

Isaiah the prophet lived about 700 years before Jesus, but he foresaw the coming Savior more clearly than any other prophet. He called Jesus the suffering servant, but he also wrote about where He would minister, things He would do, and what He would be called. He told about His birth, ministry, death and resurrection.

Some believe that our passage for tonight is referring to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus. That is probably true, but I'd like for us to see how, like many prophecies, it also has an application to the birth of Jesus and to our own lives. As I read this, think about the birth of Jesus and the fact that believers in Jesus are to represent Him.

*<sup>1</sup> "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. <sup>2</sup> See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. <sup>3</sup> Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. <sup>4</sup> "Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. <sup>5a</sup> Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy;*

Jesus was alluding to the passage when He said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* John 8:12 (NIV) The key words of light and darkness would have reminded His listeners of this passage. The Isaiah passage sounds as if God is speaking to Jesus. I imagine that as a young man this verse spoke to Him again and again. Then at 30 years of age it must have been like a trumpet call. *<sup>1</sup> "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.*

The light first came into the world when the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus within Mary's womb. But the world saw the light that first Christmas. And yet, the real life and light were ultimately seen in the words and actions of Jesus during His three years of ministry.

Jesus came into a dark, fallen world. The beginning of John's gospel says, *<sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.* John 1:5 (NIV) Look at the darkness that fills the earth, terrorism, corporate greed, political distortion and wrangling for personal gain, war and the starvation that inevitably follows it, drug addiction, slave trafficking, spousal and child abuse and we could go on and on. Darkness! It's in the news, and its hidden in homes. *<sup>2</sup> See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples...* The world of man is sin sick!

What can be done? How do we keep from being swallowed up by the darkness of selfishness and greed? *...but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.* We see the glory of God in the manger. We see it in the Words of

Jesus that the Apostles related to us, to love one another, to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We see it in Jesus' life, healing the sick, feeding the multitudes, commanding the elements, rebuking evil, transformed on the mountain, forgiving, dying for our sins, rising from the dead, ascending! Glory appeared upon Him.

And since then, the Word of Jesus has transformed nations. It has brought hospitals to the sick, education, food to starving multitudes, and truth to a world of darkness. Everywhere the Gospel goes it dispels darkness and ushers in the Light of Life, hope for today and for eternity.

*<sup>3</sup> Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.* Indeed, Jesus has transformed earthly kings and their kingdoms. Everywhere Christ has been honored by the leadership of a country and its citizens, where the true Gospel has been embraced, there has been blessing. You can see the contrast with nations that embrace idolatry and the nations that have embraced Christ.

*<sup>4</sup> "Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm.* The Gospel is still the fastest growing belief in the world. It is still outpacing the violence of Islam. It is still advancing in the most remote regions on earth as God so loved the world. Listen to the stories of missions and testimonies from the third world of people transformed by their Savior. Even in the Muslim world, people are having dreams of Jesus as Savior and seeking out underground churches.

*<sup>5a</sup> Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy...* This is speaking of the heart of Jesus. His heart is radiant, it throbs and swells with joy as the ends of the earth find freedom from the enslavement of sin and are liberated to love God and one another. As the body of Christ, our hearts throb and swell with joy too, when we hear the stories of the power of the One who came as a baby in the humble manger but changed the world by conquering sin and death. That is the One whose birth we celebrate, our Savior, Deliverer, Redeemer and King. He's the Light in the darkness and the revelation of the glory of God. He's the only hope for a sin sick world.

In celebrating His birth, we celebrate the love of God that sent Him. We celebrate the liberty He gives to us and to all who come to Him. We celebrate the transformation of lives here and to the ends of the earth. We celebrate what is yet to come when we see Him face to face. No wonder Christmas is a worldwide celebration! What a Savior! What a God! Now it is our time to, *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.*"