

Light in the Darkness

December 7, 2025

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Hadi was born in Afghanistan.
 - 1. His name, in Arabic, even though Afghanistan speaks Farsi, means “guide” or “guide to the straight path”
 - 2. And it is a fitting name b/c muslims 5 times a day to find the straight path of salvation
 - 3. It is also fitting b/c Hadi’s dad was a Mullah, a Shiite scholar and teacher who would teach people the way of Islam
- B. Hadi’s dad died at a young age, so he was sent to neighboring Iran to live with an uncle
 - 1. From a very young age, whether b/c of living in Afghanistan or becoming an orphan, Hadi knew darkness
- C. Although he was raised fairly well, Hadi knew he didn’t want to stay in Iran or go back to Afghanistan - he wanted more for his life
 - 1. He learned the Koran from a young age, studied it in school, and his family had aspirations that he too would be a Mullah one day
 - 2. But instead, he wanted to flee the darkness of life and find light
 - 3. Packing a simple bag, he began walking from Iran to Turkey and Turkey to Greece to find hope and light in Europe
- D. Of course, life as a refugee isn’t very hope-filled, and Hadi learned this soon enough as he lived in refugee camps and shelters → just more darkness
- E. After years of searching for a better life, Hadi eventually found himself in Athens. He picked up random jobs at car washes. Greece didn’t seem like the hope-filled life he had dreamed about → until light broke through
 - 1. Someone invited Hadi to come to a Bible study and hear about the one who doesn’t just guide people to the straight path, like Hadi’s name means → someone who claimed to be the straight path
 - 2. There Hadi learned about the one who is light and who leads a Kingdom of Light. Someone who came to destroy darkness and the Kingdom of Satan
 - 3. Hadi learned about Jesus. And for the first time, Hadi had real hope.
- F. Light in darkness. Hope in despair. Life, guidance. This is what Christmas is all about
 - 1. It’s the Kingdom of God invading the Kingdom of Darkness
 - 2. Light breaking through the darkness of hopelessness
 - 3. It’s God sending his Son on a rescue mission to set the captives free
- G. And that is exactly what Isaiah 9 looks forward to → the one who would be a light in the darkness, a beacon of hope in the midst of hopelessness

II. *Isaiah 9:1–6, [1] 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. [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. [3] You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. [4] For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. [5] For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. [6] For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called → **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.***

A. Historical Backdrop of Isaiah 9 → 734–732 BC

1. Isaiah ministered mainly in Judah (the southern kingdom).
2. After David's death, his son Solomon reigns as king
3. After Solomon, the kingdom split:
 - a) Northern Kingdom (Israel) – capital: Samaria; created its own competing worship centers at Bethel and Dan.
 - b) Southern Kingdom (Judah) – capital: Jerusalem; true temple worship located here.
4. Because the north built its own religious system, it grew increasingly spiritually confused, ethically corrupt, and politically unstable.
 - a) They didn't want to allow their people to worship at the temple b/c they were afraid of a consolidation of power in a unified kingdom

B. The land was DARK. Dark politically, ethically, and spiritually

1. Political Darkness

- a) The rising superpower was Assyria (roughly Kurdistan)
- b) The king at the time was Tiglath-Pileser III, one of the most aggressive conquerors in ancient history.
- c) His armies swept through Galilee, Zebulun, Naphtali, burning, deporting, and annexing them as Assyrian provinces.
- d) Regional powers added constant pressure.
 - (1) Aram-Damascus, led by King Rezin, was attacking Israel and Judah.
 - (2) The Northern Kingdom's king, Pekah, joined Rezin and attacked Judah to force Ahaz into a coalition.
 - (3) Ahaz, king of Judah, panicked, and instead of turning to God, turned to Assyria for help becoming a vassal state.

2. Ethical Darkness

- a) The prophets Isaiah and Micah talk about widespread corruption:
 - (1) Judges who took bribes
 - (2) Landlords who seized land from the poor
 - (3) Merchants cheated with false scales
 - (4) Elites exploited the vulnerable

- (5) Widespread violence and dishonesty.
 - b) *Isaiah 59:14, "Justice is driven back; godliness stands far off. Indeed, honesty stumbles in the city square and morality is not even able to enter.*
 - c) Imagine living in that kind of society, where you never actually have confidence that you will get justice, that nobody has your back, that nobody is watching out for you.
3. Religious Darkness → this is the darkness we don't understand
- a) Pagan gods
 - (1) Baal – fertility, rain, agricultural prosperity.
 - (2) Asherah – the mother goddess, worshiped in groves and wooden poles.
 - (3) Astarte/Ishtar – war and sexuality.
 - (4) These gods promised blessing, prosperity, fertility → everything people want when they stop trusting Yahweh.
 - b) But it comes at a cost... dark gods lead to dark practices
 - (1) Child sacrifice connected with Molech.
 - (a) Even King Ahaz burned his own son (2 Kings 16:3).
 - (2) Male cult prostitution
 - (a) The Jews began combining pagan worship in the hills with their own worship of YHWH
 - (b) Basically the pagan religions gave people a blank check to indulge in the flesh
 - (3) Occult practices → *Isaiah 8:19 [19] And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?*
 - (4) The people were literally asking the dead for guidance instead of asking God
 - c) Even the priests and prophets were spiritually compromised.
 - (1) Some were drunks.
 - (2) Some simply echoed whatever the king wanted.
 - (3) Some were worshipping pagan gods in secret
- C. Imagine being a person living in that society, feeling the darkness.
1. Where do you go for light and life when your spiritual leaders are corrupted by, influenced by, and peddling darkness? When you don't know any other way?
 2. Who do you trust when all your neighbors have become corrupt b/c nothing in society tells them to care for those around them?
 3. Where do you look for help when your politicians are puppets for the enemy, and only care about money and power?
- D. That was the darkness of Isaiah's day. This was also the darkness of Hadi's day in Afghanistan and Iran.

- E. Moral, political, and spiritual breakdown produced widespread fear, economic hardship, confusion, despair, hostility, and so much more.
 - 1. Isaiah uses words like gloom, distress, anguish, and deep darkness to describe the feeling of living in that day
 - F. Some of you here today know that feeling: “I don’t know what to do anymore... I’ve run out of options... I’ve read everything, tried everything, paid for every program... but I still feel like I’m stumbling in the dark.”
- III. But light breaks through...
- A. Isaiah says: “But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.” Why? Because God Himself is stepping into the darkness.
 - B. This is what Christmas is all about → light breaking through, but to truly appreciate the light, you need to appreciate the darkness, and Isaiah isn’t just describing Galilee → He’s describing the human condition.
 - C. The political collapse of Judah, the ethical rot, the religious confusion—those were symptoms of something far deeper: A world severed from its Creator, stumbling away from the only Source of life and light.
 - 1. And you could fast forward from Galilee to Kandahar to Baghdad and find the same problems → darkness
 - D. See, **darkness is a diagnosis** of a deeper problem
 - 1. Every one of us, by nature, walks in darkness. We inherit it. We choose it. We feel it. We further it. And we cannot fix it.
 - 2. We cannot generate light of our own accord. We are a people (were a people) walking in darkness.
 - 3. Muslims pray five times a day to find the straight path
 - a) They know Satan is real
 - b) They know the Kingdom of Darkness is real
 - c) But they don’t see the light – only a counterfeit; they’ve been deceived
 - 4. Everyone - you, me, Hadi - needed someone to bring the light into our darkness
 - a) Each of us needed someone to bring the torch of the gospel into our cave of despair and show us the way out
 - 5. This is why Jesus came
 - E. Jesus, the one who was called the Light of the World did not stay distant or demand we climb our way up. No, he stepped down into darkness
 - 1. In Jesus, God enters our world as a child - fragile, overlooked, unarmed - yet carrying all the hope Isaiah looked forward to in this text.
 - 2. He lived the life we were meant to live, a perfect life full of truth, purity, love, and absolute trust in the Father. A life of light.
 - 3. He entered every corner of human darkness → healing the sick, casting out demons, forgiving sin, and loving the untouchable
 - F. And then, in the great mystery of all, he doesn’t just feel bad about our darkness, but he does something about it. He took our darkness onto Himself.

1. At the cross, the Light of the world was swallowed in the blackness of judgment so that we could be delivered from darkness forever
 2. His resurrection is the sunrise Isaiah promised. Death defeated, guilt paid for, light and life.
 3. The Kingdom of Darkness has a permanent crack in it filled with light and no amount of darkness can ever snuff it out
- G. Every one, regardless of where you are born, starts in the Kingdom of Darkness
1. We know it's symptoms: selfishness, pain, hurt, anger, insecurity, shame, empty promises and dead ends. It's characterized by lies, sin, spiritual blindness, selfishness, death, and rebellion against God.
 2. It's leader is Satan, the Deceiver of the Nations
- H. But Isaiah prophesied and the Apostle John says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."
1. The Kingdom of Light is led by Jesus, the Son of God
 2. It's characterized by truth, righteousness, holiness, life, hope, and God's wisdom.
 3. And John continues to say if we come to the light, if we receive Jesus, he gives us the right to be called children of God! Children delivered out of darkness into the Kingdom of Light. That's good news.
- I. If you've embraced Jesus, repented of your sin and trusted in him for salvation, forgiveness, and freedom. That's great... But what now? It doesn't stop there.
1. The light of the world turns to us now and says, "You are the light of the world..." B/C there are billions of people who are still in darkness
 2. He calls ordinary people to carry His light into places where darkness still feels thick and immovable. That is the logical conclusion of Christmas.
 - a) To continue to bring the Good News of Jesus into dark places
- J. David said to me the other day, "Christmas lights look kind of lame during the daytime." #Truth
1. Lights aren't very effective, attractive, or necessary in broad daylight, but even a few candles can make a brilliant display of beauty in the dark
 2. The darkest places are the most desperate for light, and it's where the light displays the most glory.
- K. Some stats...
1. ~8.09B world population
 2. ~12,250 people groups
 3. 7,324 unreached
 4. 3,118 unengaged/unreached (UUPG)
 5. ~3.4B people (≈43% of the world) with little or no gospel access
- L. These people are not rejecting the gospel. They've simply never heard it.
1. They know they are in darkness, but they don't know the way out
 2. They pray every day, more than you or I do, to know and find the straight path. They don't know that the Straight Path has a name... Jesus
 3. They've never met a Christian. They have no Bible, no church, often no hope. They will live and die in the Kingdom of Darkness.

4. And it's not just spiritual darkness. The darkest places on the planet spiritually are also the darkest in reality → They are often characterized by war, corruption, injustice, poverty, fear, spiritually oppressive religions, demonic strongholds
 5. The same kinds of darkness Isaiah spoke into still exist today.
- M. Every December, our church puts resources toward these places and people like Hadi, who has committed his life to bringing light back into the darkness
1. PRAY & LEARN → prayercast.com
 2. GIVE → all month \$\$\$
 3. RECEIVE → J1 Students
 4. GO → Short, Mid, Long
 5. SEND → Workers
 6. V7 reminds us: "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."
 7. God is more committed to shining light into darkness than we are, but He invites us to join Him. So let's do it!