

## Isaiah 60 | Glory in the Ashes

**Big Idea:** The resurrection light of Jesus turns shattered people into radiant witnesses.

**Texts:** Isaiah 60:1-5, 18-22, Ephesians 5:14, Revelation 21:23.

Today, we continue in our series, “The Servant King” where we have been looking for Jesus in Isaiah. And a few sermons ago, we saw the moment when the light first broke into the darkness. But in Isaiah 60, the prophet shows us what happens after the light arrives—God’s people begin to shine, and the nations are drawn to it.

### INTRODUCTION | Your City in Ashes

Imagine walking through the ruins of your city. The walls that once protected you are broken. This building, burned to ashes. Homes are empty. Streets are quiet. Your leaders are gone. Your children have been carried away.

Your future feels like smoke rising from the ashes.

For God’s people, this wasn’t imagination. It was reality. Jerusalem had fallen. The nation was scattered in exile.

And the people who once believed they were chosen by God now wondered if the light had gone out forever. They were standing in the ashes of everything they thought their life with God would be. And into that darkness, God speaks a shocking command through the prophet Isaiah:

**“Arise, shine, for your light has come.”** Isaiah 60:1. But before we go into the text, I want to give you one image that will help you read everything Isaiah says this morning as if it were written for you — because it was.

**MOUNTAIN PEAK OF PROPHECY** | Before we move further, I want to give you a picture that helps you find your place in this prophecy. [SHOW IMAGE].

Have you ever stood in a valley looking out at a mountain range? From where you stand, the peaks appear side by side — one continuous ridge. But that’s an illusion. Those peaks may be separated by fifty, even a hundred miles. They only appear simultaneous because your vantage point collapses the distance between them.

This is what Isaiah was doing. Standing in his moment of history, looking forward, he saw multiple fulfillments of God’s promises on the same horizon — the return from exile, the coming of Christ, the spread of the gospel, the final restoration — all appearing as one ridge. He wasn’t wrong. He was standing in the valley.

What God was showing him was a range stretching across thousands of years. The first

peak — **return from exile** — has passed. The final peak — **the new creation** — is still ahead. And we are living somewhere in between, on the mountain itself, between fulfillments.

Which means when Isaiah says in verse 4, "Lift up your eyes and look around" — he is speaking directly to you. Let's read the first couple verses.

## 1 | THE LIGHT THAT AWAKENS THE SHATTERED (Is. 60:1-2)

*Isaiah 60:1-2.*

1 *"Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord rises upon **you**.*

2 *See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the Lord rises upon **you**  
and his glory appears over **you**.*

**Isaiah's world was dark.** That's not a metaphor for him — it was military, political, and spiritual devastation. But notice what he writes: "**darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples.**" Not over Babylon. Not over Jerusalem. Over the earth. Over the peoples — plural, all of them.

This is bigger than one nation's crisis. And it didn't end when Babylon fell.

Scripture uses this metaphor for every generation, because every generation lives between the same two realities — the light that has come in Christ, and the darkness that has not yet fully passed. John opens his gospel with it: the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And Revelation only resolves it at the very end, when the city has no need of sun or moon because God himself is its light.

So when someone says our generation is uniquely dark — they are both right and wrong. Right, because the darkness is real and it is pressing. Wrong, because every generation of God's people has stood in this same tension, looking for the same light.

Now here is where it gets personal. Because when darkness presses in, Christians tend to respond in one of two ways — and neither of them is what God prescribes here.

**The first response is scandal.** We act shocked. We scroll through the news and post about how unbelievable it all is, as if the world were supposed to be something other than what the Bible has always told us it would be. We treat darkness as a malfunction, a deviation from the script. But darkness was never a surprise to God. Isaiah isn't writing in crisis mode. He opens chapter 60 with his eyes wide open — yes, darkness covers the earth — and then, without flinching, he declares hope anyway. Scandal is the

response of someone who forgot what chapter they were living in.

**The second response is retreat.** We don't just mourn the darkness — we flee from it. We build beautiful, well-lit communities of faith and pull the doors shut behind us. We develop a Christian subculture with its own music, its own language, its own calendar — and slowly, almost without noticing, we stop being a light in the world and become a light hidden from it. We form colonies of the saved, not outposts of the kingdom. And the people outside can't see us anymore.

God does neither. He doesn't recoil from the darkness in disbelief. He doesn't retreat from it into some corner of creation. He rises. "But the Lord rises upon you, and his glory appears over you." The light doesn't wait for the darkness to get better before showing up. It rises into the darkness — which is the only place light is ever actually needed, isn't it?

This is not a sermon about how bad things are. But we have to see clearly before we can shine clearly. And one thing the New Testament wants us to see clearly is that Jesus is the Light Isaiah prophesied. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:14,

*14 This is why it is said:*

*“Wake up, sleeper,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”*

Paul is writing to believers here — he's not addressing the unconverted, he's addressing the church. But the language he borrows from Isaiah is universal enough that we can't avoid the wider implication: **if sleeping believers need to wake up, how much more those who have never encountered the light at all.**

So before we go any further, I want to pause here and reflect honestly. Maybe you're here today and you know you're in the dark. Not just culturally — personally. You've never received this light. This word is for you: wake up. Christ will shine on you.

And maybe you're a believer, but if you're honest, you've been asleep. The light came in, and somewhere along the way you stopped letting it move through you. You've been saved, but you've been still. That word is for you too: wake up. There is more the light wants to do in you — and through you.

## **2 | THE LIGHT THAT SHINES THROUGH GOD'S PEOPLE (Is. 60:3)**

Let's read Isaiah 60:3,

*3 “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”*

Originally, the “you” here is Israel. God had called Israel to be a light to the nations — a kingdom of priests, a holy people through whom the world would come to know the Lord. That calling was never revoked. In fact, it is fulfilled in Jesus, Israel’s Messiah.

Through Christ, the promise given to Abraham begins to overflow beyond ethnic Israel to the nations. Gentiles are grafted into the covenant people of God, sharing in the same promise and the same mission. The light does not change hands — it spreads.

Now all who belong to Christ, Jew and Gentile together, become part of this radiant witness through whom God is drawing the nations to Himself.

This is why the gospel spreads across the world. Not through military force. Not through political power. Through transformed people who cannot stop talking about what happened to them.

Isaiah saw nations streaming to the light. And history bears this out. From a small group of Galilean fishermen, the gospel reached Jerusalem, then Antioch, then Rome, then the edges of the known world. Today, there are followers of Jesus on every continent, in virtually every nation. We are living inside the unfolding of this prophecy — not at its beginning, and not yet at its end.

*But the work is still enormous.*

Out of roughly 7,400 languages spoken on earth today, only 743 have the full Bible. There are still 3,600 language groups without a single verse of Scripture in their mother tongue. The light is spreading — but there are vast stretches of darkness it has not yet reached.

Look around this room for a moment. I want to try something. I want to name what I see — because I don't think we stop often enough to realize what God has already assembled in this place.

We have brothers and sisters here from Sierra Leone. Jamaica. Dominican Republic. Panama. Canada. Korea. China. Papua New Guinea. Indonesia. Peru. Argentina. the Philippines. England. Mexico. France. Italy. Samoa, India.

I'm going to run out of breath before I run out of nations.

Do you understand what that is? That is not a demographic statistic. That is Isaiah 60 with skin on it. "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn." They came. They're here. You're looking at a prophecy in the middle of its fulfillment.

And yet — don't let this slip past you — every single person in this room is also a

carrier. You didn't just come to the light. You were sent back out with it. The nation you came from, the language your grandmother spoke, the neighborhood you grew up in — those are not coincidences. They are your assignment.

The nations aren't only overseas. Some of them live next door. Some of them work in your building. Some of them are watching you right now to see whether this light you carry is real.

*Let me tell you something that happened to me two days ago. My wife and I were on vacation. We called room service — simple request. Ten minutes became forty-five. So I walked to the front desk myself. And I'll be honest — I was not warm about it.*

*While I was waiting, one of the staff noticed my sweater. It says Yeshua the Messiah across the front. She looked up quietly and said, "I like your sweater." What sweater, I thought? Ohhhh, my "Hey, I'm a Christian!" Sweater!*

*I stood there and thought — what did she just watch for the last five minutes?*

*I'm not telling you this to be hard on myself. I'm telling you because the light doesn't clock out when you're tired or waiting longer than you think you should. You don't get to choose the moments when people are watching. They just are.*

That Light must shine through God's people. And there is a lot of the world still waiting for the light.

### **3 | THE LIGHT THAT LIFTS OUR EYES (Is. 60:4-5)**

Let's read verse 4.

*"Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip.*

*Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come."*

This is a command, not a suggestion. In the ancient world, lifting your eyes was the posture of watchfulness and expectation — but it carried deep relational meaning. Think of the father in Jesus' parable, scanning the horizon day after day, waiting for his prodigal son to appear. Isaiah's image is just as intimate: *"your sons come from afar, your daughters are carried on the hip."* This is not a military homecoming or a political return. It is a parent watching their children come home over a long distance.

Isaiah describes a regathering of exiled sons and daughters. God was telling his people that although exile was coming — displacement, forced labor, life under a foreign boot — one day, they would return. And they did return. But not all of them. And even after returning, Israel continued to live under the heel of one empire after another. So what does this prophecy truly point to?

Exile was never ultimately about being removed from land. It was about a broken relationship with God. What Isaiah 60 envisions is not a homecoming to a place, but a homecoming to a presence.

Moses brought people into the promised land. Ezra and Zerubbabel brought them back from Babylon. But Jesus does something no human migration could ever accomplish — he brings us into the very presence of God not by crossing a river, but by the Cross of Calvary! Making all who believe in Him sons and daughters of the Father (John 1:12).

So what does it mean for us to lift our eyes? It means we now stand where that waiting father stood — eyes lifted, watching the horizon — because we know what it looks like when someone who was far off finally comes home. That watching is not passive. It becomes mission.

But Isaiah doesn't stop at the watching. Look at what he says happens next. "Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy." Do you hear that? The parent doesn't just feel relieved when the child appears on the horizon. Their heart throbs. It swells. It is almost too much to contain.

Have you ever watched someone you love come to faith? Have you ever been in the room when the lights came on for someone — when the gospel stopped being information and became life?

This is why mission is never ultimately about obligation. It is about joy. The people whose eyes are lifted are the ones whose hearts are most alive. You cannot watch someone come home to the Father and stay unchanged. The radiance Isaiah describes in verse 5 is not just the light shining on you — it is the light shining through you, because of what your lifted eyes have seen.

So I'll ask you directly: when did your heart last throb like that? When did you last watch someone come home to the Father?

If it's been a while — maybe it's time to lift your eyes again.

#### **4 | THE LIGHT THAT WILL FILL THE WORLD (Is. 60:18-22, Rev. 21:23).**

*Verses 6 through 17 are worth your time this week — Isaiah paints a stunning, detailed picture of Jerusalem's full restoration, wealth returning, nations serving, the city rebuilt*

*and honored. But this morning we are after the foundation beneath all of that imagery, not the imagery itself. And that foundation is where Isaiah lands in this last section.*

*Isaiah 60:18-22,*

*18 No longer will violence be heard in your land,  
nor ruin or destruction within your borders,  
but you will call your walls Salvation  
and your gates Praise.*

*19 The sun will no more be your light by day,  
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,  
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
and your God will be your glory.*

*20 Your sun will never set again,  
and your moon will wane no more;  
the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
and your days of sorrow will end.*

*21 Then all your people will be righteous  
and they will possess the land forever.  
They are the shoot I have planted,  
the work of my hands,  
for the display of my splendor.*

*22 The least of you will become a thousand,  
the smallest a mighty nation.*

*I am the Lord;  
in its time I will do this swiftly.”*

We tend to think of Revelation as the book that describes the end. But John didn't invent that vision — he inherited it. Isaiah saw it first, eight centuries earlier. John was finishing a sentence Isaiah had already begun.

**He describes a world where** violence is finally silenced, darkness swallowed by permanent light, sorrow with nothing left to feed on, righteousness not the exception but the very atmosphere — and where the smallest, most insignificant community becomes something beyond counting.”

John, standing on the peak of Revelation, saw that promise fulfilled when he wrote in Revelation 21:23,

*“The city does not need the sun or the moon...for the glory of God gives it light.”*

*I'll be honest — I watched one of the most beautiful sunsets of my life in Carmel by the Sea just two days ago. So when Isaiah and John say there will be no more sun or*

*moon, something in me resists. But I think the point isn't that sunsets disappear — it's that they become unnecessary. God's beautiful glory will be so fully present, so completely filling every corner of the new creation, that the sun will have nothing left to do!*

Moses hid in the cleft of a rock because no one could see God's face and live. Isaiah saw the hem of His robe and cried "woe is me, I am ruined." Even the seraphim covered their faces. The full weight of God's glory was more than human flesh could bear.

But here is what the new creation changes. The Light of Christ — the same light that rose on shattered people in Isaiah 60, the same light that shone from an empty tomb — will have done its complete work. We will not hide. We will not be ruined. We will not cover our faces. We will see Him as He is, and we will be able to bear it — because He will have made us able.

Every wound healed. Every darkness driven out. Everything, in every way, made right.

## **CONCLUSION**

Please hear me today.

The light doesn't come from you — it comes upon you. And once it does, you can't stay facing inward. The shattered people of Jerusalem didn't generate hope — it rose on them. The sleeper doesn't wake himself — Christ shines on him. The exile doesn't find his way home alone — the Father is already at the horizon, watching.

You cannot shine what you haven't received. And you cannot receive it and stay the same.

Now close your eyes for a moment. Picture someone you love who doesn't know Jesus. Picture them lost. Wandering in the thick darkness Isaiah described. And now picture the Father — not waiting for them to find their way — but going out to get them. Carrying them home the way a parent carries a small child on their hip. Not because they earned it. Because that is who He is.

That person you just pictured — they have a name.

In a few weeks we celebrate the sunrise, the resurrection morning that changes everything. But between now and then, you have an assignment. Today you've received an invitation card. That card is not a piece of paper. It is you, lifting your eyes, seeing someone far off, and going out to meet them — because you know the Father is already moving toward them.

Take one, or ten. Pray over it. Put that name on it. And go.

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