

The Miraculous Light

Isaiah 9:2, 49:6; Luke 2; Matthew 1, John 1, 3

ADVENT CANDLE: We lit the first candle of the Advent Wreath to remember the Promise that God would send a Savior. The second candle reminded us of the Miracle given to us in the Person of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Today we light candle three to celebrate the Miraculous Light that entered the world as a baby born in a manger and enters our hearts when we trust in Jesus as our own Lord and Savior.

INTRODUCTION: God kept His promise! He always does.

- **God promised to send the Savior, born of a virgin. He had.**
- **God promised the Savior would be the Son of God. He was.**
- **Immanuel! God with us!**
- Several thousand years before the Son of God confined Himself to the helpless body of a baby, looking down from His heavenly throne upon the beginnings of planet earth still shrouded in darkness, He declared, "Let there be light."
- Now the Beloved of the Father lay on a bed of straw in a dingy stable in the midst of an even darker world.
- But not for long. Isaiah had declared

Isaiah 9:2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

- And John said,

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

I. APART FROM MARY AND JOSEPH, THE SHEPHERDS WERE THE FIRST TO SEE THE LIGHT JESUS BROUGHT INTO THE WORLD.

I love the way the physician/historian Luke describes that majestic night.

Luke 2:8–14

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

14 “Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

The glory of the Lord turned the blackness of the Judean night into the brightness of mid-day.

The brilliant heavenly light nearly blinded the eyes of the shepherds, but soon the light of the Lord Jesus would penetrate to the depths of their souls.

Again, remembering the words of Dr. Luke,

Luke 2:15–20

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”

16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

17 Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

18 And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ...

20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Shepherds, by the very nature of their work and the demands of the job, were usually rough men, not known for piety nor for righteousness.

However, **after they laid eyes on the Savior, they departed changed men.**

- Their minds had been **illuminated**.
- Their hearts had been **enlightened**.

- Those shepherds left the stable different than they arrived.
- The solitude of the shepherd was exchanged for eager conversation about Messiah with everyone who would listen.
- Their rough language was transformed to testimony about the Savior they had seen.
- Ribald songs sung in the countryside gave way to praise to the Almighty for what He had done.

The shepherds had been with Jesus, and **In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**

II. **SIMEON AND ANNA, TWO BELIEVERS WATCHING FOR THE COMING OF MESSIAH, WERE NEXT TO SEE THE LIGHT OF THE LORD JESUS.**

Forty days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph bundled their baby and carried Him five miles to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate Him to the Lord. As they walked through the temple courtyard toward a priest, they were intercepted by a man named Simeon.

Dr. Luke describes Simeon as a just and devout man, waiting for God's promised Savior to come into the world. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that before he died, he would see the Messiah.

The Holy Spirit had prompted him to come to the temple only a short time before Mary and Joseph entered with baby Jesus. When Simeon saw the child, immediately he knew. The Scripture says,

Luke 2:28–32 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,

And the glory of Your people Israel."

Anna was a prophetess, an 84 year old widow, who faithfully served the Lord with prayer and fasting continually in the temple. When she saw baby Jesus in the arms of Simeon, she knew immediately who this Child was.

This was the promised one of whom Isaiah declared,

Isaiah 49:6 ... I will also give You as **a light to the Gentiles**, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' ”

As people gathered around Simeon, Jesus, and His parents, Anna began to explain to them all, that this Child is God’s promised Savior who would bring redemption to all who trusted Him.

For decades Simeon and Anna had waited, faithfully watching for God’s Messiah. Now they saw Him, and **In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**

III. THE NEXT PEOPLE TO SEE THE LIGHT OF THE CHRIST CHILD, AS FAR AS WE KNOW FROM THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE, WERE THE WISE MEN.

The wise men, more properly called the magi, were a part of an ancient group of the Medes that came to prominence during the Babylonian Empire, when God sent a dream to the great King Nebuchadnezzar of a great image with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, a mid-section of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. In the dream, a stone was cut without human hands, and then the stone struck the image and crushed each of its parts so that they were as fine as dust and the wind blew them away. Then the stone grew to the size of a mountain, and it covered the whole earth!

Nebuchadnezzar called for the magi to tell him what he had dreamed and then to explain its meaning, but they could not. They practiced sorcery and divination; they studied astronomy and astrology; they were known as the wise men of their day, but they could not tell Nebuchadnezzar what he had dreamed, and therefore certainly could not offer an interpretation.

That is when Daniel, a Hebrew prophet who had been brought to Babylon as a captive from Jerusalem, stepped forward. God told Daniel the dream He sent to Nebuchadnezzar and gave Daniel the interpretation. God was revealing the kingdoms of the earth that would arise before the King of Kings destroyed them all to establish His own Kingdom on the earth.

Because he explained the dream Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel the chief of the magi. Before Daniel was put in charge, the magi had always been a body of pagan priests. Daniel did not force anyone to change, but he taught all who would listen about the One True and Living God and the truth that God had sent through the Holy Scriptures. Although never reaching a majority status, across the years, many of the magi believed in the God of the Bible and believed the Words of the Lord.

Six hundred years after Daniel became chief of the magi, a new star appeared, shining with unusual brilliance and clarity in the sky west of where the magi now lived. Some of the magi who had continued to follow the ways of Daniel remembered the prophecy spoken through an unwilling servant of the Most High named Balaam. God had caused Balaam to declare,

Numbers 24:17 “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, ...

Daniel had taught them, this would be the sign of the birth of the King promised by God through the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:6–7 6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be no end,*

Some of these believing magi set out on the long journey across the desert to make their way to Jerusalem, the capital city of the Jews, to find the King that had been born to them.

Between one and two years after Jesus was born, the magi arrived, not at the stable but at the house where the Christ child lived with His parents in Bethlehem. The Scripture says,

Matthew 2:11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Although the magi had sought the help of King Herod when they came to Jerusalem in search of the child born as the new King of the Jews, as they returned to their home, they did not return to help Herod find the Christ Child as Herod had requested.

The wise men had been with Jesus, and **In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**

IV. JESUS OFFERS THE LIGHT OF LIFE TO EVERYONE.

John 8:12 ... Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

John 9:5 ... I am the light of the world.”

And, glory to God, many trusted and followed Him, and He caused the light with which He shined to shine in them and give them life.

A. There were His disciples, of course,

- Peter, James, John, Matthew, and the others.
- Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and Salome
- The man born blind

- The adulterous woman of Samaria
- The nobleman of Capernaum and probably his son
- The prostitute about to be stoned in the street
- Rich, thieving, Zacchaeus

As I was preparing this message, **considering the many people who came to Jesus as the Light of the World**, who trusted Him and received the light of life in their own lives, what happened then?

What were their lives like?

What did they do?

The answer to this stunned and challenged me. Because I found that many of them just automatically did the things we pastors have the most trouble leading people to do.

1. They told other people about Jesus.

- The shepherds did. Told everyone they met.
- Anna did. She wasn't shy. Talked to everyone in the temple.
- All the disciples, except Judas, did. Every one of these men gave their lives telling people about Jesus, most of them having traveled to the end of the earth doing it.
- The Samaritan woman did. She told the whole city, all of whom were familiar with her past.

Wow, as much as I try to evangelize, and as much as I go on mission, I don't match that!

2. And out of their new found love for Jesus and gratitude and loyalty to Him, they gave generously from their treasures.

- The wise men did.
- The disciples, again except Judas, did. They gave everything they had.
- The women who followed Jesus did. Many of these spent their entire wealth supporting the earthly ministry of Jesus.
- Zacchaeus did. He became the most generous man in Jericho after the light of the Lord Jesus entered his heart.

Do we find it that easy, that natural to give from our treasures to the Lord?

B. Not everybody followed Him.

Jesus Himself explained this.

John 3:16–20

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ... 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation,

that the light has come into the world,

and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light,

lest his deeds should be exposed.

The rabbis astonished by a twelve year old Jesus were amazed, but they did not believe.

Many neighbors in Nazareth saw Jesus go from childhood to manhood, heard Him explain the Scriptures with amazing clarity in the synagogue, heard about or even witnessed His miracles, but did not believe.

The High Priest Caiaphas, prophesied about the atonement Jesus would make, but He would not put his own trust in Jesus as the Christ.

Pilot found no fault in the man Jesus, but He would not believe He was the Son of God.

C. Jesus gave men a choice.

John 12:46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

John 12:36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

CONCLUSION: What should we who have trusted Jesus and received the light of life do now?

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. **Walk as children of light**

1 Peter 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may **proclaim the praises of Him who called you** out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Romans 2:19 and are confident that **you yourself are a guide to the blind**, a light to those who are in darkness,