

## Session 2

December 12, 2021

### THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

#### Isaiah 9:1-3; John 1:1-9

There is likely no greater contrast in the Bible than light versus darkness. These terms are even used to define each other. Light is the absence of darkness, and darkness is the absence of light! As humans, we *like* light; we *need* light. Conversely, we don't like darkness. It is risky and daunting. It slows us down, disorients us, depresses us, and frightens us. Unless, of course, we have something to hide. Then, darkness is eerily comforting. Jesus said it this way in John 3:19: "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."

**Light gives hope (Is. 9:1-3).** During his prophetic ministry, Isaiah warned of the destruction that would come upon the northern kingdom of Israel as a result of their rebellion. Because they had turned from the truth of God, they would be plunged into a time of "distress, darkness, and the gloom of affliction" (Is. 8:22); a period of exile ultimately described as a "thick darkness." But Isaiah 9 provides an encouraging turn of events to those described in the previous chapter. Their captivity would one day end and God's people would be as prosperous and blessed as ever (v. 1). The contrast with the past is both sudden and vibrant. Those who have been continually walking in darkness will see a brilliant light (v. 2), reminiscent of the dawn breaking after a bleak and dreadful night. Interestingly, the *land of darkness* mentioned in verse 2 is identical to the *valley of the shadow of death* mentioned in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Notice the revived land is even more prosperous than the original: the nation is *enlarged*, and their *joy is increased* (v. 3). For reflection: *Have you ever had a really terrible night when you couldn't wait for the sun to come up? Why is it that the new dawn gives so much hope?*

**Light gives life (John 1:1-5).** Whereas the other gospel writers typically began with the birth of Jesus (Matthew and Luke) or His baptism (Mark), John went back to the *very* beginning. These Christological statements are filled with richness, touching on His divine nature. In verses 1 and 2, Jesus—the Word—is co-equal, co-eternal, and co-essent with the other members of the godhead. In verse 3, He is the primary agent of creation (notice the parallel themes in Genesis 1). By verse 4, His redemptive purpose is introduced. Jesus the Word, the Life, and the Light came to deliver men from the darkness of sin. The first hint that Jesus was the light mentioned in Isaiah 9 comes in verse 5: "That light shines in the darkness." But unlike the context of Isaiah, where those who were so saturated with darkness looked forward to the dawn, the mankind of John 1 saw the light, but refused to receive it. Light gives life; so, unfortunately, those who do not receive it remain not only in darkness, but in death (see Rom. 6:23; 1 John 1:5-6). For reflection: *In what ways does light give life? What are some ways in which the absence of light causes death? Can you make some spiritual applications as well?*

**Light gives direction (John 1:6-9).** Here, in his characteristic brevity, John introduced John the Baptist. The facts are simple and straight forward: his name was John; he was sent by God; he was a witness of the Messiah; but he was *not* the Messiah. His purpose was to direct people, by his testimony, to the Messiah. Just as the magi were directed to Christ by the star, so all of us have been directed to Christ by someone bearing the light of the gospel. Verse 9 returns to John's

great Christology: Jesus represented the one true light; the one true light gives light to everyone; and He came not simply to some, but to all. For reflection: *Looking back to John 3:19 (above), if Jesus came to give light and life to all, why do you think so few accept it?*