

NO LONGER ALONE IN THE DARKNESS

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Text: Isaiah 9:2

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

When I was a child I was bad about sleep walking. And I can tell you from experience that it is no fun waking up in the middle of the night in another room, in complete darkness, not knowing which way to turn or where I was. I was simply helpless until a light was turned on.

Imagine if you can, something worse—sitting on death row watching the clock tick away the last few hours and minutes of your life before your execution. Try to imagine the dark shadow that would be cast on your tiny cell knowing that you had no real hope.

Do you realize why Jesus came into the world? “To save us from our sins,” most would say. And they would be right. But that answer really does not convey the depth of our deliverance that we have found in Jesus Christ. Jesus came into a world of people who were not only stumbling in darkness but also living under the shadow of death. But it was upon those—as well as us—that the light has shone.

Jesus brought that light of which Isaiah spoke. Note the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Matthew 4:13-16. The scripture reads *“Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: ‘Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.’” NIV*

Sadly, too many people continue to sit in the darkness of this cold world without the love or light of God’s love in their lives. If they only knew or understood all that was available to them through Christ.

I. THERE WAS A PROMISE TO HUMANITY (Isaiah 9:1a).

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

A. God promised that darkness would not prevail.

■ God foretold satan’s defeat in Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” NIV

B. The dawning of the Light would bring the dawning of a new day.

■ John 1:1-5 tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” NIV

II. THERE WAS THE SEARCH BY HUMANITY (Isaiah 9:2).

A. No one sits in darkness without searching for light.

Figuratively, the absence of light can represent the absence of hope and the presence of darkness can represent the presence of hopelessness.

Humanity has sought for true light since the beginning, often resulting in the following of false religions and human philosophies. And with all their searching they have remained in darkness because they rejected the true light.

B. Unfortunately, some living in the shadow of death have chosen to remain.

■ John 3:19 tells us, “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” NIV

One would think that no one would want to live under a death sentence. If humanity truly understood the consequences, perhaps no one would reject Christ.

III. THERE WAS THE REVELATION TO HUMANITY (Isaiah 9:2).

A. The light appeared to those who looked for Him.

For those who have opened their hearts to God, upon them the Light has “dawned.”

■ Galatians 4:4-5, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” NIV

B. The revelation of Jesus Christ brought liberation.

■ John 1:6-13, “There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”

CONCLUSION

■ In 1994, two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics (based on biblical principles) in the public schools. They were invited to teach at prisons, businesses, the fire and police departments and a large orphanage. About 100 boys and girls, who had been abandoned, abused, and left in the care of a government-run program were in the orphanage. They relate the following story in their own words:

It was nearing the holiday season, 1994, time for our orphans to hear, for the first time, the traditional story of Christmas. We told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem. Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where the baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger.

Throughout the story, the children and orphanage staff sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word. Completing the story, we gave the children three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square, cut from yellow napkins I had brought with me. No colored paper was available in the city.

Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel, cut from a worn-out nightgown an American lady was throwing away as she left Russia, were used for the baby's blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from tan felt we had brought from the United States.

The orphans were busy assembling their manger as I walked among them to see if they needed any help. All went well until I got to one table where little Misha sat. He looked to be about 6 years old and had finished his project. As I looked at the little boy's manger, I was startled to see not one, but two babies in the manger. Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger. Crossing his arms in front of him and looking at this completed manger scene, the child began to repeat the story very seriously.

For such a young boy, who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related the happenings accurately--until he came to the part where Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger. Then Misha started to ad-lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said, "And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I

have no mamma and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with him. But I told him I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give him like everybody else did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I kept him warm, that would be a good gift.

So I asked Jesus, "If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?" And Jesus told me. "If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me." "So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with him--for always."

As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed frill of tears that splashed down his little cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed. The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon nor abuse him, someone who would stay with him—FOR ALWAYS.

I've learned that it's not what you have in your life, but who you have in your life that counts!

--Source unknown

Have you accepted the Light into your life?

