. Only evil. Continually. The darkness has become so pervasive that God regrets making humanity and sends the flood to judge the earth.

### 3. The Pattern Continues

Even after the flood, the pattern repeats:

- **The Tower of Babel** (Genesis 11) – Human pride and rebellion leading to confusion and scattering
- **Israel's repeated apostasy** – Even God's chosen people, who saw miracles and received the law, constantly turned away from Him
- **The prophets' descriptions** – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel all describe a people walking in spiritual darkness, worshiping idols, oppressing the poor, calling evil good and good evil

## C. What Does This Darkness Look Like?

Let me paint four pictures of what this darkness really means.

### 1. Spiritual Blindness

Darkness means we can't see clearly. We can't perceive spiritual realities. We don't know God as we should.

## **Romans 1:21–23 ESV**

<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

People in darkness worship creation instead of the Creator. They bow down to wood and stone, to power and pleasure, to anything except the true God.

## 2. Moral Confusion

### **Isaiah 5:20 ESV**

<sup>20</sup> 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!

In darkness, we lose our moral compass. We can't tell right from wrong. We justify sin and condemn righteousness. We celebrate what should shame us and shame what should be celebrated.

## 3. Hopelessness and Death

### **Ephesians 2:12 ESV**

<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world.**

No hope. That's what darkness ultimately produces. If there's no God, no judgment, no redemption, then there's no meaning. We're just accidents waiting to die and return to dust.

**Romans 6:23** – *"For the wages of sin is death..."*

Death—physical, spiritual, eternal—is the final consequence of sin. And every human being born after Adam inherits this death sentence.

## 4. Bondage

### **John 8:34 ESV**

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

We're not just victims in darkness—we're prisoners. We're enslaved to sin patterns we can't break, to fears we can't shake, to idols we can't resist. We try to be good, and we fail. We make resolutions, and we break them. We're trapped.

This is the world after the Fall. This is the darkness. Spiritual blindness, moral confusion, hopelessness, death, and bondage.

**Discussion Question:** *Before we move on, let me ask: Can you feel the weight of this? Does this description of darkness resonate with what you know about the world? About your own heart before Christ?*

## III. The First Glimmer: The Promise in the Garden

### A. Genesis 3:15 – The Protoevangelium (First Gospel)

But here's the amazing thing: God doesn't leave humanity in darkness without hope. In fact, the very first promise of a Redeemer comes in the very same chapter as the Fall.

Right there in Genesis 3, in the midst of pronouncing judgment, God turns to the serpent and says something absolutely remarkable.

#### 1. God Speaks to the Serpent

##### **Genesis 3:14–15 ESV**

<sup>14</sup> The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> **I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**”

This is called the *protoevangelium*—the “first gospel.” It's the first announcement of good news in the Bible, and it comes before Adam and Eve even leave the Garden.

#### 2. What This Promise Meant

Let's unpack what God is saying here:

**“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers...”**

There will be a cosmic conflict between the serpent's descendants (those who follow evil) and the woman's descendants (those who follow God). This isn't just about snakes and humans—it's about a spiritual war.

**"He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."**

Notice the shift from "offspring" (plural) to "he" (singular). One specific descendant of the woman will crush the serpent's head—a fatal blow. But in doing so, the serpent will bruise his heel. The cost for victory will be the Redeemer.

Who is this descendant? The entire Old Testament is the story of God preserving a family line through which this promised Seed will come. And the New Testament reveals His identity: **Jesus Christ**, born of a woman, who crushed Satan's power through His death and resurrection, though it cost Him greatly.

**Galatians 4:4** – *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, **born of woman**, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."*

**Colossians 2:15** – *"He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."*

### 3. The First Reason to Hope

Do you see what this means? Even in the moment of judgment, God provides hope. Humanity isn't abandoned in darkness. God Himself promises to provide the solution.

The Light is promised before they even leave the Garden.

This is grace. This is mercy. This is the heart of God—He pursues rebels, He makes promises to sinners, He lights a candle in the darkness and says, "Help is coming."

## **B. God's Mercy Demonstrated Immediately**

But God doesn't just make a promise—He immediately begins to demonstrate what redemption looks like.

### 1. Covering Their Shame (Genesis 3:21)

#### **Genesis 3:21 ESV**

<sup>21</sup> And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Think about what Adam and Eve did when they realized they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together—a human attempt to cover their shame. But fig leaves don't last. They wilt, they tear, they're inadequate.

So what does God do? He makes garments of animal skins. Which means **an animal had to die**. Blood had to be shed. An innocent creature had to pay the price for their sin so they could be covered.

This is the first sacrifice in Scripture. And it points directly to the ultimate sacrifice—the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

## 2. The Pattern of Sacrifice Begins

From this moment on, sacrifice becomes the pattern for approaching God:

- **Abel's offering** (Genesis 4:4) – Abel brings the firstborn of his flock, and God accepts it
- **Noah's altar** (Genesis 8:20) – After the flood, Noah builds an altar and offers burnt offerings
- **Abraham and Isaac** (Genesis 22:8) – When Isaac asks where the lamb is, Abraham prophesies: *"God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son"*
- **Passover** (Exodus 12) – The blood of a lamb on the doorposts protects from the angel of death
- **Temple sacrifices** (Leviticus) – An entire system of sacrifices pointing forward to something greater

All of these are signposts, pointing forward to the ultimate Lamb who would come and offer Himself once for all.

**John 1:29** – When John the Baptist sees Jesus, he declares: *"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

God covers what we cannot cover. God provides what we cannot provide. This is the first glimmer of light in the darkness—a promise and a pattern of redemption.

**Discussion Question:** *Why do you think God instituted this pattern of sacrifice? What does it teach us about the seriousness of sin and the cost of redemption?*



## IV. Growing Anticipation: The Prophets Speak

### A. The Promise Develops Through History

The promise made in Genesis 3:15 doesn't stay vague. As the centuries unfold, God progressively reveals more and more details about the coming Redeemer. It's like watching a photograph slowly develop in a darkroom—the image becomes clearer and clearer.

#### 1. To Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 22:18)

Around 2000 BC, God calls Abraham and makes him an incredible promise:

**Genesis 12:3** – *"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

**Genesis 22:18** – *"...and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."*

Notice: the blessing will come through Abraham's "offspring" (singular in Hebrew). This isn't just about the nation of Israel—it's about one specific descendant who will bless all nations.

**Galatians 3:16** – Paul connects the dots: *"Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ."*

#### 2. To Judah (Genesis 49:10)

Jacob, on his deathbed, blesses his twelve sons. When he comes to Judah, he says:

**Genesis 49:10** – *"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."*

The promised Seed will come from the tribe of Judah. He will be a King. And the nations will obey Him.

#### 3. To David (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

Around 1000 BC, God makes a covenant with King David:

**2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16** – *"When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom"*

*forever... And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."*

The Messiah will be a descendant of David. He will establish an eternal kingdom. This is why the Gospels are so careful to trace Jesus' genealogy back to David.

**Matthew 1:1** – *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."*

## **B. The Prophets Paint the Picture with Increasing Detail**

Between David (1000 BC) and the birth of Christ, God raises up prophets who provide stunning detail about the coming Messiah. Let's look at the most important prophecies.

### **1. Isaiah: The Prophet of the Messiah**

Isaiah, writing around 700 BC, gives us the clearest and most detailed prophecies about the Messiah. His writings are sometimes called "the fifth Gospel" because his descriptions are so vivid.

*a. Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 – The Light Prophecy*

This is the centerpiece of our study. Listen to these words:

**Isaiah 9:2** – *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; those dwelling in the land of deep darkness, on them has light shone."*

There it is—the darkness we've been talking about, and the promise of light! But Isaiah doesn't stop there.

**Isaiah 9:6-7** – *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."*

Let's break this down:

- **"A child is born"** – He will be fully human, born as a baby
- **"A son is given"** – He will be a gift from God, not earned by us
- **"The government shall be upon his shoulder"** – He will be a King

- **His names:**
  - **Wonderful Counselor** – He brings wisdom and guidance
  - **Mighty God** – He is fully divine
  - **Everlasting Father** – He is eternal, caring for His people
  - **Prince of Peace** – He brings reconciliation and rest
- **"Of his government and peace there will be no end"** – His kingdom is eternal
- **"On the throne of David"** – He's David's descendant
- **"The zeal of the Lord will do this"** – God Himself will accomplish it

This is breathtaking! Isaiah is telling people in darkness that a Light is coming—and that Light will be both fully human ("a child is born") and fully divine ("Mighty God").

*b. Isaiah 7:14 – The Virgin Birth*

**Isaiah 7:14** – *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."*

"Immanuel" means "God with us." The Messiah won't just represent God or speak for God—He will BE God dwelling with His people.

**Matthew 1:22-23** – Matthew sees this fulfilled in Jesus: *"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)."*

*c. Isaiah 11:1-10 – The Righteous King*

**Isaiah 11:1-2** – *"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."*

Jesse was David's father. Even if David's dynasty seems dead (a "stump"), new life will spring forth. The Messiah will be filled with God's Spirit.

**Isaiah 11:6, 9** – *"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat... They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."*

The Messiah won't just save individuals—He will restore all of creation. The effects of the Fall will be reversed.

d. Isaiah 53 – *The Suffering Servant*

This is perhaps the most stunning prophecy in the Old Testament. It describes a Messiah who suffers and dies for the sins of others.

**Isaiah 53:3-6** – *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

This is substitutionary atonement, prophesied 700 years before Christ. The Messiah will:

- Be despised and rejected
- Bear our griefs and sorrows
- Be pierced for our transgressions
- Be crushed for our iniquities
- Take the punishment that brings us peace
- Have our sins laid on Him

**Isaiah 53:10-11** – *"Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."*

After suffering and death, He will see His "offspring"—those He has redeemed. He will "prolong his days"—resurrection! He will "make many to be accounted righteous"—justification through His sacrifice.

e. Isaiah 60:1-3 – Arise, Shine!

**Isaiah 60:1-3** – *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."*

Again, the darkness/light imagery. The world is covered in thick darkness, but God's glory will shine through His Messiah, and even the Gentile nations will be drawn to this light.

## 2. Micah 5:2 – The Birthplace

Around the same time as Isaiah, the prophet Micah gives a very specific detail:

**Micah 5:2** – *"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."*

The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, a tiny, insignificant town. Yet His "coming forth" is "from of old, from ancient days"—He is eternal.

When the Magi come asking Herod where the Messiah would be born, the scribes immediately point to this prophecy (Matthew 2:5-6).

## 3. Malachi 4:2 – The Sun of Righteousness

Malachi is the last prophet before 400 years of silence. His final prophecy contains beautiful light imagery:

**Malachi 4:2** – *"But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall."*

The Messiah is the "sun of righteousness" bringing healing. After the long night of darkness, the dawn is coming.

## 4. Daniel 7:13-14 – The Son of Man

Daniel, writing during the Babylonian exile, has a vision:

**Daniel 7:13-14** – *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages*

*should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*

The Messiah will be "like a son of man" (human) but will come "with the clouds of heaven" (divine). He will receive an eternal, universal kingdom.

Jesus frequently refers to Himself as "the Son of Man," connecting Himself to this prophecy.

## **C. What the Prophecies Revealed**

### **1. Who He Would Be**

The prophecies tell us the Messiah would be:

- **Fully God** – "Mighty God," "Everlasting Father," with eternal origins
- **Fully human** – Born of a woman, a descendant of Abraham, Judah, and David
- **Spirit-anointed** – Filled with wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might

### **2. What He Would Do**

The Messiah would:

- **Bring light to those in darkness** ([Isaiah 9:2](#))
- **Suffer for our sins** ([Isaiah 53](#))
- **Crush the serpent** ([Genesis 3:15](#))
- **Establish an eternal kingdom** ([2 Samuel 7](#); [Daniel 7](#))
- **Bring peace and righteousness** ([Isaiah 9:7](#))
- **Heal and restore** ([Malachi 4:2](#); [Isaiah 11](#))
- **Bless all nations** ([Genesis 12:3](#))

### **3. How We Would Recognize Him**

The prophecies were specific enough to identify Him:

- Born in Bethlehem
- Born of a virgin

- From David's line
- Anointed with the Spirit
- Teaching with authority
- Performing miracles
- Suffering and dying
- Rising again

But they were also mysterious enough to require faith. How could He be both suffering servant and conquering king? How could He be both human and divine? The full picture wouldn't be clear until He came.

**Discussion Question:** *Which of these prophecies is most meaningful to you? Which one increases your appreciation for who Jesus is?*

## V. The Long Wait: Living in Expectation

### A. The Silent Years

#### 1. 400 Years of Prophetic Silence

After Malachi, around 400 BC, the prophetic voice goes silent. No more prophets. No more revelations. Just the written promises, passed down from generation to generation.

Can you imagine? Your grandparents told you about the promised Messiah. Your parents told you. You tell your children. But He hasn't come. Century after century passes.

The darkness seems to deepen. The waiting becomes harder.

#### 2. Israel Under Oppression

And it's not just spiritual darkness—it's political darkness too.

- **Babylonian exile** (586-539 BC) – Jerusalem destroyed, temple burned, people taken captive
- **Persian rule** (539-332 BC) – Allowed to return but under foreign control
- **Greek domination** (332-167 BC) – Cultural pressure to abandon Jewish faith

- **Roman occupation** (63 BC onward) – Heavy taxation, brutal military presence

Generation after generation lives under the thumb of foreign powers. When is the King coming who will free them? When is David's son going to sit on David's throne?

### 3. The Faithful Remnant

But even in the silence, even in the darkness, there were those who held on to the promises. The Gospels introduce us to some of them:

**Luke 2:25-26** – *"Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ."*

Simeon was **waiting**. His whole life oriented around the hope that he would see the Messiah.

**Luke 2:36-38** – *"And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem."*

Anna spent decades in the temple, fasting and praying, waiting for "the redemption of Jerusalem."

These are the faithful remnant—those who refused to give up hope, who scanned the Scriptures, who prayed for the promises to be fulfilled.

## B. The Anticipation Builds

### 1. Every Baby Boy – Could This Be Him?

Can you imagine being a young mother in Bethlehem, holding your newborn son? You know the prophecy—the Messiah will be born here. Could your baby be the one?

Could this be the child who will crush the serpent's head? Could this be the light who will scatter the darkness?

For centuries, every generation wondered: Will we be the ones to see Him?



## 2. The Promises Were Specific Enough to Recognize

The beauty of these prophecies is that they gave Israel clear markers to look for:

- Birthplace: Bethlehem
- Family line: Descended from Abraham, Judah, and David
- Manner of birth: Born of a virgin
- Signs: Spirit-anointed, teaching with authority, healing the sick, proclaiming good news to the poor

When the Messiah came, they would know Him.

## 3. The Promises Were Mysterious Enough to Require Faith

And yet, there were paradoxes:

- How can He be both eternal God and a baby born in time?
- How can He be both suffering servant ([Isaiah 53](#)) and conquering king ([Daniel 7](#))?
- How can He be "cut off" ([Daniel 9:26](#)) yet reign forever ([Isaiah 9:7](#))?

The prophecies required faith, not just intellectual comprehension. The full picture wouldn't make sense until God revealed it.

## C. Why the Wait Was Necessary

Looking back, we can see why God waited thousands of years between the promise and the fulfillment.

### 1. God's Perfect Timing ([Galatians 4:4](#))

**Galatians 4:4** – *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law..."*

"The fullness of time"—God's perfect timing. By the time Jesus was born:

- **Roman roads** connected the known world, allowing the gospel to spread rapidly
- **Pax Romana** (Roman peace) meant relatively safe travel

- **Greek language** (Koine Greek) was the common language, allowing the New Testament to be written and distributed widely
- **Jewish diaspora** meant synagogues in every major city, providing launching points for the gospel

God orchestrated history so that when the Light came, it could spread to the ends of the earth.

## 2. The Wait Increased the Longing

Think about it: if the Messiah had come immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, would they have appreciated Him the same way?

The centuries of darkness, of slavery, of exile, of oppression—they created a desperate longing. By the time Jesus arrived, the cry of God's people was urgent: "**How long, O Lord?**"

The wait taught Israel (and us) that we cannot save ourselves. No law, no king, no prophet, no effort can fix what sin broke. Only God can rescue us.

## 3. The Wait Proved Human Solutions Fail

Israel tried everything:

- **The Law** – God gave them perfect commandments, but they couldn't keep them (Romans 3:20)
- **Kings** – From Saul to David to Solomon to the divided kingdom, every human king failed
- **Prophets** – They called the people back to God, but the people kept rebelling
- **Human effort** – No amount of sacrifice, ritual, or moral improvement could eliminate sin

By the first century, it was clear: **only God Himself could save us.**

And that's exactly what He did.

# VI. Application: Our Darkness, Our Anticipation

So what does all this mean for us? We're not ancient Israelites waiting for the Messiah—He's already come! But this story still speaks powerfully to us in at least three ways.

## A. We Were Once in the Same Darkness

### 1. Before Christ, We Walked in Darkness

Every single person in this room was born into the same darkness that covered the world after the Fall.

**Ephesians 2:1-3** – *"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."*

Dead. Walking in trespasses. Following Satan. Children of wrath. That was us.

**Colossians 1:13** – *"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son..."*

We were in the "domain of darkness."

**1 Peter 2:9** – *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."*

Out of darkness. Into light.

### 2. Personal Reflection Questions

Take a moment and think about this:

- **What was your life like before Christ?** What did that darkness look like for you?
- **What darkness did you experience?** Hopelessness? Guilt? Fear? Emptiness? Addiction? Broken relationships?
- **How did you try to create your own "light"?** What did you turn to for meaning, purpose, security? Achievements? Relationships? Substances? Success? Control?

We all sewed our own fig leaves. None of them lasted.

## B. The World Still Walks in Darkness

### 1. The Same Spiritual Blindness Exists Today

Even though the Light has come, most of the world is still walking in darkness.

**2 Corinthians 4:4** – *"In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*

People are still searching for meaning in all the wrong places. Still worshiping idols. Still enslaved to sin. Still blind to spiritual reality.

### 2. Modern Manifestations of Darkness

Look around at our world:

- **Isolation and loneliness** despite being more digitally "connected" than ever
- **Anxiety and depression** at epidemic levels
- **Violence and injustice** – wars, oppression, human trafficking
- **Broken families** – divorce, fatherlessness, abuse
- **Addiction** – to substances, technology, work, approval
- **Fear of death** and the meaninglessness that comes with a godless worldview
- **Moral confusion** – calling evil good and good evil, just like Isaiah warned

The darkness is still here.

### 3. Our Response

How should we respond to people still in darkness?

**With compassion.** We were once there too. The Light found us.

**With urgency.** People are dying in darkness. They need to hear about the Light.

**With hope.** The same God who rescued us can rescue anyone. No one is too far gone. The Light is powerful enough to penetrate any darkness.

## C. Cultivating Advent Anticipation in Our Lives

### 1. During This Season

Advent is a season of waiting and anticipation. Here's how to enter into it:

- **Slow down.** Resist the frantic pace of the commercial Christmas season. Be intentional about creating space for reflection.
- **Read the prophecies.** Spend time in Isaiah, Micah, Malachi. Let the anticipation build.
- **Practice gratitude.** Thank God that the wait is over—the Light has come! We're not in darkness anymore.
- **Remember: We're still waiting.** Jesus came once as a baby in Bethlehem. He's coming again as the King of Kings. Advent prepares us for both.

### 2. The Art of Waiting on God

The Israelites waited centuries for God to fulfill His promise. What are you waiting for God to do in your life?

- Healing from an illness?
- Reconciliation in a relationship?
- Provision for a need?
- An answer to a prayer you've been praying for years?

How can you wait with **hope** rather than anxiety? How can you trust God's timing like the faithful remnant did?

**Isaiah 40:31** – *"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."*

### 3. Living as People of Hope

We have something the world doesn't: **certain hope.**

We know how the story ends. The Light wins. The darkness is defeated. Death is swallowed up in victory.

The same God who kept His promise the first time will keep all His promises. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion (Philippians 1:6).

**1 Peter 3:15** – *"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."*

Live with such hope, such joy, such confidence that people ask you why. And then tell them: **"The Light has come. His name is Jesus."**

## **VII. Closing: The Light Is Coming!**

### **A. The Hope of Advent**

For thousands of years, God's people waited in darkness. But they didn't wait without hope.

They had God's promises. They had the prophecies. They had the pattern of sacrifice. They had the faithful witness of those who had gone before.

And they believed that one day, the Light would come.

**We know He did.**

But here's the beautiful thing about Advent: we get to enter into that anticipation. We get to remember what it was like to long for the Messiah. We get to feel the weight of the darkness so we can truly appreciate the Light.

And we get to live in the tension of the "already but not yet." The Light has come—but we're waiting for Him to come again.

### **B. Transition to Next Week**

Next week, we're going to celebrate the most glorious moment in history: **The Light arrives.**

The baby in Bethlehem. The Word made flesh. God dwelling among us. The fulfillment of every promise, the answer to every longing, the light that darkness could not overcome.

### **C. Challenge for the Week**

I want to give you three challenges this week:

### **1. Read Isaiah.**

Read one chapter each day from these key chapters: Isaiah 7, 9, 11, 40, 42, 53, 60. Read slowly. Let the prophecies sink in.

### **2. Journal.**

As you read, write down your reflections. How do these prophecies increase your appreciation for Jesus? What do they reveal about God's heart? What longings do they stir in you?

### **3. Pray.**

Pray for someone you know who is still walking in darkness. Pray that the Light would shine in their life. And ask God to use you as a light bearer.

Next week: **The Light arrives!**