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A TIME FOR REVELATION



THE
FUTURE'S
GREAT LIGHT

How Isaiah prophesies
the expectation of Advent.

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AFTER THE HOURS of heat, the early evening beckons with a soft light and its pleasant coolness. The late hours crack the egg of the day to reveal the golden yolk of the setting sun. It would be a mind-bending exercise to try to explain darkness without describing light—it's likely impossible to do so. Light beckons on the horizon of even the darkest moments.

The prophet Isaiah, however, had awakened with the dawn. He was a prophet of Judah who ministered during the reign of four kings; the progeny of a family of rank and status; a family man; one who had a willing spirit to do what the Lord had called him to do. Commissioned to be a mouthpiece of God, he spoke with prophetic force even though his words would fall on deaf ears, and his throat would grow scratchy.

His work and writing bears some of the most profound words in all of Scripture, echoing themes of holiness, justice, allegiance, trust, righteousness, and hope. The words read today in Isaiah 9:2-7 reveal sparks of this truth, reflecting the contrast between light and dark, hope and heaviness, honor and gloom.

This contrast is foreshadowed even in the names that Isaiah gives his sons: the first named Shear-Jashub, or, “a remnant will return” and the second named Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz as a warning, “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil,” a balancing act that neither contradict nor cancel each other out, but

fleshes out the theme that this unified story directs us toward throughout the Advent season (7:3, 8:1).

We simply cannot explain the darkness without describing the light. “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (v. 2).

When we turn away from God, there is a spiritual darkness that will haunt and startle us. After an amazing work of God in our hearts we begin to redirect, reroute, reorient ourselves toward light, and find it so real, so sustaining, that the noble crew of C. S. Lewis’s *Dawn Treader* called it “drinkable”. We begin to experience the goodness of things to come like “drinkable light” and that break in the clouds and sunlight on our back fuels the drumbeat to freedom—a freedom that comes from aligning our values, allegiance, obedience, delight, and hope with our God of unfailing love.

Isaiah knew that Bethlehem would be the place that God would hem the garments of eternity. This “Prince of Peace” would one day be acquainted with the truest form of darkness imaginable—a darkness no one else could endure—so that we may walk in the light.

Isaiah foresaw a future light and was welcoming the dawn that would one day break after a long, dark night, casting beams of hope 700 years into the future. He saw a radiant heir that would come as a peasant even as he was the Messiah. Jesus shines a light past the evening, awakens the dawn, and sets the course for redemptive history—a baby growing to be a man who would experience true darkness, so that we, with sleepy eyes, may gaze upon eternal light. ■

REFLECT



Isaiah prophesied about a future light that would dawn upon those walking in darkness. How does the imagery of light breaking into darkness resonate with your own journey of faith and life experiences?



Jesus is described as the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." How do these names impact your view of who Jesus is in your life?