



# GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

## Isaiah 9:1-7

*Unto Us a Child is Born*

December 20, 2009

<sup>1</sup> But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shined.

<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

<sup>4</sup> For the yoke of his burden,  
and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup> For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

- ❖ In April of 1737 at the age of 52, German-born composer, George Frideric Handel, seems to have suffered from a stroke which incapacitated him, making it impossible for him to perform (he played the spinet or keyboard) or conduct, because it had paralyzed his right arm and he was right handed. He also complained of blurred vision. The truth was as well, that falling in and out of favor with royalty left him alternately in and out of money, and because he was not a wise businessman he in fact lost a fortune in the opera business and, depressed and in debt, gave it up in 1740.
- ❖ On April 8 of that year, he gave what he considered his farewell concert. Miserably discouraged, he felt forced to retire from public activities at the age of fifty-six. Then two unforeseen events converged to change his life. First, he received a commission from a Dublin charity to compose a work for a benefit performance. Secondly, a wealthy friend, Charles Jensen, gave Handel a libretto based on the life of Christ. Handing his depressed friend a folder, Jensen said, 'Here is a collection called *Messiah*. See what you can make of it.' What Handel found in that folder was a sequence of 79 Scripture verses which included portions from Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Lamentations, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Matthew, Luke, John, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews and Revelation.
- ❖ Handel set to work composing on August 22 in his little house on Brook Street in London. He grew so absorbed in the work that he rarely left his room, hardly stopping to eat. Within six days part one was complete. In nine days more he had finished part two, and in another six, part three. The orchestration was completed in another two days. Handel had remained secluded in his study for the entire twenty-four days it took to compose the full musical notes on 265 pages of manuscript. When it was completed, he signed it with the initials SDG, Latin for *Soli Deo Gloria* (to God alone the glory), then placed it in a drawer where it remained for seven weeks.
- ❖ A friend who visited him as he composed found him sobbing with intense emotions. Later, as Handel groped for words to describe what he had experienced, and reportedly said, 'Whether I was in the body or out of my body when I wrote it I know not.'
- ❖ *The Messiah* premiered on April 13, 1742, as a charitable benefit, raising 400 pounds and freeing 142 men from debtor's prison. A year later, Handel staged it in London. In 1743, King George II was in attendance at one of the performances of *The Messiah*, When the Hallelujah Chorus which declares that Christ would come and reign forever as King of kings and Lord of lords was sung, the king was so deeply moved that he rose to his feet and remained standing until the chorus had ended. Following the royal protocol, the entire audience stood as well, beginning a custom that remains to this day.
- ❖ Soon after this, Handel's notoriety began to increase dramatically, and his hard-won popularity remained constant until his death. By the end of his long life,

*Messiah* was firmly established in the standard repertoire. Its influence on the other composers would be extraordinary. When Haydn later heard the *Hallelujah Chorus* he wept like a child, and exclaimed, ‘He is the master of us all!’

- ❖ George Frideric Handel lived until the morning of Good Saturday, April 14, 1759. His death came only eight days after his final performance, at which he had conducted his masterpiece, *Messiah*.
- ❖ And, whereas the *Hallelujah* Chorus is undoubtedly the most famous pieces in *The Messiah*, arguably the second most recognized song is *For Unto Us a Child is Born*, taken directly from Isaiah 9.

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- Throughout this passage, the prophet Isaiah speaks in the past tense, as though the *child* has already been born.
- Yet, this is the prophetic perspective that makes this passage so powerful. We are so sure of God’s fulfillment of His future promises, that we speak of them as though they have already been completed (by God Himself).
- A popular biblical saying states, “Look forward to it, it is certain, he has already done it!”
- This is a similar perspective utilized by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:29-30, when he states, “<sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

- I. **A New Day Has Dawned**
- II. **Victory is Won**
- III. **The Victor is a Child**
- IV. **The Child is a King**

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- I. **A New Day Has Dawned**

- This passage is one of the clearest Messianic passage in all the Old Testament (certainly it is all Messianic). It incorporates the redemption and deliverance themes of previous acts of God as well:

“The exodus was a mighty act of God, revealing, redeeming and overthrowing, but the situation into which it introduced the people of God was far from ideal, and their wilderness hardships exposed their own meager response to the grace of God. Equally in the case of Gideon, the victory was dissipated in apostasy (Judges 8:27) and in the

anarchy (Judges 9) under far from perfect rulers. But in the day of the great hope, the response will match the act of go: when the light shines, they will see it (2), when joy is increased, they will rejoice (3), and they will enter into the kingdom of peace under the perfect king, an environment and a ruler productive of perfection.” Alec Motyer

- Isaiah begins this chapter, in **Verse 1**, saying, “But there will be no gloom for her who *was* in anguish.” (emphasis added)
- He writes, “In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.”
  - The land of **Zebulun** was located west and southwest of Naphtali, midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea (Joshua 19:10-16, 32-39).
  - The land of **Naphtali** sat on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and extended northward.
  - The significance of the naming of these two lands is because these areas were the first to fall when Assyria invaded Israel in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, B.C.
  - Yet, it is interesting that Isaiah says, “**In the former time he brought into contempt...**”
    - Yet, Isaiah is writing in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, **prior to the fall of Israel**. Again, he is speaking in a prophetic tone, as though Israel had already fallen to Assyria and was being restored.
    - However, the northern lands of Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to fall to Assyria in around 733, B.C., and this is likely about the time when Isaiah is speaking (the Northern Kingdom of Israel would fall in 722, B.C.).
    - In fact, the people of Zebulun and Naphtali were deported to Assyria and their regions were made into Assyrian provinces.
  - But, not only does Isaiah say, “there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish (namely, the northern lands, that is the first to fall to the Assyrian forces of Tiglath-Pilaser), but, “**in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.**”
    - This area around the Sea of Galilee was always known as a “melting pot” in Israel. It was the “bridge” between Israel and much of the rest of the world. It was, to a large degree, the connection to the Gentiles. Furthermore, this was the area that

would fall the first to Assyria and would experience the “racial mixing” that would eventually result in the “mixed-breed” Samaritans. Consider that Assyria (under Tiglath-Pileser) conquered by deporting a portion of the population, and then inserting Assyrians and other conquered people into the land, causing a mixing of race and the loss of racial identity and purity. This, of course, resulted in the loss of “purity” of racial/ethnic Hebrews in the Northern lands (the birth of the “Samaritan” people). It also led the Jews of Judea to see themselves as “pure.” NOTE: Babylon simply deported the entire population out of the conquered land, leaving Jerusalem virtually desolate until the return from Babylon.

- Yet, **God has made (again, past tense) glorious the way of the sea...Galilee of the nations (or Gentiles).**
- From this phrase, a couple of truths emerge:
  - The work will be all of God – by **grace alone**.
  - Secondly, it will involve the Gentiles – demonstrating a plan of God that encompasses the **whole world**, without distinction of race – not just the Jews.
  - (Consider the first recorded visitors to the Christ-child were shepherds (presumably Jews), and magi from the East (presumably Gentiles)).
- It is certainly fascinating, then, when one realizes the truth of the fulfillment of this prophecy in that Christ’s ministry would begin around the Sea of Galilee (**Matthew 4:12-16**).
- Then, Isaiah beautifully writes, in **Verse 2**, “**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.**”
  - The light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, would originally come to the world beginning near the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

“It is part of that grace that the source of the light will be in the very part of the land which first felt the lash of Assyria...”

- The idea, though, is that a **new day has dawned**.

- This reminds the astute reader of the **Creation account** in Genesis 1: “The earth was without form and void, and **darkness was over the face of the deep**...And God said, ‘**Let there be light**...’”
- Also, consider the words of John in John 1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”
- As is always the case, where there is light, there is **life and joy**:

<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

- Certainly, the reason why there is life and joy is that **throughout the Bible, the image of light is associated with the presence of Almighty God (Isaiah 42:16; 2 Samuel 22:29; Job 29:3; Psalm 139:11, 12; 1 John 1:5).**
- Furthermore, with the dawning of a new day, there is **VICTORY**. Isaiah hints at this in **Verse 3**, when he speaks of the people being “glad when they divide the spoil.”

**No longer will their possessions be the spoil that is divided; rather, they will be the victors dividing the spoil!**

<b>II. Victory is Won</b>
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- Of course, in the immediate context, Isaiah is speaking of **military victory**. However, this foreshadows the greatest victory ever one: the **victory over sin and death**.
- In **Verses 4-5**, Isaiah writes:

<sup>4</sup> For the yoke of his burden,  
and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.  
<sup>5</sup> For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

- This passage brings to mind God’s work of victory and deliverance on at least two previous occasions: (1) The Exodus; (2) Gideon and the defeat of Midian (Judges 6-8).

- **EXODUS** – The Exodus is certainly the great deliverance of the Old Testament (Exodus 3:7-8; 2 Samuel 7:23), foreshadowing our deliverance by God over the power of sin and death. With words like “the rod of the oppressor”, Isaiah reminds God’s people of their previous enslavement to other people and tyrants.

“<sup>23</sup> And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods?” 2 Samuel 7:23

- **GIDEON / MIDIAN** – Consider Judges 6-8, especially, 7:1-20. God defeated Midian with Gideon and only **300 men!** Also, Gideon was the deliverer of Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali (Judges 6:35), foreshadowing Christ Himself.

In other words, although the odds appear impossible, by human standards (like David vs. Goliath), **God will win the victory on behalf of His people – and His people will enjoy the benefits (the spoil) of the victory!**

- Read **Verse 4** again: “For they yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.”
  - The Assyrian leaders prided themselves on the yoke they imposed on their captive peoples.
  - However, Isaiah promises a day when One greater than the Assyrian leaders will break such yokes.
  - It is a paradox, in fact, that Christ promises a yoke; however, He states that it is “easy” and “light” (Matthew 11:29-30). Indeed, God is a monarch; yet, He is loving and benevolent...gentle and kind (unlike every other ruler the world has ever known).
  - **I am always fascinated how Christ’s carrying of His cross to His place of crucifixion resembles Him under a yoke. Whether or not this is intended, though, the point is clear: Christ bore the yoke of sin in order to crush it to pieces!**
- Notice in **Verse 5**, with victory won, the boots and garments of the warriors are simply fuel for fire, sense the battle is over, for Victory is the LORD’s! Further, the people walk onto the battlefield only after the fighting is done.

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- ❑ Yet, the question is, “**How?**” How will God break the yoke of burden? How will He win the victory?
- ❑ This leads us to **Verse 5**:

### III. The Victor is a Child

- ❑ **Verse 6** states, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...”
- ❑ Isaiah has already spoken of a child-deliverer for Israel in 7:14: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”
- ❑ Now, Isaiah more fully describes Immanuel.
- ❑ One scholar writes, “This point (of a child-deliverer) underlines the central paradox in Isaiah’s conception of Yahweh’s deliverance of His people. How will God deliver from arrogance, war, oppression, and coercion? By being more arrogant, more warlike, more oppressive, and more coercive? Surely, the book of Isaiah indicates frequently that God was powerful enough to destroy his enemies in an instant, yet again and again, when the prophet comes to the heart of the means of deliverance, a childlike face peers out at us. God is strong enough to overcome his enemies by becoming vulnerable, transparent, and humble – the only hope, in fact, for turning enmity into friendship.”
- ❑ And this is precisely how Christ defeated sin and death – by humbling Himself and becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. In other words, we have life through His death.
- ❑ Yet, the focus of this **Verse** is a **child**. The vulnerability and humility is inescapable.

Biologist Robert McElvaine writes, ‘The human infant may be the most dependent creature on the planet.’

- ❑ There is no creature more vulnerable and dependent than a newborn human. And this is exactly how, in God’s infinite wisdom, He ordained He would redeem His people and Creation.

### IV. The Child is a King

- ❑ Isaiah continues, in **Verse 6**, “and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
- ❑ This Verse comes to us as a sort of “birth announcement” of the child-deliverer/king.



- We read that Isaiah says, “**and the government shall be upon his shoulder...**”
  - This certainly does not mean that the child-deliverer will be only a political deliverer. Rather, he will be a ruler and His “government” will be much greater than any other ruler has ever known.
  - Consider the words of John Gill:

“[The government is] not only of the world in general, but of the church in particular; this child is born to royal dignity; he is King of saints; his government consists in ruling in the hearts of his people, in enacting laws for them, and causing them to submit unto them, in subduing their enemies, in protecting them, their persons and properties, rights and liberties, and in supplying them with everything necessary; and this government is delegated to him from his Father, is devolved upon him by him, is not of this world, but is spiritual; it is righteously administered, is peaceable, and will continue for ever.”

- Then, Isaiah gives the child-king four names.
- Some have suggested that Isaiah was borrowing from an Egyptian practice that gave a king five names upon his coronation. They were to have a mystical effect, empowering the Pharaoh. These names included titles such as “Mighty Bull appearing in Thebes” and “Enduring in Kingship, like Re in Heaven.”
- Some have also suggested that the names were intended to attack the claims of the Assyrian rulers about their wisdom and strength.
- Regardless, however, the names given to this child-king were: “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
  - **Wonderful Counselor**
    - Literally, it means “wonder of a counselor.”
    - This child-king would be wise beyond anything this world has ever known – He would, indeed, be the embodiment of Wisdom itself.
    - True wisdom knows that the first shall be last, we gain life by losing it, and obedience is better than sacrifice (just to name a few).
  - **Mighty God**
    - There is no doubt that the child will be human, but He will also be divine.

- The underlying Hebrew words here are *el gibbor*, and wherever in the Old Testament this phrase appears, it refers to God (Isaiah 10:21, Deuteronomy 10:17, Nehemiah 9:32 and Jeremiah 32:18).

- **Everlasting Father**

- This is not a Trinitarian use of the function of Father; rather, it is speaking of the child-king as being the loving Protector and Provider of and for His people.
- He is certainly the ideal king and cares for His children as such.

- **Prince of Peace**

- Ultimately, this child-king will bring about peace.
- First, He will establish peace among God and man. Then, He will ultimately bring about a final and eternal peace in all of Creation.
- No longer will the effects of the Fall be in existence.
- Particularly, at the Second Coming, the Messiah will establish a New Heaven and a New Earth and redeem ALL of Creation, such that there will no longer be enmity within Creation.

- NOTE: Some scholars, many of whom have been Jewish, have claimed that Isaiah 9 is a reference to Hezekiah, whose father Ahaz was son at this time. Yet, no mere human could ever actually fulfill the promises of this passage – only Christ could.

- Finally, Isaiah writes:

<sup>7</sup>Of the increase of his government and of peace  
 there will be no end,  
 on the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
 to establish it and to uphold it  
 with justice and with righteousness  
 from this time forth and forevermore.  
 The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

- This child-king will be Davidic and will be the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. His throne will be eternal, and the expanse of the Kingdom will know no bounds.
- Finally, **“The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”**

- In fact, Zeal will actually lead to the death of Christ, “Zeal for your house will consume me” (John 2:16).
- Yet, the point is, it will be the working of God alone who will accomplish what has been promised.
- Therefore, not only is Christ the King of Kings, but He is the King to end all Kings.
- And as we look back to the humility of His birth, we look forward to the glory of His Second Coming, when “every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:10-11