

A Light has Dawned

Isaiah 8:22-9:7

By the skin of my teeth

"All my intimate friends detest me; those I love have turned against me.

I am nothing but skin and bones; I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth." Job 19:19, 20

"By the skin of my teeth" means: To avoid disaster or to survive by a very narrow margin, "just barely"

Isaiah's context and prophecy

Zebulun & Naphtali had just been conquered

Isaiah predicted that the rest of Israel would also be conquered

Dark days ("death darkness") were coming for the people of God

Ephesians 8:19-9:7

8:19-22: Without hope in God, darkness and fearful gloom will come

9:1-3: In the land of death darkness, a light has dawned

The first to fall and the least honored

will be the first to see and experience the deliverance and joy of God for His people

"Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" Matthew 21:11

Matthew 4 quotes this passage: Jesus brought this great light as He began His ministry in Galilee

"Galilee of the nations" was an insult, yet it is God's great plan!

A task of a prophet: see the future and report back to us

9:4-5: Deliverance from oppression and the end of wars

Midian's defeat: God's deliverance from oppression through an intentionally tiny army of Israel

The Messiah's work is not merely vertical and it is not merely horizontal

9:6-7a: Because the Son of God is born/given

Supernatural wisdom & skill

God the mighty victor

Unending provider

Ruling through peace to peace

He is God!

Abundance: too many offspring to count

God's victory over evil and oppression is through the birth of a child who is a prince characterized by peace and leading to peace

God is strong enough to overcome his enemies by becoming vulnerable, transparent, and humble

—the grace for turning enmity into friendship

His reign is peace, mercy, righteousness and justice from start to finish for all who bow before Him

9:7b: By the passion and power of God

This work is entirely of God

It is for people to receive it and to be His hands and feet in it

The Big Idea

**God's blindingly great
and joy-producing glory**

has begun to rise

in the birth of Jesus, the Son of God

on all who trust in Him

and it will keep growing forever!

How much light does the Sun give compared to a candle?

1.5 octillion times!

$1,500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 = 1.5 * 10^{27}$

How much light does God give compared to the best of human efforts?

Where is our hope?

How hopeful are we?

Get your sunglasses on!

Questions for consideration...

Where is our hope, really?

Sometimes we hope in ourselves

even if we think we can't do it

Sometimes we hope in others

even if we think they can't do it

Sometimes we hope in science or technology

Sometimes we hope in technique or skill or wisdom

Sometimes we hope in positive thinking

Who or what do we blame? Who or what do we focus on?

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." Psalm 20:7

How hopeful are we, really?

Sometimes we are more hopeful than we should be!

We hope for the wrong things

We hope in the wrong things or people

Sometimes we just hope we can survive

"By the skin of our teeth"

Sometimes we give up hope and just try to continue on

Christians should be the most hope-filled people!

Application

Rejoice in the hope of the overwhelming glory of God!

God's glory is more than an octillion times greater than any other glory and goodness!

Pain and trouble are still real

Yet they are never the whole truth about us

And they are never the fundamental or final truth about us

Even our sin and rebellion do not stop His glory!

When we turn to Jesus, longing to be freed from our sin and rebellion,

nothing can stop this blindingly great glory of God from sweeping over us

In this we greatly rejoice!!

Isaiah 35:8-10

Point others to this hope

Christians

We so quickly turn to hope in other things

We so quickly get discouraged by lesser things

We merely hope to escape by the skin of our teeth

God's glory is more than an octillion times greater than any other glory, or any darkness or challenge

Let us encourage each other, and all the more in challenging days!

Non-Christians

Are you hoping in something far less than this glory?

Do you know anyone walking in darkness or gloom?

Do you know anyone who is hoping in something far less, that will surely disappoint?

Philip told Nathanael to come meet Jesus:

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. John 1:46

Conclusion

Where do you need help and hope today?

Who do you know who needs help and hope today?

Joy to the world! The LORD has come!

Christmas is the time to get your sunglasses on!!

Reflection Questions

1. Where are you tempted to place your hope to address your longings or concerns? Where are you tempted to place the blame when your longings or concerns aren't answered?
2. When you turn to God for help with life's concerns, how much hope do you have? Is it like a candle? Or perhaps like a roaring fire? Or perhaps like the light of the sun? Why might that be?
3. How would you state the hope that Christmas brings?
4. Who in your life needs to be reminded of this hope?
5. Who in your life needs to see and rejoice in this hope for the first time?
6. What will you do this week, and this Christmas season, to remind people of this great hope, and to introduce people to this great hope in the overwhelmingly great glory of God?