



# The *One* Who Set the World Singing

ADVENT IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

## PART ONE – SETTING THE STAGE

By Pastor David Fields

Isaiah 8:19-9:7

### I. Stage Lighting – Darkness and the Light that Dawns *The Coming Light*

#### *Darkness as Evil and Ignorance*

<sup>19</sup> When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

<sup>20</sup> Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

<sup>21</sup> Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God.

<sup>22</sup> Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

Isaiah 8:19-22

The text says the people will roam through the land and will "...look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness." (Isaiah 8:22) – What's that about?

"They are looking to their experts, to the mystics, to the scholars for solutions. Yes, they say, we are in darkness, but we can overcome it ourselves. People make the same claim today. Some look more to the state, some more to the market, and everyone looks to technology. Yet they share the identical assumptions. Things are dark but we believe we can end that darkness with intellect and innovation."<sup>1</sup>

"Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress..."

Isaiah 9:1a

The good news of Jesus is God's great 'Nevertheless!' to the fact of a world in pain. Into a world of ignorance and evil, God breaks in to turn on the lights.

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."

Isaiah 9:2

'A light has dawned' on a dark world. Isaiah is using the sun as a symbol.

### NOTES

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The sun gives life.

God is our source of our life. Every moment is sustained and upheld by God.

Jesus says in John 10:10b: “...*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*”

Abundant life. That’s what this promise of the ‘dawning light’ is all about; the end of death finally and fully. Jesus Himself – the one who is “...*the [L]ight of the world*” (John 8:12) – will allow Himself to be crucified, to go through the darkness of death, and out the other side in resurrection life. Why? To bring about the death of death. To deal death the deathblow. To end all evil once and for all. The light has dawned, conquering the darkness, to bring us back to life.

The sun shows us the truth.

Without the light, you can’t see where you’re going. The light reveals the truth of things. In 1 John 1:5 we read:

“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”

God is the source of all truth. God gives us minds to think. He is the reason you can know anything at all. But more, we could not know who God is unless God reveals Himself to us. We would ‘be in the dark’ about spiritual reality and God’s own nature and character unless God, well, told us – and He has. The scriptures are the record of God’s interaction and self-revelation that comes to its climax – God’s perfect, final revelation of Himself in the coming of Jesus. As Jesus says to His followers:

“*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*”

John 14:9

The sun is beautiful.

The sun, and the light it gives, is beautiful – think of those moments at the golden hour of sunset. It’s gorgeous. It brings joy.

God is the source of all beauty and joy. Everything you enjoy – everything – is derivative from God’s good gifts. As James says,

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

James 1:17

The beauty we long for is not just gifts from God, but of God Himself. Again, Keller puts it helpfully:

“The thing you love is lovely because it bears his signature. All joy is really found in God, and anything you do enjoy is derivative, because what you are really looking for his *him*, whether you know it or not.”<sup>1</sup>

## II. Casting Call: Who is This Child?

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given....And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Isaiah 9:6-7

Wonderful Counselor. What if Jesus Christ really is the ‘Everlasting Father,’ the ‘Mighty God?’ That would mean that the creator who creates creation, actually comes in the frailty of a human baby and experiences all the mess of life as we experience it.

Dorothy Sayers put it like this:

“The incarnation [God becoming human] means that for whatever reason God chose to let us fall...to suffer, to be subject to sorrows and death – he has nonetheless had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine...

He can exact nothing from humanity that he has not exacted from himself.”<sup>2</sup>

In Jesus, God come in the flesh, He can be ‘Wonderful Counselor,’ in that sense that He knows what it’s like. He has suffered more deeply than any of us ever will, and He does it out of love for you – to one day be able to redeem your suffering, to remove it forever. May you come to know Jesus as your ‘Wonderful Counselor’ this year.

## NOTES

### III. Playing Our Part in God's Drama of Salvation

The 'Light of the World' has come to her -and called her to this.

More, Jesus says this to every one of us who comes to take His life into ourselves: 'You,' like, all of us together as the community of faith, 'You are the light of the world.' When the lights come on for us – the darkness dispelled, the ignorance of God giving way to seeing God in Jesus Himself – we now go through the world to 'turn on the lights' wherever we go.

1. Where has the light gone out in your life? Or where are you 'hiding it,' your light, under a bowl?

2. What would it look like to 'let your light shine' this Advent season? A kind of generosity? Or courageous invites to conversation about Jesus?

3. Maybe you've been living in darkness recently – morally or spiritually – will you let Jesus turn on the lights for you? Open yourself to His saving work?

#### ENDNOTES

1. Keller, Timothy. (2016). Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ. John Murray Press.

2. Sayers, Dorothy L. (reprint 2023, original 1938). The Greatest Drama Ever Staged. Reprint by Alien Ebooks.

#### NOTES



### Open Up

Were you ever in a drama, theatre production or musical group – school play, local community theatre, etc.? What did you enjoy about it/learn from it? What did you not enjoy about it?

What do you like/love about the Advent season/lead up to Christmas? What do you dislike? What would you change this year if you could?

### Dig In

1. Read **Isaiah 8:19-9:7**: Isaiah is describing the darkness and “gloom” that have been present in his time, which will give way to light with the birth of child. This is a role Jesus has come to fill. Isaiah mentions the way some would look to “spiritists and mediums”, as well as to their own human resources in **Isaiah 8:19-21**.
  - a. In what ways do you still see “darkness” in parallel ways?
  - b. How does being honest about the darkness cultivate a deeper longing in you for the second coming of Jesus – to both bring his judgment and justice, and to restore all things?
  - c. How might Jesus want to empower you to address the darkness with his light in your circle of influence?
2. Read and reflect on **1 John 1:5-7**. How has Jesus brought “light” into your life – especially as we consider how “light” is an image for life, truth, and beauty?
3. In what areas do you want to be more open and expectant of his light in your life this season?

### Prayer

Take some time to share prayer requests and pray for each other. Also, pray that God, by His Spirit, would enable each person in your group to resist the temptations toward seeking status – and instead, to take the heart posture of a servant to every aspect of life.