

Light in the Darkness: A Series for Advent

Part Four—Dayspring

By PAUL J. SCHARF

Light is essential for life, and light is a central subject in the Bible. It literally bookends the storyline, from its creation (Gen. 1:3-4) to the point where it becomes obsolete—aside from the light that emanates from the Son of God Himself (Isa. 60:19-20; Rev. 21:23).

In between, He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5; see 12:46). As such, He is “the light of men” (John 1:4), and “the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (John 1:9).

The word *light* is found 180 times in the Old Testament and 98 times in the New Testament—with 20 of those uses appearing in the gospel of John. Truly, we could sum his gospel up in this one verse, which has been our theme in this series: “The light shines in the darkness” (John 1:5).

As God’s people waited for centuries in darkness (Isa. 8:22; 9:2; Matt. 4:16), they often experienced fear and hopelessness (Ps. 88:1, 6, 18; 143:3). Oh, there was certainly light available, as we have seen. At times, it was even brilliant and blazing (Ex. 33:18-23; 34:29-35). The nation of Israel found light for guidance in the law that God had revealed (Ps. 119:105) and in the presence of God Himself (Ps. 27:1). Still, in the grand scheme of history, the darkness was palpable. All of the centuries before the Messiah came were a time of waiting and watching “for the morning” (Ps. 130:5-6).

As we progress to the end of Advent, we are longing for the *Dayspring* (Luke 1:78). The word used here in the original Greek is common for the sunrise, or something coming from the east, and is used in Matthew 2:2 and 9.

The English word is archaic, but it prevails in our modern Biblical vocabulary just in this one verse—just for Christmastime. Like a child waiting anxiously for Christmas morning to arrive, we wait through the season of Advent to rejoice and celebrate the coming of the One who was promised for millennia to be our Savior. We take comfort in the fact that He is coming to us “from on high”—with resources outside of ourselves and our limited experiences.

He “has visited us.” This is another important Biblical concept, and in the Hebrew mind it can relate to cursing (Ex. 32:34; 34:7) or blessing (Ruth 1:6; 1 Sam. 2:21; Luke 1:68).

Zacharias (the priest, husband of Elizabeth and father of John the Baptist—whose story is told in Luke 1:5-23) enumerated the blessings that the Messiah’s visit brings as he presented his song, which is found in Luke 1:67-79. Zacharias’ newly restored voice

(Luke 1:64) uttered these words after the birth of John, and before the birth of Christ. In one sense, he gave us the final Old Testament prophecy of the coming of Messiah.

Historically, this special song has been known as the *Benedictus*, from the Latin for the word *blessed*. It is saturated with an understanding of the Old Testament and its meaning and significance, specifically as it relates to the coming of the Messiah and the ultimate establishment of His kingdom upon the Earth. Meditating upon each word—and tracing each phrase to its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures—would be a worthy task for anyone this Christmas season. Doing so might well bring joy from sadness, comfort from pain and light from darkness. We find here a veritable catalog of the benefits that our Savior’s coming portends.

The world around us is a very dark place—by nature and by human choice (John 3:19-20; 11:10; 12:46).

Yet, as we have seen,

It is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)

Merry Christmas! May Christ be your hope, and may He pour His light into your soul as you celebrate His coming today ... and as we wait for His return!

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