

A POWERFUL SAVIOR

Isaiah 9:1–7 (ESV) — 1 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. 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 shone. 3 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. 4 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. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. 6 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. 7 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 is the Word of the Lord.

INTRODUCTION

The prophet Isaiah lived during a dark time in Israel's history. The end of the kingdom was very near. The people had abandoned Yahweh, and turned to idols. The early chapters of Isaiah are full of references to Israel's impending captivity in Assyria. They had forsaken Yahweh, and rebelled against Him.

In a sense, Israel was worse off than every other nation, because her special favor meant that she endured greater punishment.

But at the same time, Israel was not punished for being WORSE than the nations of the world, but instead for being the SAME. Israel had been specially chosen by Yahweh to be His people, and they spent most of their existence trying to get away from Him.

TRANSITION: Israel was about to suffer greatly for their unfaithfulness, but Yahweh was not going to abandon the nation for all time. He would redeem a remnant of them, and bring in the Gentiles as well. He would do that through His own Son, Jesus Christ. We see a tremendous promise in these words. Let's look at them more closely.

THE PROMISE - ISAIAH 9:1

Isaiah 9:1 (ESV) — 1 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.

Most of this verse serves to identify the region of the northern kingdom, Israel. It was the first the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, tribes of Israel. It was their inheritance in the land of promise.

Centuries later the Assyrians would come and take them captive, just a few decades after Isaiah wrote these words. The Assyrians would divide the territory into three provinces: to the west was Du'ru, meaning the way of the Sea (the Mediterranean); to the east was Gal'aza, meaning the land beyond the Jordan; in the middle was what the Assyrians called Maggidu, and which we call Galilee.

The heart of the verse is the promise. The nation which was punished so severely would be given relief; there would be no more gloom, no more darkness. God's judgment began in Galilee; how wonderful that redemption also began in Galilee!

LIGHT DISPELS DARKNESS – ISAIAH 9:2-5

Isaiah 9:2–5 (ESV) — 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 shone. 3 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. 4 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. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

Sin is darkness; wickedness is darkness; idolatry is darkness. But there is no GREATER darkness than the judgment of God. And there is no greater light than that given by Jesus Christ. His coming brought tremendous joy; His second coming will bring fullness of joy for eternity. Think about the way Isaiah 9:3 illustrates this joy.

The joy God brings is compared TO THE JOY OF HARVEST. In our time the end of harvest is a fantastic time, but even more so in the ancient world. Farmers today can't control the weather, but have a lot of ways to improve and protect their crops. The ancients planted and hoed a little bit, but otherwise were powerless over every danger. They hoped for rain without hail, and that insects wouldn't eat their crops. They hoped no derechos would blow through and no wildfires would incinerate their crops. So, bringing in the harvest was always a tremendous relief, and when the harvest was plentiful, the whole region celebrated.

And, the joy God brings is compared to THE JOY OF DIVIDING THE SPOILS OF WAR. When someone was attacked by an enemy they defended themselves as best they could. If they could hold out they would eventually win the war. The enemy would abandon the field, and the victors would go through the stuff left behind, the spoils of war: gold, silver, food, clothing, tents, perhaps pack animals or livestock. Some of what had been lost could be replaced.

Beloved, WE are the harvest. Jesus died for His people, in order to rescue them from sin and the judgment of God, and to bring us into His Kingdom. WE are the harvest. Every time a sinner repents and is saved, the angels in heaven rejoice! The Lord Himself sings over us.

And beloved, WE are the conquered enemy. The Gospel is not a negotiated truce, but an unconditional surrender. Jesus Christ conquers us, but instead of parading us through the streets in shame, the Father adopts us in Christ, forgives our sin, gives us eternal life, declares us as righteous as Jesus Himself, goes to work sanctifying our lives, and gives us full shares in Jesus' own inheritance, every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. These are the spoils of war. The only way to share in them is to be conquered by Christ.

Every sinner is an enemy of God, and every enemy will be defeated. Those defeated in this mortal life share in the spoils. Those who reject Christ and remain in their sins will be eternally condemned. Jesus said the only way to save your life is to lose it; those who try to save their lives will lose them. The only way to win is to lose; sadly, there are some who cannot stomach losing, even if it means victory.

The harvest and the victory are eternal. As Isaiah 9:4-5 says, Jesus' victory is final. When He saved me, He utterly destroyed my means of going to war against Him. He has established perfect peace between the Father, Son, and Spirit and His redeemed people.

TRANSITION: How would Yahweh accomplish this? How would He bring an end to darkness? How would He grant the joy of harvest and dividing the spoils? How would He make it eternal and unchangeable?

THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS – ISAIAH 9:6-7

Isaiah 9:6-7 – 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. 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 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.

We begin with the closing words of the passage, because those words make it clear that God's purpose is not accomplished by us, but by Him. He is not a passive observer, hoping that we get it right. He acts by His own zeal, which means His intense fervor, His passion to see it done, His jealousy for His own success, His intense determination.

It was because of this zeal, this intense determination to bring about His own Will, that the Father sent the Son to take on human flesh and be born as a child is born. He didn't entrust this to a fallen man, even a Moses or a David, a man with a sinful nature. He sent His Son, holy, pure, and undefiled.

The very moment Jesus was conceived, the **government was** already **upon His shoulder**. His announcement to His disciples in Matthew 28:18 – "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me" was true from His conception. Jesus didn't earn that authority; it was given to Him by the Father. Jesus came as the King of kings, announcing and establishing the Kingdom of God. We can see in the Gospels that Jesus treated everything as His. The people were His; He chose whom He wanted to be His disciples. The Temple was His; He demanded that the people treat it as He desired. Life itself was His; He healed and raised the dead as He wished. The physical world was His; He multiplied food, walked on water, and calmed the storm. The spiritual realm was His; demons trembled at fear before Him, and absquatulated – isn't that a great word? it means they fled as fast as they could from Jesus.

JESUS IS THE WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

He was – and is – the Wonderful Counselor. A counselor is someone who gives advice, or counsel. The word “wonderful” means amazing, stunning, awe-inspiring, mind-blowing. There is no greater wisdom than the Word of God, and Jesus Himself is the Eternal Word of God. Jesus doesn’t deal in trivia or random bits of knowledge. He is the the Last and Best Word spoken by God. Jesus knows everything God knows, because He Himself is God.

He, the One at the Father’s side, is able to make the Father known to us (John 1:18). Jesus IS the wisdom of God, and provides us with wisdom, by giving Himself to us in the Word and the Spirit. Everything that we know about God – even that there IS a God – is His gift to us.

JESUS IS THE MIGHTY GOD

He was – and is – the Mighty God. He is the God who possesses infinite authority and power. The word “mighty” usually describes men who were powerful as hunters or fighters, mighty men of valor, valiant men, the kind of men you want defending your land. But they are nothing compared to Jesus Christ. He was remarkably gentle and peaceful during His earthly ministry. He came as the Lamb of God. But He is leading the war against the forces of Satan, and He will one day return as the King of kings and Lord of lords to bring the rebellion of wicked people and fallen angels to a close, and He will do with through His words alone, and not through a long, drawn-out battle.

JESUS IS THE EVERLASTING FATHER

He was – and is – the Everlasting Father. These words can also be understood as **Father of Eternity**, and that is more likely the meaning here. John writes “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4). It is Jesus who gives us living water, which springs up within us to eternal life (John 4:14). Jesus has eternal life within Himself, and He gives it to whom He wishes (John 5:21, 26), which is everyone the Father has given Him (John 17:2). When Jesus gives eternal life, it remains for all eternity. It cannot be lost or stolen or taken away. (John 10:28). People sometimes say that salvation can be lost through sin, but Jesus says that He will never, for any reason, cast out those whom the Father gives Him.

JESUS IS THE PRINCE OF PEACE

He was – and is – the Prince of Peace. All of the fruit of the Spirit were in Jesus in perfect fullness: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. No one who came to Jesus in humility ever found Him anything but kind and compassionate. His frustration and anger were reserved for those who perverted the things of God. He never retaliated against anyone for harming Him; in fact, He forgave those who crucified Him. He is not a screaming drill sergeant who abuses his recruits. He is a tender Shepherd who lovingly cares for His own.

BRINGING IT HOME

Let's think about the two illustrations of joy in Isaiah 9:3. WE are His harvest. WE are the conquered enemies who share in the spoils.

If your life is still your own – if you consider the fruits of your life to be yours, and if you consider yourself to be your own lord and master – you are in grave, eternal danger. One day every knee will bow before Jesus, and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. There is plenty of time for judgment; you have the rest of your life to wait for the judgment of God. But the Bible says that today is the day of salvation. I urge you to respond to the light that the Lord gives you when He gives it, and don't think to yourself that you have all the time in the world.

But if you have trusted in Jesus and His Gospel, and been born again, then you have this incredible promise.

Jesus comes for His own in the perfection of His time, some as children, some as teenagers, and some as adults. He reaps our lives as His own precious crop. As His harvest, our lives are His. We lose nothing by being His harvest, and gain everything, when He lays claim to us and brings us into His Kingdom. Our salvation is first HIS gain, and because it is HIS gain, we also gain in infinite measure.

And Jesus conquers us to make us His beloved children. We are not the byproduct of His labors; we ARE His labors! As His conquered enemies, our lives are His. We lose nothing by being defeated by Jesus Christ. In fact, the only way to lose is if He does not conquer us. The only way to win is to be utterly and completely defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ, because we then share in the spoils of our own defeat: His inheritance, every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, forgiveness of sin, justification, sanctification, the indwelling Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, eternal life! The Bible says that human eyes have never seen, and human ears have never heard, and human imaginations have never conceived, what God has prepared for us. (First Corinthians 2:9).

I pray you are His harvest; I pray that He has conquered you, and made you His own precious children!

Let's pray!