

Matthew 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Analysis

Isaiah's imagery of people in darkness seeing 'great light' describes spiritual awakening and salvation. The 'shadow of death' refers to the darkness of sin, judgment, and spiritual death in which all humanity exists apart from Christ. The phrase 'light is sprung up' indicates divine initiative—salvation comes to those in darkness by God's gracious illumination, not human seeking. This anticipates John 1:4-5, 9 describing Christ as the true Light.

Historical Context

Isaiah 9:1-2's historical context was Assyrian devastation of northern Israel. Yet this judgment became the location where messianic light first shone, demonstrating God's pattern of bringing salvation where judgment fell—law to gospel, death to life, darkness to light.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the imagery of light dawning on those in darkness illustrate God's sovereign initiative in salvation?
2. In what ways does Christ as the Light of the World address humanity's fundamental problem of spiritual darkness and death?

Interlinear Text

τοῖς	λαὸς	τοῖς	καθημένοις	ἐν	σκότει	εἶδε	
to them which	The people	to them which	sat	in	darkness	saw	
G3588	G2992	G3588	G2521	G1722	G4655	G1492	
φῶς	μέγα	καὶ	τοῖς	καθημένοις	ἐν	χώρᾳ	καὶ
light	great	and	to them which	sat	in	the region	and
G5457	G3173	G2532	G3588	G2521	G1722	G5561	G2532
σκιᾶ	θανάτου	φῶς	ἀνέτειλεν	αὐτοῖς			
shadow	of death	light	is sprung up				
G4639	G2288	G5457	G393				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 9:2 (Light): The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Micah 7:8 (Light): Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

Luke 2:32 (Light): A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Amos 5:8 (Darkness): Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:

Job 34:22 (Darkness): There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

Job 10:22 (Light): A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

Job 3:5 (Darkness): Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.

Jeremiah 13:16 (Light): Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

Psalms 44:19 (Parallel theme): Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.

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