

A Historical Study On The Book Of Luke
Teaching #17: The Rising Sun From Heaven – Jesus The Messiah
Luke 1:78-79

In **Luke 1:78-79**, Zechariah praised God, saying,

...the rising sun will come to us from heaven [see also Malachi 4:2] to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death [Isaiah 9:1-2], to guide our feet into the path of peace."

In Zechariah's praise, he weaves two prophecies together about the Messiah, the rising sun, who would *come to us from heaven to shine on those living in the darkness and in the shadow of death.*

These two prophecies are:

Malachi 4:2

But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays.

Isaiah 9:1-2 (Berean Study Bible)

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those in distress. In the past He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future He will honor the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations: The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.

In Isaiah 9:1-2, the prophet Isaiah states the condition of the human race.

The people of the world are:

- Walking in **DARKNESS** – The absence of light.
- Living in the shadow of **DEATH** – The absence of life.

What does it mean to walk in darkness?

Darkness is the absence of light, meaning the absence of knowledge concerning the:

- **MEANING** of life
- **EXISTENCE** of God

People live their lives **searching** for the meaning of life and **wondering** if there is a God.

They search for meaning to life in pursuits, pleasures, projects, passions, power, and in other people.

Concerning the meaning of life, they ask these questions.

Question #1: What's life all about?

Question #2: What's my purpose for living?

Question #3: Why am I here?

Concerning God, they ask these questions:

Question #1: Is there is a God?

Question #2: How do I connect with God?

Question #3: Can I know God?

Question #4: If there is a God, is he loving...does he care...why doesn't he stop the pain, the hurt, and heartache we see in the world?

Question #5: If there is a God, why doesn't he reveal himself...why does he remain distant? Why does he seem demanding?

These are just a few of the questions, among many, people ask about life and God.

These questions reveal the meaninglessness and emptiness in the hearts of people all over the world.

Then, in the minds of people as they ask these questions, is the awareness of the end of life...death.

This identifies the three greatest problems facing humanity:

Problem #1: The emptiness of life...DARKNESS...the absence of light (the absence of the knowledge of God and the meaning of life)

Problem #2: The end of life...DEATH...the absence of life.

Problem #3: The emotion of life...DESPAIR...the absence of hope.

Where did these problems originate?

To understand where these problems originate, we must go back to when God created Adam and Eve, the first humans.

In Genesis 1-3, we find that:

- God created Adam and Eve to KNOW him and live in relationship with him based on his love for them.

NOTE: 1 John 4:9 says God is love, and Genesis 1:27 says we were created in God's image, which means we were created by God to experience his love and to express his love to others.

-Adam and Eve's significance to life was to be found in their Creator.

-Adam and Eve's source of love was to be found in their Creator.

- Yet Adam and Eve CHOSE to live independently from God, causing death, darkness, and despair to enter the human race.

Consequently, as humanity spread across the earth:

- The awareness of the knowledge and love of God decreased.
- The practice of evil increased.
- The continuance of death remained.
- The presence of despair multiplied.

Each of these continues today.

However, God did not stop the human race. God did not forget about the human race, nor did he abandon the human race. Rather he made a promise to Adam and Eve that a male child would come from a woman of the human race who would destroy Satan, the one in the Garden of Eden who was opposed to God and sought to destroy the human race with death, darkness, and despair.

This promise is recorded in **Genesis 3:15**, which reads:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

The venom of Satan had entered the hearts and minds of Adam and Eve, and now the entire human race, bringing darkness, despair, and death. However, God promised that one would enter the human race who would crush the head of Satan and undo all Satan had done.

The one to come would bring:

- LIFE where there was death.
- LIGHT where there was darkness.
- HOPE where there was despair.

We know this child would come from a woman in the human race...but what woman?

After scattering the people of the earth and creating nations from them, God created one nation through whom the child would come...This nation is Israel.

God selected one man and one woman, Abraham and Sarah, to start the nation of Israel. He made promises to them and their descendants of:

- Land
- Savior
- King
- Forgiveness
- Redemption and Restoration
- Salvation
- Peace with God
- Peace on earth

These promises would flow to all nations through the child, the Savior, and the King to come. This one to come is known as the Messiah/Christ. He was born through the virgin Mary

The prophets of Israel (those who communicated God's message) revealed information about that the Messiah to come.

-The Messiah would **be a light to the world.**

Isaiah 9:1-2 (Berean Study Bible)

*Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those in distress. In the past He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future He will honor the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations: **The people walking in darkness [is there a God? Can we know God? Does life have meaning and purpose] have seen a great LIGHT; on those living in the land of the shadow of death [death hovers over the life of everyone; no one knows when their day of death will come], a LIGHT has dawned.***

-The Messiah would **bring hope to the world.**

According to **Isaiah 42:1-4**, the nations of the world would find hope in the Messiah, the servant of God.

*"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching **the islands [nations, see Mathew 12:21] will put their HOPE.**"*

-The Messiah would defeat death, rise from the dead, and **bring life to the world.**

Isaiah 52:13

*See, my servant will act wisely; he will be **raised and lifted up and highly exalted.***

Isaiah 53:11

After he has suffered, **he will see the light of life and be satisfied.**

Psalm 16:8-11

*I have set the LORD always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; **my body also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life;** You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.*

Into this dark, dead, and despairing world, the Messiah was born through the virgin Mary.

His name is Jesus.

John, a disciple of Jesus, described Jesus this way.

John 1:4-5, 9

*In him was **life**, and that life was the **light** of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome [understood]it....The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.*

Jesus came to bring **LIFE** and **LIGHT** to the world.

-Jesus said he is the bread of life that gives life to the world.

John 6:33-35

*For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and **gives life to the world.**” “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.” Then Jesus declared, “**I am the bread of life.** Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

-Jesus said he is the resurrection and the life and those who believe in him will never die.

John 11:25-27

*Jesus said to [Martha], “**I am the resurrection and the life.** The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”*

-Jesus said he is the light of the world who brings people out of darkness.

John 8:12

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “**I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

Matthew, another disciple of Jesus, wrote about Jesus being the light of the world.

Matthew quotes **Isaiah 9:1-2.**

Matthew 4:13-16

Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

Matthew also quotes **Isaiah 42:1-4** wrote,

Matthew 12:17-21

*This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. **In his name the nations will put their hope.**”*

We discover through John and Matthew that:

- Jesus is **LIGHT** to those living in the darkness.
- Jesus is **LIFE** to those living in the shadow of death.
- Jesus is **HOPE** to those living in despair.

Peter, another disciple of Jesus, quoted these words from **Psalms 16:8-11** when speaking about the resurrection of Jesus:

Acts 2: 24-28

*But **God raised him from the dead**, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: “ ‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’*

Concerning the resurrection, Peter later wrote in **1 Peter 1:3-4**,

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy **he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you...*

Notice Peter’s words of a new birth.

The old birth was our physical birth into this world.

- We were born into a meaningless empty life...devoid of purpose.
- We were born into an escapeless ending to life... death.

- We were born into a hopeless emotional life...despair.

However, through the resurrection of Jesus, we have a **LIVING HOPE!**

What is a living hope?

Peter's use of the word hope means we have:

- Something to **LIVE FOR NOW**
- and
- Something to **LOOK FORWARD TO LATER.**

What do we have to look forward to later? An eternal inheritance kept in heaven that can never perish (go away), spoil (go bad), or fade (grow old).

Where does this living hope come from?

It comes from the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus, through his death, has solved humanity's greatest problems.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, the **END** of life – DEATH – the **EMPTINESS** of life – DEVOID of meaning, and the **EMOTION** of life – DESPAIR – are solved.

Our lives now have purpose!

The resurrection of Jesus is not a fairy tale...it is a fact.

The Bible is a collection of reliable and credible historical documents written by real people at a real time in history.

The Bible can be trusted.

These historical documents verify the resurrection of Jesus.

Both John and Peter were eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

2 Peter 1:16

*For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but **we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.***

Acts 2:32

*God has raised this Jesus to life, to which **we are all witnesses.***

Acts 3:15

...God raised him from the dead. **We are witnesses of this.**

Acts 4:1-4

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to **Peter and John** while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because **the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.** They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed.

Acts 10:31

He was not seen by all the people, but by **witnesses** whom God had already chosen—**by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.**

It was the resurrection of Jesus that changed the lives of John and Peter, giving them something to live for now and something to look forward to later.

Another eyewitness to the resurrection who experienced life-change was Paul.

Jesus, after his ascension into heaven, appeared to Paul (Acts 26:15-18).

Paul writes about this in **1 Corinthians 15:1-7** (NLT).

*I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, **I also saw him.***

In **1 Corinthians 15:1-7**, notice that Jesus not only appeared to Paul, but he appeared to Peter, his disciples, and to James, as well as to over 500 people.

PRIOR to witnessing the resurrection, Paul believed Jesus was a liar. However, **AFTER** witnessing the resurrection, Paul became a believer in Jesus, prompting him to write 13 letters that are contained in the Bible.

The resurrection of Jesus transformed Paul's life. As a result, Paul traveled throughout the Roman Empire telling others about the resurrection of Jesus.

Acts 17:18 (see also 20:24; 26:15-18)

They said this because **Paul was proclaiming the good news of Jesus and the resurrection.**

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, the mystery about God is solved.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:2-3**;

...the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Jesus has revealed God to us.

Paul also wrote in **Colossians 2:9-10**,

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.

This takes us back to the questions at the beginning of the study.

Is there a God?

Yes...Jesus **REVEALED** God to us.

He is fully God.

Can we know God?

Yes...Jesus **RECONCILED** God to humanity when he **REMOVED** the sin barrier separating God and humanity.

Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

All of our sins were counted against Jesus when he died on the cross to pay our sin debt.

There are none left to be counted against us.

Through faith in Jesus, we are reconciled to God, meaning we receive the forgiveness of our sins and begin a relationship with God.

Another question we began our study with is:

What is the meaning to life?

The meaning of life is to know God through Jesus.

During the days of Solomon, he searched for the meaning to life.

- With the **WEALTH** he possessed, he experienced every everything.
- With the **WISDOM** he possessed, he evaluated every experience.

The results of Solomon's research are contained in a book he wrote called *Ecclesiastes*.

In this book, Solomon wrote that he searched for meaning to life in people, pleasures, pursuits, and projects, denying himself nothing that he desired. The conclusion to his research is summarized in the opening sentences of *Ecclesiastes*.

Solomon wrote in **Ecclesiastes 1:2**,

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” Says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

The major reason for Solomon’s conclusion, that life is meaningless, is because death is the destiny of us all.

He wrote in **Ecclesiastes 7:2**,

*It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, **for death is the destiny of everyone;** the living should take this to heart.*

Solomon used the phrase **a chasing after the wind** to describe the meaningless of life because of death.

He used this phrase **18** times.

This takes us back to humanity’s three greatest problems:

Death – the end of life.

Darkness – the emptiness of life.

Despair – the emotion of life.

This takes us back to Jesus.

Into this dark, dead, despairing world, Jesus comes to bring hope as the bread of life and light of the world.

Jesus said,

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

If you have never believed in Jesus for salvation, or are not sure you have, you can do so today. Below is a simple prayer to express your belief in Jesus.

Jesus, I believe you are the bread of life and the light of the world. I believe you died for my sins and rose from the dead.

Through your belief in Jesus, you have eternal life.

To grow in your understanding about God, Jesus, and the Bible, check out my website: www.gracereach.org. There you will find articles, videos, and podcasts.

We will conclude this study by reading once more the end of Zechariah's praise.

In **Luke 1:78-79**, Zechariah praises God, saying,

...the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

Jesus is the rising sun who has come to us from heaven to shine on those living in the darkness and the shadow of death.

Thanks for being a part of the Bible study!

All verses are NIV unless otherwise noted.

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