

Light in the Darkness

Isaiah 9:1-7

During Advent we are looking some passage in Isaiah..

Isaiah weaves a Messianic expectation throughout this majestic book.

- o He tells of the Savior, who is God-with-us (7:14), the child destined to rule forever (9:6–7), the hope of the Davidic throne (11:1), the suffering servant of the Lord (42:1–9; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12), the anointed preacher of the gospel (61:1–3), the bloodied victor over all evil (63:1–6), and more.

All our longings are met in this Messiah! [Pray]

It's that time of year in which it seems that the darkness is chasing us. I'm sure you've said something like "It gets dark so early" recently.

Some of you may leave in the morning in the dark, go to work, and drive home in the dark.

- The darkness of this time of year illustrates the moral, social, personal, and relational darkness that exists in our area and in the world.
- But it's Christmas season.
- What does the message of Christmas say to the darkness?
- It preaches hope to us.

Christmas is about the light of Jesus Christ breaking into the darkness.

The remnant in Isaiah's day was sustained by the prediction of this great light, and our faith today is strengthened as we consider these glorious promises and fulfillments.

Christmas reminds us that God always keeps his promises.

Christmas reminds us that there's only one way to deal with the darkness in our life — the darkness we feel morally, socially, politically, relationally — and it's not with longer parties and more extravagant spending, or more exotic vacations — we deal with the darkness in our heart and in our world by looking to the Light of the World.

V. 2: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

- Isaiah uses the "prophetic perfect" – verb tense for completed action.
- He states it as if it has already taken place.
- And we know the Light did come, and He will come again.

At a basic, natural level, we understand the value of the light, don't we?

(A few months ago we considered the theme of light in the gospel of John).

The similarities between light and the Light of the World are helpful for understanding the coming of Christ:

1. Light causes a reaction.

- Teenagers, don't you love it when a parent turns the light on in the morning trying to wake you up?... that's great isn't it?
- Jesus has caused a quite a reaction in his coming!

- Light came into the world and some received it, some rejected it, but no one ignored it. Some “love darkness rather than light.” Others worship as the expected one.
- John Stott stated that in the gospel there were basically three responses to Jesus: (1) some hated him, (2) some were terrified by him; (3) others worshiped him — But no one casually “liked him”!
- His coming caused a reaction.
- You have to do something with Jesus Christ. Light has come!

2. Light brings life.

- Generally speaking, things grow in light.
- I read an article from Popular Science Magazine, “If the Sun Went Out How Long Would Life on Earth Survive?” [I’ve never asked that question but people have to write about something!]

Within a week, the average global surface temperature would drop below 0°F. In a year, it would dip to -100°. ... our planet would [eventually] reach a stable -400°

The majority of life would enjoy only a brief post-sun existence. Photosynthesis would halt immediately, and most plants would die in a few weeks....

With the food chain's bottom tier knocked out, most animals would die off quickly, but scavengers picking over the dead remains could last until the cold killed them.....

Humans could live in submarines in the deepest and warmest parts of the ocean....

- In short, we need the Sun for life.

3. Light symbolizes truth, purity and goodness, whereas darkness symbolizes falsehood, sin, corruption, evil, and distress.

- Isaiah 8:22 — this was Isaiah’s day: darkness.
- “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness.” (5:20)
- The Messiah is characterized by purity, justice and righteousness and purity.

Son of God, love’s pure light

Radiant beams from thy holy face

With the dawn of redeeming grace

Jesus, Lord at thy birth

4. Light provides safety.

- How many of you wanted to sleep with the lights on when little?
- Thieves operate in the dark usually...
- A life apart from Christ is a life of panic.

6. Light provides healing.

- People often move to warmer, sunnier climates for health reasons.
- Get you some vitamin D!
- “The Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.” (Mal 4:2)
- The rays of the sun bring healing to all who come under its influence.

7. Light brings joy.

- When the sun comes out after periods of darkness and bad weather, people get happy.
- Vampires come from NW, not Hawaii!
- Brits don't smile. (I'm exaggerating). Timmis: "I'm smiling on the inside."
- Verses 3-5 images of great joy.

Those are just a few opening reflections on the value of light...

The whole world needs the light of the world.

- Isaiah begins the chapter proclaiming the coming of this light into the world.
- This is Christmas. This is Advent.
- There are lots of lights this time of year; it's a festival of lights. (Candle light service)
- But may all those lights direct our attention to The Light. (Read/Pray)

Let's consider this text in two parts:

- (1) **The News of the Messiah [the Light] (9:1-5)**
- (2) **The Nature of the Messiah [The Light] (9:6-7)**

#1: The News of the Messiah (9:1-9:5)

Chapter 8 is doom and gloom (22), but then there is the announcement of light (read 1-2)

Let me take you back for a moment... 8th Century BC. (8:11-22)

- We are over 700 years before Christ.
- Judah is fairly prosperous, economically, but they are corrupt.
 - They had lost a king recently, Uzziah, and now it has the wicked King Ahaz. (2 Kings 16)
 - He's a sleazy kind of wheeler-dealer.
 - **His biggest concern is political and economic success; not faithfulness to Yahweh.**
 - He actually offered his own son up to be sacrificed (2 Kings 16:3)
 - He is facing a coalition of forces in the North – Syro-Ephraimite war.
 - Farther north than that was the I superpower of the day – **Assyria**.
 - It was expanding in every side. Judah was trying to survive in light of this danger.
 - So in addition to the idolatry and corruption that characterized most of Judah, the people were also insecure and fearful.

A. They are fearing everything except God's power (8:11-18) [7:2; 6; 16]

11-12: God gives this word to Isaiah & the remnant: Be different; don't be like the faithfulness nation.

- 12: "Conspiracy here and conspiracy there" –
- They are living as though God is not in charge.
- 12b: "Do not fear what they fear" (shaking as trees in the wind; ch 7)
 - There is a crisis; but it surface level.
 - It's nothing compared to the greatness of God.
- **A panic-driven life is not the Christian life.**

13: "This is the one you should fear": The Lord of Hosts.

- **To not fear God is to make him indifferent and insignificant.**

- **1 Peter 3:15** - Peter uses this verse applying it to Jesus Christ.
- **Settle this in your heart: Jesus is Lord and Jesus reigns.**

14-15: God is either your “**sanctuary**” (that is, *if you fear him*), or a “**stone of offense and a stumbling block**” (for *those who do not regard him as holy*).

16: Basically an appeal to return to the Scriptures, and give up conspiracy theories.

17-18: Isaiah and his children will fear the Lord. God will have a remnant.

B. They are believing everything except Gods’ Word! (8:19-22)

19: They rejected God and his word, and they became superstitious.

They are **turning to false sources of hope.**

- They trust what is futile.
- **Chesterton: “When a person ceases to worship God, he does not worship nothing, but worships everything.”**

20: Go back to the book! There is no hope/truth in these superstitious things. “**no dawn**”

- You don’t need occult gibberish when God has spoken clearly in his Word.

21a: The result of this way of life? The people are greatly distressed, disappointed, and hungry.

21b: Further, they are angry at their king, and their God.

- **“Looking for love in all the wrong places”**
- **They are looking for security in all the wrong places.**

This is Judah in 8th century BC!

It could be said of much of the modern world: idolatry, fear, false sources of hope.

C. It is into this dark situation that Isaiah proclaimed the news of the coming Messiah.

- The coming of the Messiah means you don’t have to be afraid anymore!
- It means you have every reason to trust God’s Word!
- It means you really can call on the Lord!
- It shows that God really does reign!
- It means salvation is here! Peace is here! Joy is here!
- All of our longings are met in this Messiah.

9:1-2: God says in effect, “Let there be light.”

- **The in-breaking of Jesus Christ into the world is that dramatic!**
- **God has intervened! God has kept his promises! (Gen 3:15; Gen 12).**

Where will this light be found? *Galilee of the Nations* (or Galilee of the Gentiles)

- **This was shocking!**
- If God were going to do something big, then he wouldn’t He start in divine headquarters: **Jerusalem!?**
- **But instead he starts in “Podunkville.”**
- **“Tarboro of the Nations”**
- **Barbourville of the Nations! (Corbin snobs)**
- **Regional pride exists around the world, and it was present in the 1st century!**

But **Galilee was more than a little nowhere place...**

Galilee was in an important place geographically

- Whenever Israel was attacked it was usually in the **north**.
- Enemies would march through the Fertile Crescent and invade, “**Galilee in the north.**”
- The peoples of Galilee had a history of **slavery and despair**.
- **God came to his people first, where his people had suffered most.**
- **They who had experienced the darkness of oppression would be squinting at the coming of the light!**

Due to its location, and its war torn history, it was also an area of great **ethnic diversity**:
Hittites, Canaanites, Mesopotamians, etc

- “Galilee of the Gentiles” [Nations] was a by-word for that which is compromised, impure, religiously mixed and confused.

This area will be the first to see the light of the Messiah!

Matthew 4:12-17 this text is cited to announce Jesus’ public ministry.

¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness

have seen a great light,

and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,

on them a light has dawned.”

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- **Matthew begins here and ends with make disciples of “all nations.” (Matt 28)**
- **The light would come to Galilee – and after the events of Easter – Jesus would commission his disciples to the ends of the earth.**
- **He is the Savior of the Nations.**

All of this was shocking.

- **The Son of David had none of the markers of greatness; a person of no consequence as far as the world was concerned.**
- **But there was divine glory in Galilee, though much of the world did not recognize it.**

2: They will see God’s salvation in the Messiah.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining

‘Til he appeared and the soul felt its worth

A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices

For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn

3: The “**you**” here is God. He is the chief actor in the passage! He will do it! (V. 7)

God will intervene.

- 3a: “**Multiply the nation...**” God is spreading out this light to more and more people (“multiplied the nation”), which will one day be made up of a people from every tribe, language, people, and nation” (Rev 7:9).
- 3b: “**You have increased its joy**” God will bring joy where there was gloom.
 - Joy is mentioned some 25 times in Isaiah.
 - There’s a lot of superficial joy at Christmas... True joy is found in this Messiah.

D. He gives pictures of joy describing God’s deliverance and blessing (3b-5)

It’s like the NBA Championship

[These predictions are near and far, Assyria, and the coming Kingdom]

1. **Great Harvest** (v. 3) -- a seen of joy and abundance... the idea here...
 - Isaiah uses beautiful imagery of **feasting to describe the kingdom of God** (cf., Isaiah 25:6-8)
2. **Triumph like Gideon** (v. 4). God’s deliverance will be like Gideon’s victory over the Midianites – which was clearly the result of God fighting for his people. (Judges 6-8).
 - **Gideon was an unlikely hero, and won in an unlikely way (with torches and trumpets, throwing the enemy into a panic, leading the enemy to slaughter themselves!).**
 - This **pattern** set forth in the OT comes to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, an unlikely hero who would set the captives free in an unlikely way: through death.
 - God turns the wisdom of the world on its head.
 - **Assyrian’s boasted of their “yoke” – that deliverance from Assyrian pointed to an ultimate one...**
 - **God’s speciality is breaking chains.**
 - **Many Christmas songs are freedom songs, and rightly so.**
3. **Trampled Enemy** (v. 5). **God will do away with wars**
 - **Even boots and garments** – not just weapons, but their clothes will burn! War will cease.
 - The Messiah will burn the boot of **our enemies Satan, sin and death.**
 - **We don’t have an enemy of Assyria, but these enemies. And Jesus defeated them.**
 - His reign will bring universal peace; instruments of war will not be needed (cf. 2:4).

There is still a battle going on, but it’s a mop up victory.

- **It’s like “D Day” and “V Day” of World War II.**
- World War II was essentially decided during the Battle of Normandy (referred to as “D-day”) in 1944, when Allied forces dealt a fatal blow to Germany that made their defeat inevitable.
- But it **took another year for Germany to surrender (V-Day).**
 - **It was an already-but not yet victory.**
 - The battle was over but some mop up work going on.
- Jesus won the battle by dying on the cross and rising from the dead – like D Day.
- But the victory over evil will not be fully manifested until V-Day, when He returns!
- **He trampled our enemies at Easter, and will trample evil once and for all at his return.**
- **He will have a bride for himself: Kill the dragon, get the girl.**

How will all of this come about? And who will this Deliverer be? Now Isaiah tells us...

#2: The Nature of the Messiah (9:6-7)

Consider (1) his **birth**, (2) his **names**, and (3) his **kingdom**.

- This “**child theme**” is big in Isaiah (7:14; Isaiah’s own children; children playing [ch. 11])

God’s provision for us in our sin, fear and despair is a child.

- “God’s answer to the bully of Assyria, was not the promise to send a bigger bully.
- His answer for the world’s bully’s today is not to send a bigger one.
- His answer is Jesus.” (Ortlund Jr)

A. His Birth (9:6a)

6: How is all of this going to happen?

Who is going to appear to bring **this light and liberty and joy? A child.**

His humanity: “a child... a son”

- Born like a baby, vulnerable, small, fully human. “Born of woman” (Gal 4:4)
- He did the things babies do.
 - He didn’t have a halo on his head!
 - “No crying he makes” is actually not right!

Mild, he lays his glory by

Born that men no more may die

Born to raise the sons of earth

Born to give them second birth

His deity at least hinted at: “a son *given*”

- “God sent forth his son” (Gal 4:4)
- The Son par excellence
- His reflection of the Father is perfect – he is the Son of God

More on his deity: “government on his shoulders” (**Micah 5:2**)

Our deep longing for a **perfect and unending government is found in Jesus Christ.**

- Our King has strong shoulders.
- He can carry the world, for he has all authority in heaven and on earth.

But before these shoulders would carry the government his shoulders would have to carry a cross on his shoulders.

God’s grace is underscored here: “**for us**”

- Christmas is about **grace**.
- For Christ to change you, you must receive Him by grace through faith.

This is the ultimate gift.

- **Some gifts make you swallow your pride.**
- You have to admit you need this gift in order to be thankful for it..
- **How would you respond if someone gave you a ... A Dieting Book? A book on “how to win friends” A case of Deodorant?**

- Sometimes people give you gifts because they know you like them; but some may give you certain gifts because they think you need them! *socks!* Political books...
- You are only thankful for these kinds of gifts if you think you *need* them!
- For the gift of Christ to change our lives, we must say *we need him*.
- We need him in a most desperate way; for our condition is worse than a physical or social problem.
- God didn't send a physical trainer into the world; he didn't send a life coach into the world; He did not send a politician into the world – He sent the Savior into the world!!!
- Why? Because that's what we needed!!! And He Has graciously provided him to us!

For Christ to change you, you must swallow your pride, and call out to him to save you.

- You must admit you're a sinner, and give up control of your life...
- "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17)

The next sentence tells us that this Christ is fully sufficient to save us.

B. His Names (9:6b)

These four names show more of his unique identity.

- They are titles that you can only give to God.
- Have you seen those book *7,000 Baby Names*? You won't find these!
- Christmas Letters/Cards — Some people have extraordinary kids! You would think these were their names.

1. **Wonderful Counselor.**

- See **Isaiah 11:2**.
- Throughout Isaiah, the prophet laughs at human counsel; and contrast it with the superiority of God's counsel.

In **Isaiah 28:29**, he speaks of the false wisdom of Israel's misguided leaders, and how this should have created a deep longing for one who could give divine counsel:

²⁹ This also comes from the LORD of hosts;
 he is wonderful in counsel
 and excellent in wisdom.

So it is with Jesus Christ; **he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom.**

- His teaching "**astonished**" people. (Matt 7:28). His acts astonished them.
- He is in contrast to Ahaz, whose decisions ruined people;
- Jesus' wisdom transcends Solomon.
- The Decisions of a king make or break the kingdom;
- Jesus is the only one qualified to rule this kingdom.
- Often the king had advisors (2 Sam 16:23), and the strength of one's reign had to do with the quality of his counselors.
- But Jesus needs no counselors. (**Romans 11:33-36**)

Therefore, look to him as your counselor! Build your life on his word.

- He is a "**Supernatural Counselor**"

- **Newhart: “Stop it!”**
- Jesus’ counsel is better than Newhart!

He is with us always!

Your pastors can’t be with you all the time to counsel you; but Jesus can.

Your friends/parents can’t be with you all the time, but Jesus can.

Jesus can run an everlasting kingdom because he is the only one with the wisdom to do it!

- In Isaiah’s day, a time of fear and insecurity, instead of seeking the Lord’s counsel, they were inquiring of mediums and necromancers, etc.
- Don’t look to the wrong place; look to the Christ of Scripture for supernatural counsel.

2. **Mighty God.** This expression always refers to God himself.

- The baby born in Bethlehem is called “Mighty God.”
- Able to take care of everything!
- His enemies are no match for him. “My Lord and my God” (John 20).

3. **Everlasting Father.** This is not a statement about the second person of the Trinity.

- It’s a statement about Jesus’ fatherly care.
- He loves us like a Father. He’s tender; merciful...
- Usually “Father is reserved for our God and Father, but Jesus is fatherly toward his disciples.
- In the gospels we see him calling individuals “son” and “daughter” with affection. (Matt 9:2; Mark 5:34).
- “Everlasting” shows his deity.

4. **Prince of Peace.** “Prince” was a common word for a government official (Isa 34:12; 49:7).

- But this prince will bring total peace, total shalom, something earthly princes could never do.
- Further, he brought peace by He reconciling enemies to the Father, through his death on the cross; and now gives us the experience of peace, as we trust him.
- Jesus gives us peace with God; allows us to experience the peace of God, and will one day bring universal peace fulfilling the promises of God.

9:6: Application: It’s hard to state the importance of verse 6!

Skeptic: “Keep the Merry, Dump the Myth.”

- Here’s what Isaiah 9 says to the skeptic: If it’s true, then everything else in the Bible makes sense – miracles, teaching, death, resurrection, ascension, return.
- Jesus’ birth foreshadows the rest of his life.
- If the story is false, then there’s why take any of the Bible seriously?
- You have to deal with it. It’s a stunning verse!

C. His Kingdom (9:7)

7a: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end”

- The word “**increase**” (or “vast”) carries the idea of an **ever-growing abundance (Isa 7:22), of multiplication (Gen 1:28).**
- Christ’s kingdom will be marked by unending multiplication and prosperity.
- There will be **love and knowledge and passion for all eternity.**
- We will not get **bored in this kingdom.** You won’t be staring at your phone all day!

7b: “on the throne of David”

- God promised that David would have a Son who would reign forever.
- Jesus is the answer to this promise (2 Sam 7:13,16).
- **Even King David himself will bow in worship before him.**

7c: he will “establish it” and “uphold it” with “justice and righteousness.”

- The kingdom of Jesus **will reflect the character of Jesus.**
- Justice and righteousness will mark it; there will be no oppression in the kingdom.
- **Within us is a desire for Justice; and it’s coming because Jesus is coming.**
- **The longing for justice is a longing for Jesus.**

We are reminded when we read Isaiah, like various other books of the Bible, of the **corrupt nature of human governments across history.**

- **Pharaohs** enslaved Israel with cruel oppression.
- **The Assyrian Empire (reigning during this time) was established by bloodshed and massacre, cruelty and torture, plundering, and exiling, being as vicious as any empire in human history.**
- **Alexander the Great** also left a trail of blood.
- Then we read of **Roman corruption**, torture and execution...
- And we could go on throughout history to talk about the sins of **England, Germany, Russia,**
- Or political corruption within our own government in the U.S. throughout our history.

Isaiah 9 tells us of the ultimate king and the ultimate kingdom.

- **There will be no more injustice in the world!**
- **There will be an end to every other kingdom, but not this one.**

Revelation 11:15 (ESV): The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

Who guarantees that this kingdom will come?

7d: “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this”

- **God’s zeal ensures it! He will do it! (See Isa 37:32 re his remnant)**
- **God will have a people for himself, and those people are united in the Messiah.**
- No power will **stop God’s Messianic purposes in Jesus.**

God is **not cold and indifferent; but zealous!**

- He knows only one way to love you, Christian: with zeal and passion and wholeheartedness.
- **That is how we are to love him – with passion!**

Isaiah proclaims this light to the remnant in the midst of a dark world; and in today's dark world, we know that the light has come, and he will come again.

Church, behold your Savior, Light Has Come!

- As our Wonderful Counselor, he has divine wisdom. Listen to him.**
- As our Mighty God, he defeats our enemies easily. Rejoice in him.**
- As our Everlasting Father, he loves us with a tender and eternal love. Enjoy "him.**
- As our Prince of Peace, we have been reconciled to God and one another, and look forward to the day in which we enjoy total shalom in a new heavens and new welcome. Welcome this peace. Anticipate this peace.**

**For to us... a child is born, to us a son is given;
And the government shall be upon his shoulder,
And his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**