

A GREAT LIGHT IN THE PLACE OF DARKNESS

Matthew 4:16 is a loose quote of Isaiah 9:2, but if you really understand what is being said, it is staggeringly marvelous.

Matthew 4:16 (NKJV)

16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.”

The cultured pious Jews in the Jerusalem area considered this region up north (Galilee) so affected by Gentiles to be a place of darkness, and as it were the place where darkness was the most dense which is described as the ***shadow of death***. In contrast Jerusalem was considered to be the place of enlightenment.

Who would have ever thought this? This darkest of all places in the land of Israel would be the first to see the GREAT MESSIANIC LIGHT most brilliantly. The word “**dawned**” (Gk. *aneteilen*) indicates that the light first shone here most brilliantly! This is where the LIGHT of God’s Messiah dawned. It started here!

That is most amazing. Cultured Jews automatically assumed the LIGHT of the Messiah would shine first and foremost on Jerusalem the capital city – the holy city. After all, was not Jerusalem the most favored place before God? It was the place of learning, the place of worship, the place of pure Judaism.

But NO! Instead, God chose a location rejected by these religious leaders – a place associated with spiritual DARKNESS where He would FIRST shine the Messianic LIGHT in a major way. God’s ways are not man’s ways!

The birth of Christ in the most humble of circumstances; the Gentile welcoming committee; the strangeness of the forerunner; and now the DARK place of Messiah’s reveal; are all totally unconventional and unexpected. And yet, there it was all the time – right there in the prophetic Scriptures as prophesied by Isaiah 700 years in advance. You can’t make this stuff up. You could never just make this fit. This is a total God-thing!

The context of the Isaiah 9 Messianic prophecy is this. Isaiah 8 predicted a coming Assyrian invasion in which the Northern Kingdom would be taken captive. But that message of gloom was then followed by a message of future hope as seen in Isaiah 9. This message of HOPE was centered in the Davidic Messiah Who would bring about deliverance and establish an everlasting kingdom of peace.

But the ***“first dawn”*** of this HOPE would not be seen in Judea or in Jerusalem, but rather in the dark shadowy land of ***“Galilee of the Gentiles”***. This my friends was fulfilled to the letter!

Note the DOUBLE emphasis on LIGHT here in Matt. 4:16 as quoted from Isaiah 9:2. These people in this region would see a GREAT LIGHT. This was the LIGHT of the Messiah Who Himself said, ***“I am the light of the world”*** (Jn. 8:12).

This LIGHT was the TRUTH of Who Jesus is as the divine-human Messiah Who brings in the kingdom! Nobody ever imagined this LIGHT would shine first and foremost on ***“Galilee of the Gentiles”***. But here it was literally being fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who came to dwell in Capernaum in perfect accord with prophetic truth.