

The Light in the Darkness

Isaiah 9:1-7

This morning we're going to pause in our study of the book of Revelation. We're at a decent stopping point after Pastor Dave walked us through Revelation chapter 5 last week. I thought we might save Revelation chapter 6, that talks about the 4 horsemen of the Apocalypse, I thought we might save that for Wednesday's Christmas Eve service, so please make sure you come out for that doomsday message. I'm kidding, we're planning a fun, family friendly Christmas Eve service with some great praise and worship, as well as some special music, and a focus on our Savior Jesus as the *super-hero* of Christmas. That'll be a fun time together at 5:30pm, Wednesday. And then we'll continue our journey in Revelation, with the doom of chapter 6, once we get back together in January.

There are many, many Old Testament prophecies that, hundreds of years beforehand, foretold about Jesus Christ. Perhaps one that you hear most often quoted during the Christmas season is from Isaiah 9, it says *"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light... For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."* **(9:2a, 6)** This morning, we're going to take a deeper look at this passage and at the surrounding context as it relates not only to the first coming of Jesus- a child born in Bethlehem wrapped in cloth lying in a manger, but also to the second coming of Jesus- the warrior King descending from the sky described in Revelation 19. Before we read the passage together, let me give you a little historical context that should help unlock the best understanding of this passage.

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem, and was called as a prophet by God around the year 740 BC, which means about 740 years before Jesus was born. And his writings span over the course of approximately 60 years. The basic theme of Isaiah is this: God is bringing judgment against Jerusalem and Israel for the people's rebellion against God's covenant with them. And God is also judging the surrounding nations as well for their rejection of Him as God. And the judgement that is coming for Israel, is *complete* destruction as a nation. The language used tells us that the nation will be totally destroyed- it says the land will be rendered

utterly desolate, even a remaining portion of people left will be *burned*, the people will be *shattered*, it says that the “tree of Israel” will be completely chopped down... and yet, that tree will have a stump, a “holy seed” that remains. (Chapter 6) The language conveys the idea that the light of the nation of Israel will be completely snuffed out and it will be in total gloom and darkness. And that’s where we enter chapter 9, with the promise of a light. But before we read that section, let’s keep going with our overview.

In chapter 11, Isaiah defines the previously mentioned stump- the holy seed- *not* as a percentage of Jewish people who will remain or return to the land of Israel- but rather the stump, the holy seed, is referred to as a *single person*. The stump, the holy seed, is described as a specific person who is a *branch* from the roots of Jesse. (Jesse was King David’s father). This branch will have the 7 Spirits of the Lord upon Him (we’ve mentioned these 7 spirits a couple times from our study in the book of Revelation) The Spirit of the LORD, the spirit of wisdom, of understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and fear of the LORD. This stump, holy seed, branch person will “*strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.*” (**V 4b**) Does that sound like anyone we’ve mentioned in the book of Revelation? (Chapter 19, Jesus returning to earth with a sword coming out of His mouth, to strike down the nations) The book of Isaiah says He will be dressed in righteousness and faithfulness, and in His time the wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the young goat, a calf and a young lion will hang out together with a young boy, children will be able to play around cobra nests- and in that day- covenant people who remain whether from Israel, Assyria, Egypt, Pathos, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, the various islands- people from wherever- will be gathered together under one flag.

The theme of judgment, yet sprinkled with hope based in a Messianic figure, continues up through Isaiah chapter 39. And basically what happens in history between chapter 39 and 40, is that what Isaiah foretold would happen, *happened*. Israel was cut down, demolished by Assyria and then exiled by God to Babylon. And starting in chapter 40 there is hope mentioned again, that God wants to comfort, and bring strength to the weary. Well, after 70 years in exile, God did bring some people, whose hope remained in Him, back to the land of Israel- comforting, strengthening them- and yet Israel was not restored as a

nation in the way the people expected. It did not become a renewed nation state (no it was still under Babylonian control), it did not become a place of the nations where the wolf, lamb, cobra and child could play together. Instead, a servant of God is described in chapter 49, one who has a mouth like a sharp sword (again, we know who this is- Revelation 19), and this *servant* is named *Israel*. **(49:3)** Do not underplay this statement. The people expected to return after God's judgement to a *nation* called Israel, and instead what they got was a *person* called Israel. And even to this day, those who are more concerned about the *nation* than the *person* are completely missing God's point.

God's servant Israel, this person, chapter 53- would be exalted, yet would suffer and be killed- He'd be a lamb slaughtered, who would take on the people's sins, and in the end- He would be rewarded. Because of Him, chapter 54 describes prosperity, and chapter 55 describes a free offer of mercy, chapter 56 describes rewards for obedience to God offered to the nations of the world; yet chapter 57 changes gears and calls out those who continue to do evil, chapters 58 and 59 continue that theme and thus call people to repentance- it's stated that a Redeemer is promised for those who turn from wrongdoing. Chapter 60 describes the earth once again in darkness, yet a light will shine. Chapter 61 contains the words later quoted by Jesus as recorded in Luke 4, it says "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD anointed me To bring good news to the humble; He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, To proclaim release to captives, And freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD.*" **(61:1-2a)**

Chapter 65- God says He will reveal Himself and will be received by those who had not known of Him beforehand- and they will be rewarded; but to those who claim they know Him and yet rebel against Him- they will be cursed. God says His servants will be called by another name (in other words, *not* Israel, **65:15**). For He is going to create a new heaven and a new earth- a *New Jerusalem*. **(65:17, Revelation 21)** And the ending chapter 66, sums up the whole book of Isaiah with basically the idea that those from all nations who humbly purify themselves as His servants, will experience His glory and will experience the new heavens and earth; but those who rebel against Him will be slayed by the LORD's sword. Basically the same summary as the book of Revelation.

And the reason I wanted to give you a fast overview of the entire book of Isaiah, is because as we are reading from chapter 9, I want us to already have in our minds that this is not just referring to the baby in a manger, but it is referring also to the eternal Messiah warrior King suffering Servant who came so that He could give His life in order to offer us forgiveness; who is forming a new nation, a new Israel, a new Jerusalem, a new Heaven and Earth under His Lordship for those who humbly surrender to Him- purifying themselves by turning from wrong to right, from selfishness to surrender, who is coming to judge the world with the sword of His mouth, eliminating those who deny His worthiness as King while rescuing with salvation those who proclaim Him as King. That's a heavy Christmas message, right? And yet, it's the 100% truth of Christmas. If we somehow miss this truth, then we miss the whole meaning of Christmas. Alright, Isaiah 9, the people of Israel and the surrounding nations are in darkness and gloom because of their rebellion against God, because of their separation from God, because of the judgement of God... verse 1, and we'll read all 7 verses and then walk back through it... **(v1-7)**

This is a really awesome passage of scripture, let's go through it verse by verse. **Verse 1** talks of the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, those are 2 of the 12 tribes of Israel, and if you have maps in the back of your Bible, you'll see that the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali settled right near the Sea of Galilee, which is the region confirmed at the end of the verse. Something will happen there around the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the tribes Zebulun and Naphtali, that will make that region *glorious*. What is this glorious thing that will happen there? **Verse 2...**

The whole land is walking in metaphorical, spiritual darkness- as I mentioned, the book of Isaiah tells us what is meant by that, the idea is that the people are disconnected from God, their rebellion has reached the limit, God's patience has ended, and irreversible destruction has been decreed for the land. But, in this region of Galilee, a light will shine. Now, I think perhaps sometimes when we hear this passage about the light appearing in the darkness, maybe we're all kind of thinking about the bright star that led the wisemen to Jesus in Bethlehem. We probably think of a cold, dark night, and not only the light of a star guiding the wisemen, but also the light of the angels appearing in the night sky to announce

to the shepherds the birth of Jesus. While all of what I've just described is accurate- the star nor the angels are the light that Isaiah is referring to. Bethlehem is not in the region of Galilee, its actually a pretty good distance away from the region of Galilee. Bethlehem is just outside of Jerusalem, far south of Galilee, in the region of Judah. The light being referred to here by Isaiah is *Jesus Himself*. The Gospel books- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, all tell us that Jesus spent most of His time during His ministry where? (In the region of *Galilee*) Not only this, but Gospel writer John, in the first chapter of his book, very much attributes Jesus to being the Light that shines in the darkness. (John 1) Luke 2 records Simeon meeting baby Jesus and proclaiming He is light for revelation for the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel. In **John 8:12**, Jesus is recorded as specifically referring to Himself as the "Light of the world."

Jesus is the person being referred to here in Isaiah as the Light. And now addressing Jesus who is the Light, Isaiah says in **verse 3...**

This Light, Jesus, will multiply the nation. How is He going to multiply the nation, when Isaiah has told us God has already declared that He is going to irreversibly cut down the nation? How are the people going to be able to rejoice when destruction arrives and remains? What does that mean? Well, let's let scripture interpret scripture, listen to how Isaiah answers these questions later on in chapter 65, when God is describing a contrast between His servants and those who are rebellious against Him. Isaiah **chapter 65:13-15** says this, addressing those in Israel who have rebelled against Him: *"Therefore, this is what the Lord God says: Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry. Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. 14 Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart, But you will cry out from a painful heart, And you will wail from a broken spirit. 15 You will leave your name as a curse to My chosen ones, And the Lord God will put you to death. But My servants will be called by another name."* Then **verse 17** *"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind."*

These verses tell us that Jesus will multiply the nation, not in an earthly literal sense- no, that nation was being cut down. But servants of Jesus, made up of

nations from all around the world, who turn to Jesus as His servants- will be called by another name. They will be a new nation, a Kingdom of Priests as the book of Revelation states. They will be given reason to rejoice, they will be glad, they will be blessed, they will eat and drink, they will be honored. The servants of this Light to come, Jesus, will be so happy that they won't even give thought to the old earthly life. The former things will not be remembered or even come to mind. Can you think of a moment in your life when you were the absolute most happy, content, joyful, that you have ever been? ...That moment, in comparison, is going to seem so lame that you'll forget about it as you're experiencing the things Jesus has in store for you as His servant.

Now, has Jesus fulfilled all these things yet, did Jesus while He was teaching in Galilee bring all of these promises into existence? No. Not exactly. Not yet. But we do see the beginning formation of a new nation. And we do see the blessing of miracles here and there. What we find during Jesus life, living/teaching in Galilee, is that there is still extreme hardship and destruction going on in the earthly national borders that used to be called Israel. The land is occupied by the Romans, and is only referred to as the Roman Province of Judea and Galilee. The language of the land isn't even Hebrew, it's Aramaic and Greek. There's not much rejoicing, the people are heavily taxed and persecuted by the government. And yet, Jesus called people living in that harsh reality, into a new reality that was coming. He invited people, no matter what their background, into a new formation of people bonded together as servants of the One true Creator God. He worked miracles that proved He was sent by God with this message. The miracles served not only as proof of the truth of His message, but the miracles also served as a foreshadowing of the life of healing and freedom that was to come, for God's servants, in this new Kingdom nation state. **Verse 4...**

I think this verse is not *just* talking spiritually, but literally too. Yes, it's spiritual in the sense that Jesus, by His death on the cross and resurrection back to life, He breaks the burden of sin. In taking the sin of the world upon Himself, Jesus lifts the weight of sin off of His servants. Jesus takes on the punishing staff of God Himself, the staff is removed from bearing down on the shoulders of mankind. But even for those who live life under the earthly weight of oppressive governments, occupied nation states, hostile persecution- when they pass from

this earth either in death or when Jesus gathers His church to Himself- they will be freed from all physical burden and all literal earthly oppression as well.

The reference to the battle of Midian is worth noting. The battle of Midian is the battle described in Judges 7. At the time, the people group known as the Midians, for about 7 years, infested the land of Israel, destroying their crops and livestock, living off the land while the people of Israel went hungry. And Gideon, along with 300 other men, under the Lord's instruction, encircled the military camp of Midian, blew trumpets, smashed clay pots, and shouted at the top of their lungs, and the Midian army was thrown into shock and confusion- they began fighting and killing amongst themselves, and those who survived the infighting fled far away. And the people of Israel were able to collect a huge amount of gold, amulets, ear rings, necklaces, fancy robes- all this plunder, that the Midians just left behind as they ran away. Judges 8 says the Midians were so wealthy that even their camels worn bling, and all that bling was left behind for God's covenant people to collect. And I think the reference to this event is conveying to us the idea that this coming Light, will singlehandedly defeat the oppressors. The servants of God themselves won't have to fight at all, as was the case with Gideon against the Midianites; and there will be a ridiculous amount of reward to collect as well, as was the case with the battle of Midian. **Verse 5...**

This Light, Jesus, will one day put an end to all wars. There will be no more need for soldiers, military boots, blood stained military uniforms- this could all be thrown into the fire for burning. Verse 6 gives us more details about this Light, nation multiplying, joy increasing, burden breaking, war ending hero... **(verse 6)**

A Child will be born. Isaiah didn't realize it at the time, but later those truly seeking God, would realize this Child who was born in Bethlehem, who then lived and taught in Galilee, who then took on the sins of the world as He died on a cross- those truly seeking God who followed Jesus realized that this was actually God Himself, born into human flesh. This Child was God, humbling Himself and taking on the form of mankind. Though God, He limited Himself and made it so that He had to learn to walk, to work, to function in this world as a mortal fleshly human. But the humble ranking of a lowly human would only last for a season, eventually the government of the world will rest on His shoulders- He will end up

being the ultimate authority, the ruling official, the God figure calling all the shots. He will be called Wonderful Counselor- Jesus was definitely that during His time on earth- His answers, wisdom, and teaching time and time again silenced in wonder all those attempting to outwit Him. The truth He taught was the ultimate counsel of the day, and remains the ultimate counsel to this day. He said Himself that even after He left the earth, God would send another counselor, a Helper- the Spirit of truth; and so through His Spirit, Jesus still remains the Wonderful Counselor.

He will be called *Mighty God*. Now, it's sacrilegious, it's heresy, it's blasphemy, to call anyone "Mighty God" other than God- the Mighty, Creator, all-powerful God. Like I said, the followers of Jesus realized this later, but here Isaiah says it in real plain language that everyone *should* have picked up on- this coming Light, nation multiplier, joy increaser, breaker of burdens, ender of wars, coming Child- is the Mighty God- Creator God Himself, in human flesh.

Eternal Father. My earthly father passed away in 2019. Loosing a dad has ripple effects on many levels, for years afterwards. But there's a type of Father, who Isaiah is saying will come, that will be eternal- He won't die, He won't be lost, He won't pass away, the relationship with Him won't be broken nor estranged- He will be a forever Father.

Prince of Peace. This is really cool. A King is a fatherly ruling figure, and a prince is the son of a king. Jesus is Wonderful Counselor, He is Mighty God, He is Eternal Father, but in a sense, He's also a "Son of the Mighty God Eternal Father." Jesus-God decided that a Father-Son relationship was the best way to describe Himself on Earth as God clothed in human flesh. Jesus was "of God" and in God's likeness as a son is in the likeness of his father. And in time, a son eventually becomes more and more like His father as he grows into an adult and matures. Jesus, in the beginning, was very much "son like"- born as a human child. But as time progresses, when we see Jesus again, He will very much be in full Father form. Using earthly, inadequate words- when we see Jesus again, He will have matured into the very spitting image and function of His Father- God Almighty. Jesus is Father King *and* Prince Son, and He's specifically the Prince of what? Peace.

Throughout history, it has been a common practice for kings of empires to marry their son *the prince*, to the daughter of a king from another empire, in order to unify the two kingdoms and promote peace. It didn't mean that the prince was always peaceful, no- he would eventually more than likely have to defend the united kingdom he would inherit against enemies- but for the purpose of recognizing the peace treaty between two nation states created by the marriage of a prince to a princess of another state- a prince of peace would be a pretty good title to express that. And that's actually the reality of what Jesus did for us. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, son of the Mighty God Father King, is described in the Bible as marrying the bride, the church- in figurative, spiritual language type sense. Jesus left His Heavenly Kingdom, in order to pursue a bride from another kingdom, the earthly kingdom of mankind, that was in bad standing with His Heavenly Kingdom. His marriage to the bride of the earthly kingdom brings unity and stability to them with the Heavenly Kingdom. He's the Prince of Peace. And we who are His church, His bride, will one day fully experience the peaceful results of what that union provides. One day the world will lie desolate- torn apart by war and disaster- and we who marry ourselves to Jesus will enter into His Kingdom of Peace. And will we ever have to worry about that Kingdom of Peace ending, will anyone ever come against this Prince of Peace and take peace away from Him and His people? No, verse 7... **(7a)**

Not only will there be no end to His Kingdom reign and His Kingdom peace, but there will be no end to the *increase* of His Kingdom reign and His Kingdom peace. In other words, it will be so great that it will seem like it just gets better and better and better each and every day- like, every day you wake up feeling that today is even *more* better and *more* peaceful than yesterday, and then the next day, you're like, I didn't think I could feel even *more* peaceful than yesterday, but somehow I am. The capacity of good ruling, justice, peace only increases, for all eternity. King David was a war time King, He was a man after God's own heart and loved the Lord dearly, even through terrible mistakes and failures- but his kingdom cannot be described as one of peace. It was David's son, *a prince*, David's son Solomon- who served as the next king, and it was during his time that there was truly a kingdom of peace. In fact, the Hebrew name Solomon is taken directly from the word Shalom- the name Solomon in Hebrew means peace. His time as king was the golden age of Israel. But it ended. The throne of

David became corrupted towards the end of Solomon's life. In contrast, the Light, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace- His human lineage is from the ancestry of King David, and He will rule in peace as did David's son Solomon, but there will be no end to the increase of His rule and peace. The rest of verse 7... **(7b)**

He will establish it- in other words He will create it, firmly plant it, solidify it. He will uphold it- support it, maintain it, keep it exalted high- through what means? Through real justice and righteousness. Elected officials always seem to run their campaigns and win your vote through talking about justice and doing really good, right things, but once they get in power... often justice and righteousness disappear. It won't be like that with this King. Once he takes the throne, from then on into all eternity, He will rule with justice, righteousness, and peace. The zeal of the LORD of armies will accomplish this. The zeal of the LORD, the intense passion, the righteous jealousy, the righteous anger of the LORD will accomplish these promises. What does this mean?

The LORD God Jesus Christ is so passionate about wanting to live with you and I in an eternal Kingdom of peace, joy, and prosperity- that He is willing to angrily yet justly, remove anyone who is preventing His Kingdom from experiencing peace, joy, and prosperity. The zeal of the LORD of armies was not revealed at the time of the child born in a manger, but the zeal of the LORD of armies will be on full display when the Light of the World Prince of Peace returns as described in Revelation 19.

This Christmas I want to encourage us all to embrace the fullness of who Jesus is. Not only the meekness of the child, but the fierceness of the coming ruling King.