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Christmas Lights – Isaiah 60:1-3

Introduction – Just as Christmas lights hung around your home declare your command of light in the midst of darkness, so the people of God are called to “*arise, shine*” the light that they are in Christ to a world lost in deep darkness.

The Text: Isaiah 60:1-3 (AV) *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

Creation Light – This is first a prophecy of the New Creation. It is another day when “*darkness was on the face of the deep*” (Gen 1:1-4). There is a glory, announced by the Word of God, which hovers over the darkness and then begins separating the darkness from the light by pushing the darkness away.

The season of Advent and the celebration of Christmas is a celebration of a new beginning, a new heavens and a new earth. But is this passage a prophecy of Christ’s incarnation?

Christ Light – A similar passage, Isaiah 9:2 is quoted in Matt 4:16, identifying this great light as coming in the incarnation (and Christ’s public, human ministry). Simeon identifies this light as Jesus at the time of His circumcision (Luke 2:32)– a blessing to both Israel and the Gentiles. Jesus, in His nighttime meeting with Nicodemus, spoke of the antithesis of those who receive Him and those who reject Him in terms of this darkness and light (John 3:18-21). Twice it is recorded of Jesus saying, “I am the Light of the world” (John 8:12, 9:5). For Jew and Gentile, there is only one way out of the darkness, the deep, gross darkness that we find ourselves in. And that way is Jesus. It is true and ought not to be declared tritely: He is the reason for the season.

Christian Light – And this is why we are commanded to “*arise, shine – for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.*” Now, the glory will be seen upon us (v2). “*The subjects of Messiah’s kingdom, the living members of his church, are so irradiated by him, that they shine likewise; as the moon shines, but with a borrowed light derived from the sun. beholding, in this glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, according to the measure and growth of their faith.*” – John Newton.

We were darkness, but now we are light (Eph 5:8) – not in ourselves, but in the Lord. In that passage, Paul exhorts us to live like it, to walk as children of light (Eph 5:8-14). The passage ends with a first-century hymn, maybe a baptismal hymn, which eludes to the call of Isaiah 60:1. Elsewhere, Paul shows that our transformation in Christ (imperfect as we are) shines as lights in a world crooked and perverse (Phil 2:13-14).

The celebration of Christmas is a celebration of a new creation – our new creation. In Christ, we are the light of the world. In Christ, we are the answer to every problem of darkness. Jesus, who is the Light of the world, told us, the church, “you are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14).

Conquering Light – Because this kingdom transformation is slow and often less noticeable than we might like, we need the reminder of all of Isaiah 60:1-3. Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, Christmas, is not a celebration of sentimental chestnuts roasting on an open fire, although it is fine if one uses roasted chestnuts, or any of a number of other material things, to celebrate. It is not the celebration of a wonderful, old story that bears little implication on the rest of the world over the rest of the year. To ‘keep the Christmas spirit’ is not to have warm, friendly feelings for people for the rest of the year. This celebration is a declaration of a war which was won, a re-creation that was accomplished, a new Adam who has and is redeeming, reforming, and renewing the world.

“*Gentiles shall come to thy light*” – not just a few, but so many that it will be said that the Gentiles were saved.

“*and kings to the brightness of thy rising*” – that is, kings and their kingdoms. Nations, tribes, and tongues, will come to this

mountain of the Lord and worship Jesus with us.

Christmas Lights - Therefore, prepare for Christmas as a celebration of light taking over the darkness. Emmanuel is with us and in Him, we are like those lights shining in the darkness.

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