

## A New Day Has Dawned

- I think one most btfl events in nature to behold: sunset. You're looking west over treeline/hills or standing on beach looking over Gulf/Mex or Pacfc Ocn, and you watch as sun slowly slips beneath horizon and falls out of sight. You've seen sunset; gorgeous, isn't it? But know what I think even more gorgeous? A sunrise! Now, you've got get up early see sunrise; and not evone's a morn prsn. But if get up before daybrk, while wrld arnd you still dark/cold; and you look east over trees/mnts, or look over Lk MI or Atlntc Ocn, you can see: first, orng glow; then golden sliver/sun peakng over horzn; evntly brillnt light of new day. If you've seen sunrise, you know: not just btfl & brthtkng; it's inspiring. A sunrise means a NDD, a fresh start, new beginning, new opptnts; there's optimism, joy – NDD. One day when I was in Israel, exactly 14 yrs ago this Tues, I got up early, sat on western bank Sea/Gal, and I watched as the sun rose over eastern hills, scattering drknss/night and shining it's warm light onto tranquil water stretched out before me. Absolutely btfl! A sunrise means NDD.
- It's that pic of sunrise that Isa uses today to describe Epiph/J. Epiph = appearing. Since Dec 25 we've been celbrtng birth/J our Sav in flesh. But 12 days Xmas culmnt in the celbrtn Epiph: appearing/J to whole wrld, not just as Sav/Jews but also Sav of ntns/Gntls. Think who's seen J so far: Jwsh prnts, Jwsh shphrds, Jwsh wrshprs at Jwsh tmpl. But now we have these Magi, these wise men, fr a faraway land, trvng hndrds miles for many wks, to wrshp not Jwsh Sav but wrld's Sav. And so, for wrld, Epiph means: the long/cold/dark night is coming to an end. The warm sun is rising, cresting over hrzn, and a sunburst of blazing/glorious light is shining onto dark wrld. The Epiph/J means NDD.
- **Vs. 1.** Sun is rising, and that sun is Son/God, shining in brilliant glory. All Adv long we prayed, "Come LJ." And now finly, **vs. 1a.** J is here! He is: **vs. 1b. Vs. 2a.** So not just backside/planet but whole wrld is covrd in drknss! It's dark evwhr! Why? Bec sin evwhr, & effects/sin evwhr. Drknss is symbol: sprtl ignrnc, seprtn fr God, sorrow, suffrng, sin, dth, destrctn, hope/joy/god-lessness. **Vs. 2a** – all the ppls, incl you/me, bec we're born in sin & live in sin – evone of us! And if you want know what this drknss/sin is like, just go back 1 ch, Isa 59. Listen to this: **"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. For your hands are stained w/blood, your fingers w/guilt. Your lips have spoken falsely, and your tongue mutters wicked things... Our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify vs us. Our offenses are ever w/us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: rebellion & treachery vs the LORD, turning our backs on our God, inciting revolt & oppression, uttering lies our hearts have conceived... We look for light, but all is drknss; for brghtnss, but we walk in deep shadows."** That: the drknss/sin that Isa's talking re here. And it's not just out there; it's in here! Take honest look at your hrt. Find: hatred, sin, pride, evil, drknss; find it in your dark thghts/wrds/behvr. Jn: **"Ppl loved drknss instd of lght bec their deeds were evil"** (3:19). We all live in a dark cloud/sin. **Vs. 2a.**
- But, **vs. 2b.** This is the sunrise of a NDDing – a glorious lght, cresting over horzn, rising into sky, scattering drknss. A NDD! And J is the lght! J: **"I am the light/wrld. Whovr follows me will nvr walk in drknss but'll have lght/life"** (Jn 8:12). And Jn: **"In him was life, and that life was the lght of all mankind. The lght shines in the drknss, and the drknss has not ovrcome it"** (1:4-5). That lght is J! Lght is symbol: life, truth, undrstndng, God's grace, Gos, salvtn. That one word, lght, encapslts God's entire plan/salvtn. J is born in glow of angel-lght; lght/Epiph star illumines his crib; he lives a sinless life that shines in holy brghtnss; his mrcls shine lght/God's love on hurting ppl; his msg/forgvnss shines lght/hope for sinful ppl. And when he dies on cross, *"lght/wrld by drknss slain,"* and for 3 hrs sun stops shining, and wrld literly turns dark, it's then that drknss is defeatd forever – bec there on cross J took upon self your drknss/mine, sin/wrld, and paid awful punshmnt we deservd, to rescue us fr drknss forever. *"Then bursting forth in glorious day, up fr grave he rose again."* And so bright is this res/J fr dead, so brilliant is God's plan/salvtn, that it takes momnt for our eyes adjust to lght & see that J's done evthng nec save us; and HS's thrown open blackout curtains in our hrts, so that God's lght can pour thru windows, and we can bask in Gos's warm lght by faith.

- Woah baby, that's bright! Vs. 1-2. Or Is 9: **"The ppl walkng in drknss've seen great lght; on those living in land deep drknss, a lght has dawned" (2)**. A NDD. J, God fr God, lght fr lght, has **"called you out of drknss into his wndrfl lght (1 Pt 2:9)**. That's what he's done for you. **"Your/you" vs. 1-2**. Let that shine in your hrt! God loves you! The sunrise of God's grace is shining on you!
- But not just you. This sunrise is **"a lght to lghtn Gentls" (Lk 2:32)**. Gentls: foreigners, ppl fr other ntns, non-Jews, who didn't grow up w/OT or proms/God. But Isa: **vs. 3 (Gentls)**. You have the lght; others can see it, and they want it! Remem during Exodus, 10 plgs, 9<sup>th</sup> plg, drknss – whole land Egypt was covrd in drknss, except for Goshen where Hebs lived. They had the lght; Egyptns knew it, wantd it. By faith, you have lght/Gos. Gentls can see that lght, want it. Xian Ch is only real beacon/lght in this dark wrld. So **vs. 3**. Few exmpls. First, Magi: not Jwsh; prob fr old land/Babylon where Isrlts held captive. But genrtns/Magi scholars studied Heb Scrptrs, belvd prophcies, and when saw Epiph star, made long journey to find Sav. They saw light, wanted it. Or think re Qn/Sheba who visited Kng Solomon to hear his wisdom, ask him questns, see his fame. Sheba is modern Yeman, south of Saudi Arabia. So here's anthr Gentl, making anthr long journey, to see glory/Lord. And after visiting Jrslm, seeing templ, hearing Scrptrs, Qn/Sheba: **"I did not bel these things until I came and saw w/my own eyes" (1 Knigs 10:7)**. She saw light, wanted it.
- And so, bright msg/Epiph is this: J is not just for Jews but for Gentls as well. He's wrld's Sav. That's why **vs. 3**, incldng you/me, bec we: Gentls. Burl WI is way further fr Isrl than Babylon or Sheba. But just like Magi and Qn and countless other Gentls, the sunrise/Gos is shining on us. NDD. **Vs. 4**. This is vision of Gentls streaming to Xianity, just like back in Adv, in Isa 2, we saw Gentls streaming to mnt/Lord, Xian Ch. And it's a joyous scene; **vs. 5ab** bec all kinds/ppl, of all kinds/backgrnds are belvng in J as Sav. It's like in Rev: **"A great multtd that no one could count, fr ev ntn, tribe, ppl, and lang, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (7:9)**. It's like Pent, when Gos spread to ppl **"fr ev ntn under hvn" (Act 2:5)** – **"Parthians, Medes, Elamites" (9)**, that whole list. Think re it like this: Lent preps res; East celbrts res; Pent spreads msg/res to wrld. In same way, Adv preps birth/Sav; Xmas celebrts; Epiph spreads msg to wrld. Ntns & kngs are coming to faith.
- And they're bringing gifts: **vs. 5cd, 6cd**. You think of Magi, w/GFM. You think of Ps 72 that we just sang: **"May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts. May all kings bow down to him and all ntns serve him" (10-11)**. When you've spent time in the drknss, then come into God's lght, the natural response: praise & thank Lord.
- Will that be your response? In 2023 will you praise/thank Lord for calling you out of drknss into his wndrfl lght? Or do you prefer the drknss? Imagine yourself, for a moment, sitting on western shore of Sea/Gal, very early in morn. It's dark, it's cold. But as you gaze over the tranquil waters, to the eastern hills in the distance, you see: first, the orange glow; then a sliver of the sun; finally the brilliant light of a warm & joyful sunrise. **Vs. 1**. Epiph means a NDD. **"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps 118:24)**.

### Isaiah 60:1-6

<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 hip. <sup>5</sup> Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. <sup>6</sup> Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.