

‘You have heard me say before that I love Christmas. At the heart of the Christmas celebration is the kernel of a wonderful historical event. In spite of all the overlay of history that often has threatened to completely obscure that wonderful event, Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into our world of sense and limitation to redeem us from our sins. That is the reality that overwhelms all the other stuff. As the apostle Paul said in another context, “shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” I will not allow Rudolf destroy my joy in this season. Hollywood will be Hollywood in all seasons and will be judged by the God they so often despise.

But there are important things to speak of today and things for which to rejoice. Let us look at Isaiah 9:1-8.

- 1 ¶ Nevertheless the dimness *shall not be* such as *was* in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.
- 2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.
- 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and* not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, *and as men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.
- 4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.
- 5 For every battle of the warrior *is* with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but *this* shall be with burning *and* fuel of fire.
- 6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
- 7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.
8. The LORD send a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.

Isaiah 8 tells us that Isaiah and his children were given as signs to the nation of Judah and Israel. Great troubles were prophesied against these nations and their kings. The offenses of God’s people are clearly marked in chapter 8: they had forsaken their trust in God and were seeking to false prophets and trusting in their alliances and in wizards and those with familiar spirits. Isaiah calls them back to the true God and predicts the awful tragedy of the invasion by Assyria and the wasting of the land. A great darkness would descent upon the land, a spiritual darkness of anguish and misery, so great that men would be without food and comfort, and they would see the misery upon the earth and curse their king and their God. The darkness in their souls would proceed from the prophets that the consulted—those that muttered and peeped, but did not speak according to the law and the prophets. There was no light in such prophets and those that consulted them found darkness in their souls, and thick darkness filled with distress and misery and into that darkness they would be driven away.

But for God’s people there is always a “nevertheless,” as Matthew Henry puts it. The promise of God cannot be turned aside by the darkness of man’s sin and misery. The darkness cannot overwhelm the light of the promises of God. I want to look at the first eight verses of Isaiah 9, especially to verses 6 and 7, a great Christmas text.

Vs. 1,2. Here is the “nevertheless.” The two afflictions are probably the invasions of Tiglath-pileser and Shalmanezar. There will be a glorious light will arise in the same places in Israel that were so distressed by these invasions. These places will be made glorious by the events that will take place. The world will never forget the events that will memorialize the land of Naphtali and Manasseh.

What is it that would memorialize the land of Zebulun and Naphtali for all the history of the world? Let us look at Matthew 4:12 ff “Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.*” (Mt 4:12-16 AV).

Matthew says that this prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. This is the light that would memorialize that land. This is the reason that we must understand the Old Testament in the light of the New. Jesus is the light that makes all things plain.

The coming of Christ would bring real joy to the world. Not the fleeting temporary joy that Israel knew from time to time: Until the coming of Christ, and the shining of the great light that is mentioned in verse 2, there was no true joy in Israel. Many times they had been increased. They certainly were joyful in the material benefits that came because of the conquest of the land under Joshua. They increased under David and Solomon. They increased during certain of the kings of Judah, as did also Israel at certain times under their kings. Land that had been lost was won back. Cities that had been lost were brought back under the rule of the house of David.

There would be an increase again after the captivity in Babylon that was yet some 200 years in the future, but predicted by Isaiah. The temple would be rebuilt and the city of Jerusalem restored. It would be restored under the Maccabees. King Herod would greatly enlarge the Temple and adorn it. Israel would be prosperous and have connections to the highest powers of the Roman Empire. But these times of joy were fleeting and mixed with great trouble and distress.

But the coming of Christ brings real joy—the contrast between the first of verse 3 and the last of the verse. The increases that had taken place before were temporal and fleeting; the dawning of the great light of the Gospel would bring joy unspeakable and full of glory, as the Apostle Paul put it. So I would read verse 3: “You have multiplied the nation, but not increased the joy—as you will do when Christ comes. When He comes men will rejoice as those who reap a great harvest and as those that divide the spoils of battle. I think I have Calvin with me on this also, for he emphasizes the “before thee” in verse 4 and says, “Men often rejoice, but with a deceitful and transitory *joy*, which is followed by mourning and tears. He affirms that this *joy* has its roots so deeply laid, that it can never perish or be destroyed. Such is also the import of the phrase *before thee*; for nothing cheers the godly so much as when the face of God shines sweetly on them. They are not like irreligious men, who are carried hither and thither by a blind and uncertain *joy*, but they have that which alone gives ground for full joy, their reliance on God’s fatherly kindness.”

The coming of Christ would bring the deliverance of His people from their real bondage: unbelief and sin. The bondage that physical, economic, and social bondage only mirrors. Jesus said that he that commits sin is the servant of sin. Men sin because they are slaves of sin. This great deliverance will be like the deliverance from Midian during the days of Gideon. It will be by God’s hand alone, and not by the arm of the flesh. It will be God who establishes His kingdom and brings joy to the sons of men.

This brings us to verses 6 & 7:

Vs. 6. This is the reason for all that that has gone before.

A child is born. The true humanity of Christ. He was truly human, born of the Virgin Mary.

A Son is given. The true deity and pre-existence of Jesus. He was the Son of God before He was made the Son of Man. This is the greatest of all gifts, this gift His Son as we read in John 3:16: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This everlasting life is a spiritual condition that includes the joy that we talked about and which is the result of God’s gift of His only begotten Son, as Isaiah says.

The government shall be upon His shoulders. He is entrusted with seeing that the will of God is carried out, and He does what no earthly king can do. An earthly king can command, but this King reigns from heaven, which means that His rule is in the hearts and minds of men, so that they are transformed. Their hearts and minds are changed and conformed to the will of God by His word and Spirit, so that they choose the will of God, they love the Lord, and they understand the promises of God.

His name shall be called: This is the name, which is a code for His attributes: Some of the attributes of Jesus Christ are mentioned here. This is His Name forever.

- Wonderful: How our hearts are filled with awe. Wonderful means that it is something really hard to understand.

Jesus Christ is revealed as wonderful. Do you know Him to be wonderful? Wonder working; miracle working. Christians are those that Christ has shown himself wonderful to. Is He wonderful to you? Has your soul ever been filled with awe, because He has shown something to you that only God could have known? The devotional and musical literature of the church is filled with expressions of the wonder of Jesus Christ. “Come let us Sing of a Wonderful Love...” “Marvellous Grace of our Loving Lord..” “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” “Wondrous King, All Glorious” See Hymn 571: from Psalm 62

My soul in silence waits for God
My Savior He has proved
He only is my Rock and tow’r
I never shall be moved

My honor is secure with God,
My Savior He is known;
My Refuge and my Rock of Strength
Are found in God alone.

On Him, ye people, evermore
Rely with confidence;
Before him pour ye out your heart,
For God is our defense.

For God has spoken o’er and o’er
And unto me has shown
That saving pow’r and lasting strength
Belong to Him alone.

Yea, loving kindness evermore
Belongs to thee, O Lord;
And thou according to his work
Dost every man reward.

“A Wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord.....”

- Counselor: In him are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: Col. 2 He is the best and greatest counselor: do you need wisdom; ask of God. Tough knots to solve in your career, family, soul, understanding. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a

light unto my path.” “Commit thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established.” But you must know the Scriptures, for therein is the data used by the Holy Spirit in moving our souls.

- The Mighty God; Jesus is truly God with strength [mighty]—God manifest in the flesh; the express image of His Father. Jesus is wisdom joined to strength, and therefore able to be a Savior. His voice penetrated the gloom and darkness of the tomb of Lazarus and brought him from the dead, and His calls His elect to life, those who were dead in trespasses and sins, a voice that penetrates the darkness of our sin and misery, giving us hope, causing us to rise up and follow Him.
- The Everlasting Father: Shows that Jesus is truly God. Father is a proper name for Deity. Because Jesus is God, he partakes of the divine attribute of fatherhood, even though when we speak of the Persons of the Trinity, He is the Son with respect to the Father. The eternal, everlasting “Author” or source of all things. In relationship to the First Person of the Trinity, He is a Son; with relation to Creation He is the Father and Source and Author of all things.
- ‘Prince of Peace’: He is the only king who can bring true peace, as well as true joy. He brings peace with God, the foundation of all other peace.

All who submit to Christ will lead a quiet and blessed life. If Christ is in your life, then there is peace in your life.

This speaks first of all of the conscience, for forgiveness of sins quiets the conscience, and a man has peace with God. As Calvin says, "Otherwise we must be engaged in incessant conflicts and liable to daily attacks." If you love Jesus Christ, then you love peace and seek peace. A disquieted spirit seeks to quarrel with everyone around; it strains at gnats and swallows camels; it lusts and wars and desires, and is never content because it does not seek its contentment in God.

Peace is therefore a gift of very great value. It is not the highest value, and we do believe that we should purchase peace at any price; in fact, it cannot be purchased at any price, for it is the gift of God by faith in Jesus Christ. But those who know the value and the benefits of peace will not trade it away in quarrels over trifles. A meek and quiet spirit; esteeming others better than ourselves; turning away wrath with a soft answer, are all methods that will help us to preserve the great treasure of Christ.

Vs. 7. His kingdom is the reality of which David’s kingdom is a type. He rules from the Jerusalem which is above. His kingdom shall have no end, but will increase more and more. This increase is permanent and lasting, not like the increases that God had given to Israel from time to time, which came to an end. The kingdom of Christ will endure forever, as we read so often in the prophets and in the other Scriptures.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform it. The joy is permanent because it does not depend upon the flesh or the will of man. It depends on the energy of the Lord of Hosts. The energy of the flesh will fail and the body will be laid in the dust, but Jesus Christ arose from the dead and is sitting at the right hand of God until all His enemies become His footstool. Judgment and justice will be established in the hearts and lives of His people. He will teach His people to love justice and mercy, to deliver those who

are in bondage to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Do you serve this king? Have you given your heart to Him?

Application:

- A. Let us act like forgiven people. Let us speak of forgiveness of sins and the grace of God. Make much of the mercy and the forbearance of God. Let us not live for ourselves, but for one another. Let us love one another, for love is the fulfilling of the law. Do the things that promote love; not that promote strife.
- B. Let us treat one another like forgiven people. Let us love the assembling of ourselves; and promote love in that assembling; not strife and self-will. Don't just think of yourself, but think of the things of others, the Bible tells me.
- C. Let us bring our lives into order. You can do this because of the zeal of the Lord of Hosts. God is for you. He began in eternity to arrange for your salvation. He is zealous about it; and you ought to be zealous about it. Your life is to be ordered by the Scripture as the Holy Spirit speaks: “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2Ti 3:16-17 AV)