

The Only News That Matters: Jesus Is the Light

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When Paul says, "the night is far gone, the day is at hand," the day he's speaking about is a day of salvation. It's wonderful to remember that the coming of Christ the first time is described for us in the Gospel of Matthew as a missionary sunrise. It's a sunrise that lit up a darkened world that had no knowledge of God and was utterly in the dark. In Matthew 4:16, Jesus is walking and talking in a part of Israel full of foreigners. He's walking and talking in some regions that had not only Jews but also had Gentiles. And when Jesus came and lived among them, it is described as a sunrise.

Listen to these words from Matthew 4. "He went and lived in Capernaum by the sea (that's Jesus), in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, the Galilee of the Gentiles, the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light and for those dwelling in the regions of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.'" Do you see what's happening? When Christ comes into the world, it's like the sky begins to go from black to blue. It's like the sun begins to come up over the horizon and these Gentile nations living in northern Israel who had no insight into anything - they could read all the best books. They were reading in the dark. Everything man does is in this dark night. And then Jesus comes on the scene and it's like a missionary light that is expanded and that is worked into the lives of these Gentiles and He begins to shine His light upon them.

And then, let me go back to the Old Testament if I could where we get this marvelous prophecy of what will happen when the light comes on the scene. In Isaiah 60, we have this prophecy of the light of God shining on Israel, and then Israel shining its light and then all the nations coming in. Let me read it to you. It says this: "Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." So here's Israel under the light of Jesus. And it says, "The glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the people, but the Lord will arise upon you. and His glory will be seen upon you, and the nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising."

Do you see what's happening here? This little tiny country on the borders of the Mediterranean; this little nothing country had the light of the glory of God shine on them. And now for the last 2,000 years, Gentile nations have been streaming in. You go, "That seems very amazing." No, that's why you're here this morning! You wouldn't be here this morning if the light hadn't shined on Israel. And now a bunch of pagan Americans, here they are. Brazilians, Canadians - people from all over the world have streamed to the Lord Jesus Christ. People from all over the planet have seen Christ and His glory. And they've come to Him. Why on earth? You in the dark, you who have no capacity to receive any truth, you who's locked into the flesh totally oblivious to all truth, you who's locked into the world just going with the flow and with what the world says, you who's utterly lied to by the devil, why on earth would you ever say to any word that drops out of Jesus' mouth, "Yes, amen! I believe that!" Why would you do that? It's because

the sovereign God of the universe is shining His light, shone it on Israel, shone it in this missionary sunrise when Jesus came. And now the people can't stop coming.

Wake up! Wake up! This is what's happening in the world. This is what's happening in the world. This is what should be on the nightly news that more people came to Christ today! The King! The King! The King is gaining more followers again today! Oh, and another tribe - another tribe has come to Him!

I heard from one of our missionaries today Iranians are just coming to Christ like crazy. There's so many Iranians coming to Christ. Does it make the news? It doesn't make the news. Is it news? It's the only news that matters.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the light. He makes the day. The day is dawning. And this world is not under the power of the flesh alone anymore. Now there's a people under the power of the Spirit. Oh, the works of the flesh are evident, but so is the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, faithfulness, self-control are being formed in this new people who have seen the light of Christ.

And not only is the flesh not dominating everyone because the Spirit's moved in, but the world is not the only force in the world either. Now there's this beautiful reality called the church. If the world is the group of people that makes truth seem implausible - you know where I'm going - then the church is that group of people that makes the truth seem plausible.

Peter tells us, "You (church) are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people; now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy; now you have received mercy." We are the people who encourage each other with a holy peer pressure, with a godly accountability. We call each other to keep looking at the light. The world says sin is good, sin is worth it. The consequences won't be that bad. In fact, the consequences don't even exist. The church is there to say to one another: Christ is worth it. The consequences of sin are unthinkable. And the Gospel's enough to forgive you and keep you going all the way until the very end. This is the night and the day we're talking about.