

The Story of Christmas: Light in the Darkness

Isaiah 9:1-2

Study Notes for December 25, 2022

i. **Introduction:** Phillips Brooks Spiritual Renewal

A. **The Historical Context, Is. 9:1; Select.**

Verse 1

This is Prophetic Language (cf. Mt. 4:12-16)

The Greater Context

A Nation is Born, 1051 BC

A Divided Kingdom, 931 BC

A Threatened Kingdom, 734 BC

The Promise of God to Judah/Ahaz, Is. 7...

“The end of the conduit of the upper pool” (v. 3)

“The stubs of smoldering firebrands” (v. 4)

“It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass” (v. 7)

“A virgin will be with child” (v. 14)

“Immanuel” (v. 14)

“He will eat curds and honey” (v. 15)

“The land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken” (v. 15)

A Messianic Promise, Mt. 1:22-23

B. **The Temporal Context: A Dark World, Is. 9:2a, c.**

“The people who walk in darkness... those who live in a dark land...”

“Darkness” (חֹשֶׁךְ [chashak])

Dr. Bryan Chapell wrote, “At the time of Jesus’ birth, Bethlehem had become a town of little importance—fallen from its renown as David’s city. In fact, most people avoided it on their way to Jerusalem. ¶ Still, God’s graceful design was to use the dingy town to bring His divine Son into the world. On that day, Bethlehem shone so brightly that we would sing of her: ‘The hopes and fears of all the years were met in thee tonight.’ ¶ The King of Glory came to a forgotten town, in an oppressed land, to be laid in a cattle trough, by a disgraced mother, of a transient family, and to be announced to the world by lowly shepherds.”



The Messianic Context: Darkness

- A “Felt” Darkness from God...
- A Dark Time Politically: Herod the Great...
- A Dark Time Worldly: Rome was a vast as it was vicious...
- A Dark Time Religiously, cf. Amos 8:11-12; Rom. 2:21-24; Mt. 23:13, 15; Jn. 8:43-44a...

***Point:** Yet as we just saw in our study of the book of Esther...

What did we learn from Esther? When God seems _____, He is _____!

C. The Dawning of God’s Glorious Light, Is. 9:2b, d.

“Light” (אור [or])

Luke 1:78-79

This speaks of the transformation that occurs when, gazing upon Christ, one goes from darkness to light... from spiritual death to spiritual life... from spiritual depression to spiritual joy!

Jack Miller said, “Zechariah prophesied that the sun would rise from heaven over those who live in darkness because of the tender mercy of our God (Luke 1:78). So into the real world, because of our God's mercy, comes a real Savior leading you through real problems and empowering you to master sins that are too much for you.” (Quoted in his sermon on Lk. 1:78)

Herbert Wolf wrote, “In the famous priestly blessing of Num 6:25, the Hiphil stem of the verb is used in a similar context: ‘The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.’ This time-honored expression occurs five times in the Psalms, invoking God’s saving and restoring presence on behalf of his servants (Ps 31:16 [H 17]; 67:1 [H 2]; 80:3, 7, 19 [H 80:4, 8, 20]; 119:135)... Light can also symbolize general ‘life’ or ‘prosperity.’ ‘To see the light’ is ‘to be born’ (Job 3:16), and the ‘light of life’ is a poetic reference to being alive (Job 33:30; Ps 56:13 [H 14]).” (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, p. 26)

That is the “Light” which at the birth of Christ shown into the darkness of this world (cf. Jn. 1:4-5; 8:12; Lk. 2:25-32)...

Philipps Brooks wrote...

O little town of Bethlehem, how still
we see thee lie.

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,
the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the
everlasting Light.

The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight!

***Where We Live:** According to Is. 9, what is The Story of Christmas?

1. It begins in the context of darkness, struggle, and defeat. And when all hope seems to be lost, a Light dawns!
2. And that “light” is none other than Jesus Christ- who in coming illumines the mind that we might see and rejoice in...