The Morning Star is Coming

David A. Sims, JD PhD AIF® CKA®

18th Saturday in Ordinary Time, August 10, 2024



The dream at my happy place.

In February 1985, a little more than a year into law school at the Levin College of Law on the campus of the University of Florida, I was radically saved in Gainesville, Florida. I was reading the Bible in the book of Isaiah. And somewhere around 4:00 am, verses 59:1-2 changed my life forever.

Up to that time, I had been living a well-seasoned and well-practiced reprobate lifestyle. I won't gore you with the details but by then suffice it to say that I knew what slavery to sin was. I've never forgotten it. Never will.

The enslavement started not long after my confirmation at Asbury United Methodist Church in Maitland, Florida, around the time I turned 12 in 1973. It officially ended when I met with Dennis Delacure, the very same minister who confirmed me in the faith, a couple of weeks after I was born again in 1985. We met at his office in First United Methodist Church, 419 NE 1st Street Gainesville, Florida 32601, for well over 2 hours. I told him everything I'd been up to since my confirmation. All the ugly stuff, all the gunk and junk. All the stuff about which I was ashamed and guilty. I have two distinct memories from my confessional time. Reverend Delacure's face. It was jolly and seemed to be glowing red. And when I walked out into that sunshiny Florida spring day, all creation seemed to be singing. It was like my senses were fully alive and in tune for the first time in my life since reaching age 12. The smells were glorious. The birds were melodious. The light and grass and trees and shrubs and flowers were pulsating. The rose petal I touched felt otherworldly. And then I went and ate a Fred's gator tail sub. It tasted better than the first time Tamara and I shared one in 1980 at the start of our first semester at UF.

Perhaps a few days after my conversion, maybe weeks, I can't recall, I had two mystically memorable experiences on two separate nights, both around the same time of the morning I was saved. They were so real that it's like I just woke up to them now.

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The first was a dream. The other was an inexplicable wake-up from a deep sleep.

This story is about the dream. I'll tell the other story another time.

The dream went like this.

> I'm on New Smyrna Beach, Florida. My happy place. I'm right here[1] on the glorious Atlantic ocean's edge where the tide is rolling in and out. Our feet are getting wet with the tides. That ocean, right there, is one of the top five happy points in my happy place. I cannot count the number of times I've frolicked and body-surfed like a porpoise right from that very entry point into the water. I cannot count all the times I swam in the ocean from another point about a mile south from there at the condo my folks owned when I was growing up. I love New Smyrna Beach, Florida.
>
> And in the dream, I'm right in front of the home where I get to stay when I'm in NSB. My mother-in-law's beach house. It's happy for so many reasons.
>
> It's where I met my wife for the first time, in the very same spot on the beach. Yellow bikini and all. That was the summer of 1980. Eight children, seven grandchildren later, that memorable meeting and the dream are as real to me as anything else right now. More real than this cup of green tea I'm drinking (sip).
>
> I've had so many incredible memories there with Tamara, our children, her mom and dad and stepdad (Tam's dad passed away prematurely in 1988 a couple of months before our firstborn, Micah David, was gifted to us), with family and friends. My children love it there as well. And two of my four daughters are getting married there soon (October 2024, April 2025)!
>
> Anyway, here's the dream.
>
> > It's dark before sunrise. Not much moon, but plenty of glorious stars in the sky, so the breakers and their white foam are somewhat visible. You can hear and smell the ocean living before you.
> >
> > Facing east, listening to the waves and wind, I find myself holding hands with Tamara on my right and realize that I'm holding hands with someone on my left whom I don't know. But then I realize that Tamara is holding

[1] https://www.google.com/maps/place/1807+Beacon+St,+New+Smyrna+Beach,+FL+32169/@29.057199,-80.9067996,18.06z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x88e729797e1c49ad:0x707470e58e677466!8m2!3d29.0570125!4d-80.9066302!16s%2Fg%2F11c4ssx5r8?entry=ttu.

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hands with someone to her right and the person to my left is holding someone's hand to his or her left (I don't recall whether it was a man or woman to my left, but I know it was an adult) and on and on it goes from there as far as I can see.

To my left, the north, are the jetties. A rock outcropping at the north end of NSB, the southern lip into the Intracoastal waterway created by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1935. The northern jetties lip is south Daytona Beach.

As far as I could see to my left, and as far as I could see to my right, there were people holding hands, looking east.

We started singing hymns and praise songs. It seemed like it went on for quite some time.

All of a sudden the singing slowly died down. We all began to focus on a small, single light way out on the horizon that just appeared. It looked like it was standing still. But pretty soon we realized it was moving toward us. Fast. It was just about to reach the breakers, seemingly 20 feet or so off the water's surface when the brightness splintered.

The light raced into our eyes, down into our chests. And we were all yanked up into the sky. It was a scary feeling. It didn't hurt but looking back it felt something like the combined feeling of taking off in an airplane at the velocity of punching a Tesla.

And that's when I awoke.

The yank in the dream yanked me awake, and I found myself pulled forward sitting up with my forehead about to touch my knees. Thank goodness I was young and in good shape. Otherwise, it might have thrown my back out.

I sat there for a moment wondering what the heck had just happened. Then I laid back down and fell into a deep sleep.

That morning, I got up wondering about the dream, ate some breakfast, and headed to my class on the law of torts.

Slowly, the dream faded in my consciousness but would periodically surface and move into my thoughts during the days that followed.

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The morning star rises.

Over the next weeks, as I was reading in 2 Peter 1, I discovered something that caused the dream to come alive:

> For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, *until the day dawns* and ***the morning star rises*** *in your hearts*….

Full stop. What does that mean? I wondered.



I spent the next hour or so looking for what else the Bible had to say about the "morning star" and what I found blew my mind.

It still does.

A few days ago, the memory of this dream came back to me amid one of my frequent early morning sleep interruptions at age 63. It kept me from going back to sleep, so instead of fighting the thoughts back to sleep I went with them. As I often do in such sleepless periods with thoughts flowing, I opened my Notes app and created a new note: "The Morning Star – NSB." It was wonderful thinking about NSB and that dream.

They were happy moments laying there in the dark of our room with Tam next to me sleeping away. Joyful thoughts thinking about the summer of 1980, beginning our relationship, smitten, inseparable that summer, heading off to UF that fall together. Getting to know her mom and dad, her brothers and sister. We all grew up about a half mile from each other. They lived in Bretton Woods, and I lived in Druid Hills. They dubbed their neighborhood sports teams, "the Bretton Woods Bulldogs." I forget what we called ours. But we used to play sandlot football against each other growing up and had wrestling matches in the "sand pit" near their hood.

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I knew Tamara's two older brothers, Garth and Kevin, distantly during those days and knew her older sister, Kyra, a little better. We had Geometry together when I was in 10th grade and she was in 11th. Tamara and I rode the school bus together one time when she was in 9th and I was in 10th grade, and she tells a funny story of me flirting with her that day. But for some reason, we never connected until that summer of 1980. I always say she was off chasing either the surfer boys or high culture boys at our high school, both of whom were rare species in that day and time. So, I think she finally decided she had to lower her standards and gave me a chance.

But I digress. Where was I?

Oh, yes, the dream back in 1985 and my discoveries about "the morning star" present in Scripture back then.

Revelations from the book of Revelation, back into the Old Testament.

I learned that there are two other places where the Greek words for "morning star" come together in the Bible. Both are in the Revelation (i.e., Apocalypse) to John.

> Revelation 2:26-29
>
> [26] The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, [27] and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. [28] *And I will give him* ***the morning star***. [29] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'
>
> Revelation 22:16
>
> [16] "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, ***the bright morning star***."

Wow. Jesus is the "bright" *morning star* and somehow, he gives *the morning star* (gives himself?) to the one who "conquers" (or, overcomes NASB) and keep his "works" (or, deeds) "until the end" – which I guessed then and am pretty convinced now means the end of time, which starts when he returns.

When I saw this in Revelation, I thought to myself, "Is that the light we saw in my dream? Was it Jesus in the dream, the bright morning star on the horizon who somehow splintered into rays and gave us at the dawn of day the morning star rising in our

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hearts?" I've wondered this ever since, with long periods when I never thought about it or gave it a second thought.

But recently, on the morning of August 8, 2024, around 1:25 am or so, I remembered the dream and dove into the "morning star" Scriptures again, and it's been a fun journey giving rise to this story.

Sometime later in 1985 I realized through study and reading commentaries that there are two places in the Old Testament – one in the Law (the book of Numbers) and the other in the Major Prophets (the book of Isaiah) foreshadowing what Peter and Jesus say about the "morning star" – fulfilling, as Peter says, the prophetic word of God given centuries before. Peter puts it this way:

> And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed,…knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
>
> 2 Peter 1:19-21

These two OT prophetic loci reference "star" and "light" in ways that the NT picks up in various ways, particularly coalescing them in the "morning star" texts found in 2 Peter and Revelation.

Numbers 24:15-19, Balaam's Final Oracle, is the first:

> [15] And he took up his discourse and said,
>
> "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
> the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
> [16] the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
> and knows the knowledge of the Most High,
> who sees the vision of the Almighty,
> falling down with his eyes uncovered:
> [17] I see him, but not now;
> I behold him, but not near:
> **a *star* shall come out of Jacob**,
> and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
> it shall crush the forehead of Moab
> and break down all the sons of Sheth.
> [18] Edom shall be dispossessed;

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Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed.
Israel is doing valiantly.
[19] And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion
and destroy the survivors of cities!"

The beginning of the fulfillment of Balaam's prophetic vision in Numbers 24:17 is found in Matthew 2:1-2 explicitly:

> The Visit of the Wise Men
>
> [1] Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, [2] saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? *For we saw his star when it rose* and have come to worship him."

Secondly, the major prophet Isaiah gives us the other prophetic OT lens through which we see the resurrected Jesus as "the root and the descendant of David, ***the bright morning star***."



> Isaiah 60:1-3
>
> The Future Glory of Israel
>
> [1] Arise, shine, for your **light** has come,
> and the glory of the LORD **has risen** upon you.
> [2] 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.
> [3] And nations shall come to **your light**,
> and kings to the brightness of **your rising**.

The LORD (YHWH) here in Isaiah is Jesus, God's Beloved Son, the bright morning star.

He, the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5), shines upon those who believe, brings his glory upon them.

And he shines *in them* when he gives them the morning star, by which it now seems to me that he brings about in the transfiguration-transformation-metamorphosis of our mortality into immortality (1 Cor 15:50-55).

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Put another way, it comes about through "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4).

Back to the future in 2 Peter.

Let's go back to the future in Peter's second letter:

> For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, *until the day dawns* and ***the morning star rises*** *in your hearts*, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Back to the future?

Yes.

This is an eschatological text pointing to the future ("coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "*until the day dawns* and ***the morning star rises*** *in your hearts*").

What we miss, if we're not careful, is that Peter's reference to the transfiguration of Jesus recorded for us in Mark 9:7//Matthew 17:5//Luke 9:35 brings us both back and forward in time: back to the future, so to speak.

> It brings us back to a dramatic event in space-time when God the Father bore witness to Peter, James, and John about his Beloved Son.
>
> And when Jesus is transfigured-transformed-metamorphosed in the presence of Peter, James, and John – before "he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory" – it is as if both the Father and the Son are unveiling the future not only to Peter, James, and John, but also to us who read and believe this 1st century account in the 21st century.
>
> It's like both Father and Son are showing us what will happen when Jesus, the bright morning star, returns distributing the morning star in the hearts of those

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who believe, those who have overcome and faithfully kept the deeds of Jesus (Rev 2:26), those who are working and waiting for Jesus to bring heaven to earth and, as N. T. Wright is fond of saying, to "set the world to rights."

Transfiguration to the morning star, "in the twinkling of an eye."



So here is where I end up, and where I end.

It's been 39 years since I had that happy, mystifying dream on NSB at my happy place.

And now I've come to believe that the transfiguration of Jesus was a foreshadowing of the future promise to us that will come when he returns, because he is risen bodily from the dead, because he is alive, and God has promised it by raising him from the dead.

I believe that those who are alive when he returns will receive the morning star of transforming life and will be metamorphosed into immortality as 1 Corinthians 15:50-55 tells us, with new bodies encasing new central nervous systems and everything else new, when Jesus brings heaven to earth in fulfillment of all the prayers we've prayed ("Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven") and all the promises God has made to us in Christ.

The Bible is clear that when he returns we will be like him. Somehow, it's going to involve light, the bright morning star giving us the morning star rising in our hearts when the day dawns. Get ready. The Morning Star is coming. Jesus is going to wrap up the world and set it to rights.

I can't wait. Come Lord Jesus!







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