

Advent Reading for Tuesday, December 5, 2017 ***“A Light to Galilee of the Gentiles” (Isaiah 9:1-2)***

Our third prophetic reading centers on the geographical area along the border of Israel in NE Galilee. Two of the twelve tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, had been allocated this portion of land by Joshua during the conquest. Because of their location, they were the first to suffer when the hostile king from Assyria invaded the land (II Kings 15:29). Being near the border, Gentiles were also constantly going and coming, and many settled there, becoming a prominent part of the population. Isaiah referred to this area as *Galilee of the Gentiles*, and it was still viewed as such when Jesus began His ministry.

Isaiah’s prophecy reads as follows: *“There will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them”* (Isaiah 9:1-2).

Matthew, in describing the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, carefully highlighted how *“Jesus withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet”* (Matthew 4:12-14). Nothing was a mere coincidence in Jesus’ ministry. His choice to make this gloomy area of Palestine the hub of His ministry was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s 700 year old prophecy. Galilee of the Gentiles would be the first to see the dawn of redeeming grace!

Matthew’s affirmation that Jesus’ ministry in this remote *Galilee of the Gentiles* region fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy is but one of many New Testament references of Jesus being the Light. When Joseph and Mary presented the infant Jesus in the temple, the elderly Simeon took Him into his arms and blessed God, boldly declaring that this child would be *“a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of His people, Israel”* (Luke 2:32). While Jesus as a Jew was *the glory of His people*, His light would also bring illumination to all the peoples of the world.

The Apostle John also highlights this truth: *“In Him was life, and this life was the Light of men. And the Light continues to shine in the darkness, and the darkness did not overpower it”* (John 1:4-5). And Jesus Himself would later declare, *“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life”* (John 8:12).

How blessed we are that the Light of Christ, and the good news of the gospel, has come to us! As the Apostle Paul made clear when he was writing to the predominately Gentile church in Ephesus: *“You were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light, for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth”* (Ephesians 5:8-9). As those who have received the Light, our calling is to *walk as children of Light*. We are to seek to bear witness to our Lord in every way possible, by our words, our attitudes, and our actions. Our world is dark, but we have the opportunity to dispel the darkness by being children of Light!

Giving Thanks – Thank You for using others to bring Your light to us! Help us pass it on to others who are still walking in darkness.