

I Saw the Light!

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 9.

Isaiah chapter 9, page 573. And we're going to look at verse 2.

Isaiah chapter 9, verse 2. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

And particularly those words, they have seen a great light. They have seen a great light. I wondered so aimless, life filled with sin.

I wouldn't let my dear Savior in. Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night. Praise the Lord. I saw the light. I saw the light.

[1 : 12] I saw the light. No more darkness. No more night. Now I'm so happy. No sorrow in sight. Praise the Lord. I saw the light.

Many of you will recognize those lyrics as a 1940s gospel song written and sung by Hank Williams. We were here actually a couple of weeks ago with the children, with the school assembly and murder burns.

He's not here today, so I can say it. He was actually singing that song as we were waiting for the children to come in. And as Hank Williams himself confessed, the inspiration of the lyrics for that gospel song, they came from his mother.

Because like many of us, our mother was a Christian influence. And for Hank Williams, she was a devout Christian who brought him up to go to church. She had a great influence and impact upon his life.

Sadly, although he certainly sang about seeing the light, it's not clear if Hank Williams actually did see the light. Because he tragically died at the age of only 29.

[2 : 18] And he died in the back of a car on the 1st of January, 1953, from a heart attack. A heart attack that was induced by drugs and alcohol.

And yet, despite the dark circumstances of his death, those lyrics about the light of the gospel, they've struck a chord with many people. Because as you know, when we often describe someone who's become a Christian, sometimes people say it in a derogatory way, but we do describe it that way, that they have seen the light.

They've seen the light. Because that's what it's like to become a Christian. You're brought, as Peter tells us, you're brought from the darkness of sin into the light of salvation, the marvelous light of salvation.

And every Christian can say, I saw the light. I saw the light. No more darkness. No more night. Now I'm so happy. No sorrow in sight. Praise the Lord.

I saw the light. Praise the Lord. I saw the light. And you know, that was the confession of the people in Isaiah's day.

[3 : 25] Praise the Lord. I saw the light. But they could only make that confession because the prophet confessed, praise the Lord. I saw the Lord.

The people confessed, I saw the light. The prophet confessed, I saw the Lord. And that's what I want to think about both this morning and this evening from this chapter in Isaiah chapter 9.

This morning we're going to consider what the people confessed. Praise the Lord. I saw the light. And then this evening, if you'll come back this evening, we're going to consider what the prophet confessed.

Praise the Lord. I saw the Lord. And so this morning the people, we see them confessing, praise the Lord. I saw the light. And they saw the light all because of the gloom of sin and the gift of a son.

The gloom of sin and the gift of a son. That's our two headings this morning. So first of all, the gloom of sin. The gloom of sin. We read there in verse 1.

[4 : 28] But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the latter time, he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shone. Now the book of the prophet Isaiah, it's one of, if not the most well-known and much-loved books of the Old Testament.

Not least because of the precious and even the prophetic words of that well-known chapter, Isaiah chapter 53, which is a chapter all about the suffering servant who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

But the thing about Isaiah is that he wasn't just a foreteller of this coming Messiah. Isaiah was also a foreteller. Isaiah was a preacher of the gospel.

Isaiah was a herald of the truth. Isaiah was a minister of God's word. And Isaiah's ministry, it's quite an amazing ministry. It was a long ministry, a ministry that spanned the reign of four kings, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

[5 : 47] More than that, Isaiah's ministry, you could say, was a Christ-centered ministry. Because for an Old Testament prophet who lived 700 years before Jesus was born, and yet for this prophet, he preached so much about Christ that you'd be certain that, reading it, you'd be certain that he was actually there at the time.

Because 700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah writes, as we see here in this chapter, he writes about the birth of Jesus. He also writes about the anointing of Jesus, and the ministry of Jesus, and the rejection of Jesus, and the sufferings of Jesus, and the death of Jesus, the burial of Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus.

He even mentions the kingship of Jesus. Isaiah preaches and wrote about so much about Jesus Christ in this book that so many commentators have referred to the book of Isaiah as the fifth gospel.

But even though Isaiah's ministry was a long ministry and a Christ-centered ministry, it was also a difficult ministry. It was a difficult ministry, and what made Isaiah's ministry difficult was the rebellion of the people and the rejection of his message.

What made his life difficult was the rebellion of the people and the refusal to believe, which is why Isaiah says there in verse 2 that the people, they walked in darkness.

[7 : 16] But not just darkness. He says there in verse 2, it was a deep darkness, a deep darkness. There was this spiritual darkness, a darkness of sin, where Paul says in the New Testament, the God of this world had blinded their minds in unbelief to keep them from seeing the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

And you know, just like our own day, the people of Isaiah's day, they were so blinded, and they were in such deep spiritual darkness that they refused to listen to the Lord's prophet.

They rejected the message of the Lord's prophet. And even though Isaiah was a man who was called to faithfully and fearlessly preach and proclaim God's message, the people weren't interested.

The people ignored what was being said to them. And they were, as it says there, they walked in darkness. They walked in darkness.

But as a prophet, that's the amazing thing about Isaiah. I always find him fascinating. Isaiah wasn't called to please people. And he wasn't called to pander to people either.

[8 : 33] Isaiah was called to foretell and forth-tell God's word. And that's what he did. Because Isaiah kept preaching to the people of his day, reminding them and reaffirming to them that they need to repent of their sin and they need to seek reconciliation with the Lord.

But the reality was, for the people of Isaiah's day, in their hearts and in their home life, they were far away from the Lord.

In their heart and in their home life, they were far away from the Lord. Yes, they had an outward appearance of religion. It was there in their head.

But they didn't love the Lord in their heart. And that's the gloom of sin that Isaiah was being confronted with and also confronting it with by his message.

It was of a people who were paying lip service to the Lord, but still walking in darkness. They were a people paying lip service to the Lord, but still walking in darkness.

[9 : 38] And the reason they were walking in darkness was because their hearts were divided. Their hearts were divided and their heads were double-minded. Their hearts were divided and their heads were double-minded because they wanted to praise the Lord and they wanted to please themselves both at the same time.

They wanted to praise the Lord one day and then please themselves another day. And Isaiah says, they walked in darkness. And sadly, many people are still doing the same thing.

Nothing new under the sun. People are still walking in darkness. It may not be 700 BC, but the heart of the problem, as you know, is still the problem of the heart.

Because many people in our congregation, many people in our community, you, I'm sure, my friend, your heart is divided.

Your head double-minded. Because maybe this morning, well, you want to praise the Lord. And it's good you want to praise the Lord. But the rest of the week, you want to please yourself.

[10 : 46] And sadly, you prefer the gloom of sin rather than the glory of salvation. You prefer the garbage of this world rather than clinging and claiming the gift that has been given to you by God.

And yet, you know, the glory of the gospel is that Isaiah and others, they have preached and proclaimed throughout the centuries. Throughout all these centuries, they've preached and proclaimed that the Lord has promised to remove the gloom of sin by providing the gift of a son.

The Lord promised to remove the gloom of sin by providing the gift of a son. And the remarkable thing is that Jesus knew that he was that gift. Jesus always knew he was the gift.

As God's only begotten son, Jesus knew that he was the gift of salvation to this gloomy world of darkness. In fact, as we read in the New Testament, in order to fulfill the promise that's given here, in order to fulfill the prophecy found in this chapter, when Jesus began his public ministry, after being baptized and then tempted in the wilderness, Jesus begins his public ministry and he goes to live in Capernaum.

He goes to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. And it was all because, as Matthew wrote in his gospel, it was all so that it might be fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

[12 : 15] The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. Then verse 2 again. The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.

And for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. And you notice what Matthew says straight after that. From that time, Jesus went to preach.

And what did he preach? Repent. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And you know, the gospel writers, they picked up on all these prophecies that were written in the Old Testament. And you know, I believe it was John who really grasped the concept of this gloom of sin in his gospel.

Because when you read through John's gospel, I'd always encourage you to read John's gospel if you don't ever read the gospels. Because throughout his gospel, John makes all these contrasts. He makes contrasts between day and night, between light and darkness, between gloom and glory.

[13 : 26] And these contrasts, they're all symbolic. They all point to God's judgment of sin and God's blessing of salvation. That's what all these contrasts are about. And one of the first things John writes in his gospel about Jesus is that in him was life.

And the life was the light of men. And the light shone in the darkness. And the darkness could not overcome it. You know, John could see that this Jesus, he is God.

And in him is light. And there is in him no darkness at all. John knew that into the gloom of this sinful world, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, all so that we would see the light of his glory.

That we would see he is light. And John warns us, even after the story of Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night under the cover of darkness, John warns us, this is the judgment.

Light has come into the world. But sadly, people love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil. And Jesus warns us in the Sermon on the Mount that if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness?

[14 : 47] But you know, John shows us, you read through his gospel, he shows us that the teaching of Jesus is all about working in the light and walking in the light. Working in the light and

walking in the light.

Jesus says, we must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Because the night is coming when no one can work. And as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world, says Jesus.

And whoever believes in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. And you know, this is why when we come to even the central moment of our Bible, what everything in the Bible is pointing to and bringing us to is the central moment of the gospel and the cruel cross of Calvary.

And what do we see there? That when the sun is at its highest and its hottest, everything is plunged into darkness. Everything is plunged into darkness as the light of the world takes our darkness and the gift of God receives our gloom.

The gloom of our sin. And if it's all, it's all happened. Everything was brought to that point. Why? Because as Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4, the God who said at the very beginning of our world, let there be light.

[16:06] He is now able to shine into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And this is why our Bible, you know friends, this is why our Bible always encourages us to walk in the light.

To keep walking in the light. John says in his New Testament letter, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

And what do we discover? The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. My friend, the people who walked in darkness, they have seen a great light.

The question is, have you seen it yet? Have you seen the light? Have you been brought from darkness into His most marvelous light?

So the gloom of sin. And secondly, we see the gift of a son. The gift of a son. Look at verse 6. Just the beginning of verse 6.

[17:14] We'll look at the rest of verse 6 tonight. For to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given. To us, a child is born.

To us, a son is given. I'm sure you've heard, I'm sure you've heard, maybe if you read the record that the free church produces, if you look at the back, the title of the article that's often there is Post Tenebrous Lux.

Post Tenebrous Lux. It's an old Latin phrase which means after darkness, light. After darkness, light. Post Tenebrous Lux.

It's a phrase that originated during the 16th century with the Protestant Reformation. And in fact, it became, you could say, the rallying call or cry of the reformers because they sought to rediscover the light of God's word after this long, dark period in history.

Because for centuries prior to the Reformation in the 16th century, during the medieval period, the Bible was only ever written in Latin, which meant that no one had a Bible in their hands and no one had a Bible in their home.

[18:29] Because the Bible, it could only be read and understood by the Roman Catholic clergy. But the beautiful thing about the Reformation in the 16th century, and I think it's something we should all be so thankful for, was that the reformers put the Bible back into the hands of the people.

The reformers put the Bible back into the homes of the people so that they could read the Bible for themselves and understand the Bible for themselves and come to a saving knowledge of the truth by reading the truth themselves.

It was all so that they could see the light of the gospel in God's word. And so the phrase post-tenebrous lux, after darkness, light, it became the rallying cry for the reformers.

It became the motto of the Reformation. It's why we are a reformed church, because the reformers believe that the more we see the light of God's word, the more it will dispel the darkness of this world and give direction for our lives.

And that's still true today. The more we see the light of God's word, the more it will dispel the darkness of this world and give direction for our lives.

[19:40] Which means, my friend, you are holding this morning in your hands the light of God's word. you are a privileged people.

To not only have the light of God's word in your hands, but to have it in your own language and in a Bible version that's easy for you to read and understand. You have the light of the gospel right in

front of you.

And as we were singing in Psalm 119, God's promise to you is that his word will be for you a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

And that word will not only dispel the darkness of this world, it will also give you direction in your life. Whatever direction the Lord is going to lead you, he will lead you through his word.

Because as our catechism teaches us, and I hope you read your catechism because it's a brilliant document. The word of God which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, it's the only rule.

[20 : 47] The only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever. And so to neglect the light of God's word or to hide the light of the gospel from others, we do so at our peril.

We do so at our peril. This is our lighthouse. This is our lighthouse. And in your hands and in your home, it's there. And it's there for you to preserve you, to protect you, and to prevent you from shipwreck, making shipwreck of your soul.

You are a privileged people. The word of God is your light and it's there to preserve you, protect you, and prevent you from making shipwreck of your soul. So my friend, if you don't do it already, open it.

Read it. Use it. Love it. Learn from it. Live it. Find light in it. Because in it is life.

There is life in these words. This is God's word. It's a gift to us. But what's amazing is God's word speaks of an even greater gift in his son.

[21 : 58] God's word is a gift but it speaks of a greater gift in God's son. And that's what we read in verse 6. Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given.

Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. This verse, as you know, it's often read along with other surrounding verses from other chapters close by.

So Isaiah chapter 7 verse 14, what it says there, probably on the same page of your Bible, it says there that the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call his name Emmanuel.

Then if you go over the page to chapter 11 verses 1 and 2, there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his root shall bear fruit and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

And these verses from Isaiah chapter 7, chapter 9, we're looking at this morning and chapter 11, they're all about the gift of a son. They're all speaking to us about the light that's found in this son.

[23 : 15] This light who has promised to remove the gloom of sin. But you know, what's interesting is that Isaiah chapter 7 to 11 or to 12 even, they form a section of the Bible, a section of Scripture called the book of Emmanuel.

The book of Emmanuel, and as you can guess, these chapters in Isaiah, they're all about Emmanuel. As you know, Emmanuel means God with us.

God with us. And you know, here in the middle of the book of Emmanuel, what are we told? God's son is with us.

God's son is with us, which should be the greatest comfort to all of us. That whatever happens in our lives, even when people come and people go, ministers come and ministers go, the promise of Emmanuel remains the same.

God is with us. And the promise, his promise to us is that he will never leave us and he will never forsake us because his son has been given and gifted to us as our saviour to remove the gloom of our sin and the gloom of our sickness and the gloom of our sorrow and the gloom even of our separation in our lives.

[24 : 34] You know, that's the emphasis. That's the promise and prophecy given here. God's son and our saviour has been given and gifted to us.

They're small words, but they have a huge emphasis. God's son and our saviour has been gifted to us. It's not what Isaiah says.

Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. God's gift has been given to us. To us in the gloom of sin.

To us walking in darkness. To us who are lost and without hope in this world. All given and gifted to us. Lovingly given and gifted.

To us. And you know, this time of year, I'm sure you've heard it already, maybe on the radio or on the TV, people often speak about the magic of Christmas.

[25 : 33] And for many children, it is a magical time. But you know, so many people forget about the message of Christmas. And here it is. Isaiah is reminding us again.

Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And you know, so many people say that at Christmas it's better to give than to receive.

But you know, the truth of Christmas is that God has lovingly given. God has lovingly gifted to us his son so that we receive him as our saviour.

And yet, receiving God's love gift of his son and salvation, it's something that people struggle with. I don't know why they struggle with it.

Maybe you struggle with it. Maybe you think to yourself, well, murder, it can't be as simple as that. It can never be as simple as you make it out to be. There must be a catch. There must be something I'm missing and something I'm not really understanding.

[26 : 42] But no, this is God's love gift to you. This is, let's see, this is his Christmas present to you. And you know, for many of you, you've had it presented to you.

Every year for a long time. And this is his Christmas present to deal with the gloom of sin through the gift of his son. And it's a free gift to you.

You know all this. It costs you nothing. It's been graciously given and freely held out to you. All you have to do is receive this gift. You don't have to pay for it.

You don't have to earn it. You don't have to work for it. You don't have to be good enough. You don't have to be worthy enough to receive it. All you have to do is accept it and appreciate it and thank the Lord for it.

You have to earnestly, wholeheartedly accept it and appreciate it. And you know with this, I'll conclude this morning.

[27 : 43] You know this time of year it always reminds me of Christianity Explored. I've been doing Christianity Explored with the school over the past number of weeks. And we recently watched session six.

And session six in Christianity Explored it's entitled Grace. As many of you will know the name grace means gift. That's what it's all about. So go home today put on Christianity Explored session six.

And in session six it opens with the scene of a little girl. And the parents are covering her eyes and they're counting down and then she's allowed to see her Christmas presents. So she's to open her Christmas presents on Christmas morning.

And you see her opening them. But once the little girl has finished unwrapping all of her gifts she turns to her parents and she says okay how much do I owe you?

How much do I owe you? Now you can't imagine any child saying that. Can you? Which of course the child is missing the point of Christmas.

[28 : 49] Because as you know all gifts that are given they're under the Christmas tree they've been lovingly given and gifted to the recipient. And you know it would be wrong for that little girl to refuse the gift.

It would be wrong for her or even rude of her to reject it. But the whole point of course is to remind us is that that is the very thing we do every time we refuse God's gift of his son.

And that's the very thing we do every time we reject Jesus as our saviour. Jesus has been lovingly given and gifted to you as those who sit in the gloom of sin under the grip of darkness.

And you know he offers himself to you as light. He offers himself to you as life. And how dare we ask how much do I owe you?

He's paid it all. He's paid it all. It's such a full and a free gift that it would be wrong of us to refuse it. It would be rude of us to reject it.

[30 : 02] Which is why we are to accept it. To come in absolute humility and accept this gift. Acknowledge what a gift it is and appreciate that gift every day of our lives.

Because the wonder of it and this is something we should never lose sight of. The wonder of it is that it is freely given. And for you today it is freely received.

Freely received. But you know what's so solemn about the gift of salvation? Is that it costs you nothing to receive it. Absolute nothing.

Cost you nothing to receive it. It will cost you your soul to reject it. It will cost you your soul to reject it.

What shall it profit a man or a woman said Jesus if they were to gain and get and be gifted the whole world yet lose their own soul? It costs you nothing to receive it.

[31 : 08] But it will cost you your soul to reject it. And so what we see this morning is that the people who walked in darkness they have seen a great light.

And even though the gloom of sin and the grip of darkness was upon the people the promise was there. The gift of God's Son in salvation it was right there encouraging and enabling the people to confess I saw the light I saw the light no more darkness no more night now I'm so happy no sorrow in sight praise the Lord I saw the light.

Can you make that same confession this morning? That's what we're all being called to confess praise the Lord I saw the light.

Well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us and let us pray. O Lord our gracious God we give thanks that thy word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path and we pray this morning that as we have opened our Bibles that the light has truly shone out of it to shine into our heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ our prayer is that we will all be brought from darkness and to thine own marvelous light that we might all say that we have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious.

Lord speak to us we pray help us to look to this Jesus and to confess as we were singing earlier that the Lord is my light and he is my salvation.

[32 : 55] Lord bless thy truth to us then we ask go before us we plead for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning we're going to sing the words of Psalm 43 Psalm 43 it's in the Scottish Psalter page 264 Psalm 43 page 264 we're singing from verse 3 down to the end of the psalm what is our prayer as God's word is proclaimed and this is what the psalmist prays O send thy light forth and thy truth let them be guides to me and bring me to thine holy hill in where thy dwellings be then will I to God's altar go to God my chiefest joy yea God my God thy name to praise my harp

I will employ so we'll sing Psalm 43 from verse 3 down to the end of the psalm and we'll stand to sing if you're able to God's praise O send thy light forth on thy truth let them be guides to me and bring me to thine holy hill in where thy dwellings be then will I to God's altar go to God my chiefest joy yea God yea God my God thy name to praise my harp

I will employ why art thou there cast down my soul what what church is good and why with vexing thoughts art thou disquieted in me still thrust in God for him to praise good cause I shall have be of my count my count is the help my heart that doth be saved the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen give Amen your Amen and your ■■■■ Amen