

The Prophets Foretold: Part Four
Isaiah 9:2, 6-7a

MAIN POINT:

Introduction:

[LEADER NOTE: *If you are able, prepare ahead of time your meeting room so that it can be darkened and lighted easily—the brighter, the better when you start the discussion time, and the darker, the better when you turn out the lights. Have a candle or small lamp or flashlight close at hand (and a match or lighter if you are using a candle). You may want to have a small flashlight to read these notes when the lights are out or dimmed.*]

Start the discussion by sharing these facts or by asking the group to respond to the questions:

- **What is our main source of light?** (Sun)
- **What is the speed of light?** 186,000 miles/second in a vacuum
- **What do we call the study of light?** (Optics)
- **What type of energy is light?** Electromagnetic
- **What is the smallest unit of light called? (think Star Trek weaponry)** (photon)
- **What is the wavelength of visible light?** 400-700 nanometers
- **What is the frequency of visible lightwaves?** 430-750 terahertz
- **What do we call the absence of light?** (darkness)

[AS SOON AS YOU SAY THE ANSWER OR SOMEONE GUESSES IT, TURN OFF ALL THE LIGHTS. THEN CONTINUE WITH QUESTIONS BELOW, using a small flashlight just so you can read the questions below.]

- **How long did it take before our eyes become accustomed to dark? What can you see?**
- **What can't you see?**
- **What are the dangers and drawbacks of darkness?**
 - Can't see danger
 - Distorts what little you can see (the radiator is a monster, as Pastor Andy described)
 - Difficult to see colors and details that bring out beauty and individuality
 - Can't distinguish one person from another

Turn on the lamp or flashlight or light the candle, and then ask:

What can we now see that we couldn't see in the dark?

Keep the lights low until you have finished the next two questions.

Our Dark World

Use your small light to read Isaiah 9:2, and then remind the group of the social and political context for this passage:

Judah (southern kingdom) is being pressured by Aram & Israel to make an alliance with them so they can protect themselves from Assyria, the dominant superpower at that time. The problem is, an alliance wasn't just a military alliance; it meant giving up their political independence and religious expression, a joining of cultural values. They had to choose between worship of the one true God and their identity as God's people on one hand, and risk attack and possible destruction of their country on the other.

Then ask these questions:

- In what ways do we face the dilemma of choosing between fitting in with our culture and compromising our Christian identity?
- Who or what seeks an alliance with us that would lead to such a compromise?

A Great Light

Turn on all the lights in the room and ask a volunteer to read aloud Isaiah 9:2-7. Then ask the group to respond to these questions:

- These verses are promises for political and religious solutions to the problems facing the people of Judah. How do promises help people cope with their present problems?
- Can anyone give an example of being helped by a promise or hope through a time of trouble?
- Look at verse 6: what are the meanings of each of the four titles for this child?
- Of the four titles, which one fits Jesus as you know him? Why do you answer as you do?
- Look at verse 7. How much do you believe in this promise? What signs do you see that make this hope believable?
- How is God working in our world today? What signs of hope are there in the midst of darkness?
- The best way to be light in the world is to point people to the Light of the world. Does what you say or do look like Jesus? Does it point people to Jesus? If not, what changes need to be made in your life?

Prayer: