

The Everlasting Light

Epiphany Sunday

Epiphany is between Christmas and Lent. At the beginning of church history the first Christians celebrated Epiphany, not Christmas, and this practice continues in the Eastern Orthodox. Epiphany means the light shines forth, revealing.

What is being revealed? How God acts.

- I. God is not a philosophical idea or abstraction.
 1. In himself he is ultimately beyond us, indescribable, "hidden." Ex 33:20: "'But,' he said, 'you shall not see my face; for man shall not see me and live.'" I Tim 6:16: "who alone has immortality and dwells in **unapproachable light**, whom no man has ever seen or can see." John 5:37: "And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen." John 1:18: "No one has ever seen God; **the only Son**, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." Isaiah 45:15: "Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior." Rom 11:33-34: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How **unsearchable** are his judgments and how **inscrutable** his ways!"
 2. "God is light." 1 John 1:5b: "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." "Everlasting light." As in Isaiah 60:19-20:
"The sun shall be no more
your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give light to you by night;
but **the Lord will be your everlasting
light**,
and your God will be your **glory**.
Your sun shall no more go down,
nor your moon withdraw itself;
for the Lord will be your
everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall
be ended."
Yet the Lord created light. Isa 45:7: "I form light and create darkness." Gen 1:3-4: "And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness." Ps 139:12: "even the darkness is not dark to thee, the night is bright as the day; for darkness is as light with thee."
 3. Ultimately, we only know what God is not. Beyond us, beyond our darkness. **We are wholly unholy**. "Holy" = his otherness. Holy, light, and glory go together. Lk 2:32: "a **light** for revelation to the Gentiles, and for **glory** to thy people Israel." Rev 21:23: "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb."
- II. At the same time, he acts. He reveals who he is in what he does.
 1. Something is going on, a direction, a purpose, a foreshadowing.

2. Isa 60: 1-3: "Arise shine; for your light has come,
and **the glory of the Lord** has
risen upon you.

For behold, darkness shall cover the
earth,

and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and **his glory** will be seen upon
you.

And nations shall come to **your**
light,

And kings to the brightness of your
rising."

Isa 9:2: "The people who walked in darkness
have seen **a great light;**
those who dwelt in a land of deep
darkness,
on them has **light** shined."

Psalms 36:9: "For with thee is the fountain of life;
In **thy light** do we see light."

Again, Luke 2:32 and Isa 60:19-20.

III. The three wise gifts, the foreshadowing.

1. Matt 2:11. It does not say three wise men. Note Isa 60:6 and 11. Kings, camels, gold, frankincense.
2. Gold is costly. Power, majesty. Frankincense is costly (incense), something for a king. The priest used frankincense in the temple. See Ex 30:33-38. Myrrh is added here, foreshadowing embalming. John 19:39-42. Nicodemus.

IV. **The everlasting light.** Isa 60:19-20.

1. Isa 60:19-20 = John 1:4-5, 9: "In him was life, and the life was **the light of men.** The **light shines in the darkness**, and the darkness has not overcome it....**The true light** that enlightens every man was coming into the world." 8:12: "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, **'I am the light of the world;** he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have **the light of life.**" 9:5: "As long as I am in the world, **I am the light of the world.**" And therefore, I Thess 5:5: "For you are all **sons of light** and **sons of the day;** we are not of the night or of darkness."
2. Isaiah 60:19-20 foreshadows Rev 21:22-23: "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for **the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.**" Rev. 22:5: "And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for **the Lord God will be their light,** and they shall reign forever and ever."
"O Little Town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth **The everlasting light,**
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight."

3. 2 Cor 4:6: “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has **shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**”

That’s Epiphany. **The Everlasting Light!**