

frequently in Isaiah than in all the other prophetic books put together, and occurs about the same number of times in the last twenty-seven chapters as in the first thirty-nine. The note is struck very early, for Isaiah's first great picture of future millennial glory is immediately followed by the words: "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD" (Isa. 2:5).

It is natural to find this concept stressed, for many of the problems dealt with in Isaiah are problems of the understanding. He is trying to encourage the true people of God to trust God's goodness and have confidence in the wisdom of His inscrutable plan. Even when the immediate future appears dark and obscure, even when troubles and difficulties might seem great enough to drive them to despair, God's people can know that He has a fixed purpose of future blessing, and that He will eventually bring His people into the wonderful light of His glorious promises.

At the first extensive picture of the Servant of the Lord it was predicted that He would "be for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:6) and God gave His people this promise: "I will make darkness light before them" (Isa. 42:16). In Isaiah 49:6 the Servant was told: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." The same figure is used in Isaiah 51:4 and in Isaiah 58:8 and 10. Our present chapter refers to light six times (vv. 1, 3, 19, 20) -- more than any other chapter in the book.

Verse 2 shows the true source of light. Though darkness may cover the entire earth, when the Lord arises upon a person there is light, both for himself and for a blessing to others.

The similarity of these first two verses to some of the statements about the Servant of the Lord might lead an English reader to think that the Servant was the one addressed, but in the light of the Hebrew (as well as of the succeeding verses) this is impossible, since the Hebrew words translated "thy" and "thee" in this chapter are feminine and refer to the people of God, represented as a city.