Advent in Isaiah

For to Us a Child Is Born

Isaiah 9:1-7

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For to Us a Child Is Born

Scripture

Tonight is Christmas Eve. During Advent, I have preached a series of messages on the Old Testament Scripture Readings that I am calling, "Advent in Isaiah."

In about 740 BC God called Isaiah to be a minister of his Word to Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah. The culture had essentially turned away from God and his Word. People no longer believed God's truth, and there was a general decay of the culture. In many ways, America today is like Judah of old.

Nevertheless, God still had a remnant of people who were believers. Amid great spiritual darkness, there were those who were faithful to him and his Word. This evening's text is one of the great Bible texts in which Isaiah promised the people that God would send a child to be born who would bring light into a world made dark by unbelief. And that child, of course, is Jesus.

Let's read about the child that is born to us in Isaiah 9:1-7:

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 shined.
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. (Isaiah 9:1-7)

Introduction

Some people have a stressful load this Christmas season. Take Santa Claus, for instance. Phillip Bump, a technology writer for *The Atlantic*, has attempted to provide a tongue-in-cheek answer to the question: what exactly is Santa's yearly workload? Bump calculated the number of Christian children in the world and the geographic distribution of those children around the globe. After factoring in all the nuances of time zones, distance between houses, and how many children live in each house, Bump shared his conclusions about Santa's yearly task:

> [Based on CIA estimates] there are just over 526,000,000 Christian kids under the age of 14 in the world who celebrate

> Christmas on December 25. In other words, Santa has to deliver presents to almost 22 million kids an hour, every hour, on Christmas Eve. That's about 365,000 kids a minute; about 6,100 a second. [1]

Bump mentions a few caveats: not all Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25, the CIA's data isn't always up-to-date, and some non-Christians celebrate Christmas too. But all in all, Santa has an enormous job to do! He has to serve over half a billion kids in one night as he pulls a huge sleigh with nine reindeer, while he tries to avoid being detected and shot down by the North America Aerospace Defense Command – and don't forget that one of his reindeer has a *very* shiny nose.

Of course we have fun with this, but we know that Santa cannot possibly be a universal gift-giver. However, God really did send a universal gift-giver in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, who gives the gift of eternal life to all who receive him as a gift.

Isaiah wanted to give the people of his day – and of our day too – hope. He pointed to the one whose birth would bring light into a world made dark by sin and unbelief. He wanted to give people hope, and he did so in a wonderful way in this evening's text.

Lesson

The analysis of the concept of hope as set forth in Isaiah 9:1-7 shows us that just as God dispelled the darkness at creation, so he will bring light into a world made dark by sin and unbelief.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Hope Described (9:1-3)
2. The Hope Explained (9:4-7)

[1] Philip Bump, "Santa's Christmas Eve Workload, Calculated," *The Atlantic* (12-14-11).

I. The Hope Described (9:1-3)

First, let's look at the hope described.

What is interesting about this passage is that although the events are yet future, Isaiah wrote about them in the past tense, as though they had already happened.

Isaiah described hope in three ways.

A. What God Does (9:1)

First, Isaiah described what God does.

Isaiah had previously described the coming fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians (Isaiah 7:1-9). **Zebulun** and **Naphtali** fell to the Assyrians, and there was indeed **no gloom for her who was in anguish** (9:1a). But, Isaiah assured the remnant that in **the latter time** God **has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations** (9:1b). God's provision of hope will come from Galilee. Jesus' home, of course, was in Galilee.

B. What God's People Enjoy (9:2)

Second, Isaiah described what God's people enjoy.

Isaiah said 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."** People living out their daily lives were **in darkness**. That is, God was hidden from them. However, God in his mercy sent a **great light** to them. God's people enjoy light amid darkness.

C. What Follows (9:3)

And third, Isaiah described what follows.

Isaiah said in verse 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."** The blessing that will come from the great light will not only be for the remnant in Isaiah's day, but it will be for all people. And there will be tremendous joy at the coming spiritual harvest.

II. The Hope Explained (9:4-7)

And second, let's look at the hope explained.

Isaiah explained hope in three ways. Each way is introduced by the word "for."

A. What God Does (9:4)

First, Isaiah explained what God does.

Isaiah said in verse 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."** Gideon won a great victory at **Midian** with just 300 men against a great army. It was a victory that only God could accomplish. Similarly, God will win a great spiritual victory over sin and unbelief by the advent of Jesus.

B. What God's People Enjoy (9:5)

Second, Isaiah explained what God's people enjoy.

Isaiah said in verse 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."** People who receive Jesus as Savior will enjoy the fruit of a victory they did not win. It was God who acted on their behalf. This is the beauty and glory of the good news of Christmas.

C. What Follows (9:6-7)

And third, Isaiah explained what follows.

Each preceding explanation leads to this third explanation. How does God accomplish victory? And in what way do people enjoy the fruit of a victory that they themselves did not accomplish? By the mere fact of a child's birth. That is the amazing good news of Christmas. Isaiah said in verses 6a, **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given."** This child is of course the Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas.

And Jesus can accomplish salvation for his people because **the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor** (which refers to his qualification for ruling)**, Mighty God** (which refers to his person and power)**, Everlasting Father** (which refers to his relationship to his subjects)**, Prince of Peace** (which refers to the kingdom over which he rules). Furthermore, **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** (9:6b-7).

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the concept of hope as set forth in Isaiah 9:1-7, let us embrace Jesus as the fulfillment of that hope.

Jesus is indeed the child that was born for us. He is the son that was given to us. He is the true salvation that comes to us. On this Christmas Eve, I invite you to embrace Jesus as your Savior. Amen.

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To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.

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PRAYER:

Our Father, thank you for the message of Isaiah. Thank you for Jesus. He is indeed the child that was born for us. He is the son that was given to us. He is the true salvation comes to us. On this Christmas Eve, may each one of us embrace him as our Savior.

And for all of this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!