

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

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“Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first he lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every warrior’s sandal from the noisy battle and garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning and fuel of fire. 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, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His Government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and over His Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.” Isaiah 9:1-7 (see also Isaiah 7:14 and 11:19; Luke 1:67-79).

Isaiah is a mini Bible in structure. Like the Bible, Isaiah has 66 chapters in 2 main sections: 39 chapters in the first section (like the Old Testament) and 27 in the second (like the New Testament).

The Old Testament opens with God's case against man because of his sin. Isaiah opens the same way (Isaiah 1:18). The first section closes with the prophecy of the coming King of Righteousness and the redemption of Israel (34-35), just as the prophets close the Old Testament with predictions of His coming Kingdom.

A Voice in the Wilderness

The second part of Isaiah (chapter 40) opens with *“the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness.”* (John the Baptist) and is concerned with the person and work of Jesus Christ. The New Testament also opens with John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus preparing His way (John 1:6, 23). Isaiah ends with the vision of new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. The New Testament closes with this same view in Revelation. This striking similarity between Isaiah and the whole Bible is unforgettable.

9.1 ***“Nevertheless there shall be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.”*** (The first to fall to Assyria - within months of Isaiah's meeting with Ahaz (7:1-9)

God sends distress on disobedient nations. For the guilty there is gloom.

God judges nations. He humbles the proud. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

Undeserved Favour

“But in the future He will honour Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan.” God is merciful. He intervenes in history to work salvation and deliverance. This is what grace means - undeserved favour.

9.2 *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light - on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."* This prophecy of course had its fulfillment when God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ appeared and preached the Gospel in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali and in Galilee of the Gentiles.

In the most unexpected places, at the least expected times - God intervenes. Even in the worst of times God's people have a comfort. ***"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."*** 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (see also 2 Corinthians 6:4-8).

Post Tennebras Lux! After the Darkness Light

Where sin increased God's grace increased much more. No matter how dark things may become, God's light shines brighter. All the darkness cannot put out that light. ***"I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I the Lord do all these things."*** Isaiah 45:7

(Modern examples of people walking in darkness - of Atheism, Communism, Animism and Islam - who have seen a great light - in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Red China, Mozambique, Sudan). Revival blessings in the midst of persecution and oppression.

When the Gospel comes to any place light comes. A great light. Those who live in darkness: (Examples from witchcraft dominated areas, Hillbrow, Albania). Those outside of Christ have no God, no forgiveness, no salvation, no hope, no heaven. Only darkness and despair.

9.3 *"You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before You as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder."* The nation of Israel had been severely judged and diminished. It had just lost the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali. Yet the Word of God came through Isaiah to comfort His people and reassure them that despite the present traumatic cutting off and diminishing of the nation of Israel - yet the time will come when God Himself will enlarge the nation and increase their joy. Everyone rejoices over success, achievement and prosperity (as at a harvest) and over gaining a **victory**, or receiving a gift (as with plunder).

God's intervention will accomplish the salvation of His people. He will achieve Redemption for those to whom He grants the gift of faith and repentance. He will bless His children with the greatest gifts ever given - the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the kingdom of darkness, entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God, adoption into the family of God. ***"Those who sow in tears will reap in joy."***

Good News

9.4 *"For as in the day of Midian's defeat, You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor."* The Lord has intervened and ended the oppression of sin and Satan. Into our darkness, His Light has shone. At the beginning of His ministry Christ quoted Isaiah 61:1.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed." Luke 4:18

The Cross and the Crown

9.5 *"Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire"* The wicked will be judged. Those who oppress God's people will be destroyed. The message of Christmas is not only a message of **God's Love** for His people but also of **His Wrath** against sin. We see here not only His mercy but His

Justice. He **Saves**, but He also Judges. The message of the **CRADLE** includes a message of the **CROSS** and the **CROWN**.

The Christmas message of the **Cradle** should emphasise the Deity of Christ's Incarnation. But the purpose of Christ's coming was the **Cross**. He was born to die as an Atonement for our sins. Yet the Saviour whose Incarnation we remember at Christmas will come again as the eternal Judge.

He who died on the **CROSS** now wears the **CROWN** of the Sovereign Lord of the universe. We will all stand before His Throne and have to give an account of our lives for everything we have done and for everything we have said. Unless we have turned to God in faith and repented of our sins we will be condemned. If our lives have not borne the fruit of obedience we too will be destined for burning. Along with those guilty of innocent blood we will be fuel for the fire.

The Cradle

9.6 *"For to us a Child is born"* Everyone loves the birth of a child. Well, almost everyone. Of course there are some who prefer abortion to birth. Instead of life they choose death. But most of us find a new born child cute. That is why most people celebrate Christmas. A babe in a manger is so unthreatening. So harmless.

The Menace of the Manger

However some atheists feel very threatened. Every Christmas season the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) institutes law suits against any public manger scenes. Radical Humanists in S.A. look forward to future opportunities when they can try to banish all public expression of Christian Faith. Perhaps they understand something of the immense implication of the Baby in a manger. The God of the Ages, lying in a feeding trough in a stable. Not born in a palace or the Temple. Not even in a home, but outside of human habitation, in the cold amongst farm animals.

But aside from neurotic atheists, most people feel drawn to the story of the baby born in a manger, with Angels singing, shepherds kneeling, wise men bringing gifts. It all seems quite nice and sweet and cute. But the verse does not stop there,

"to us a Son is given." We no longer worship a babe in the **CRADLE**. He is the Son of God who died on the **CROSS**. *"And the Government will be upon His shoulders."*

War on the Womb

This is getting more threatening. This is why Herod declared war on the womb. He understood **The Menace of the Manger**. There was no room for God in the world He has made.

"Where is the One who has been born King... We ...have come to worship Him." (Matthew 2:2) declared the Magi from the East. Herod felt that his selfish lifestyle and comfortable political position was threatened by the new born babe. Gripped by selfishness and a lust for power, Herod sought to murder the Messiah by massacring all still in the manger in Bethlehem.

Centuries before, Pharaoh had sought to slaughter all new born Hebrew boys in Egypt. And today other Pharaohs and Herods are waging a similar war on the womb.

Born a King

Christ was not born a prince nor an heir to the throne. He was the only One who has ever been born a King: *"And the Government will be on His shoulders."* Jesus Christ is Lord. He is sovereign. He is the final authority.

In Eastern Europe the Communist authorities allowed prayer - in the churches -but not in the schools. You could preach piety - but not the Lordship of Christ in all areas of life. Jesus could be Saviour of your soul maybe - but not Lord over your mind, or your life, or your home, or work, or community, or city, or country!

The Lordship of Christ

When the Bible speaks of *"the Government"* it is always talking about God's sovereign government. We are un-Biblical when we attribute sovereign powers to the civil authorities. Civil governments are *"God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."* Rom. 13:4. Governors *"are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong."* 1 Peter 2:14. As Jesus declared to the Roman governor Pilate: *"You would have no authority over Me unless it had been given you from above."* John 19:11

This is the message of the Manger: **Jesus is Lord!** He is Lord of all and over all aspects of life: King of kings and Lord of lords!

9.6 "And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

***Wonderful Counsellor.** He is all knowing. He embodies absolute wisdom. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He hears our prayers. He guides His people.

***Mighty God.** He is all powerful. He is God Himself. Jesus Christ is Immanuel - the Incarnation of God. He is fully God and fully man. Light from Light, True God from True God. (Ask the Jehovah's Witnesses, the unbelieving Jews and Liberal Theologians to explain this verse. How do they understand these Words?)

***Everlasting Father.** He is eternal. From everlasting to everlasting. As a Father He is compassionate. He Cares, He provides and He protects His children.

***Prince of Peace.** There is no peace without the Prince of Peace. Those politicians who think that they can achieve peace without Christ are deluded. Only in Christ will we as individuals, families, or nations, find true and lasting peace.

9.7 "Of the increase of His Government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His Kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."

The ultimate victory and triumph of Christ's Kingdom is inevitable.

"All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord and all the families of the nations will bow down before Him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations." Psalm 22:27-28

"All kings will bow down to Him and all nations will serve Him." Psalm 72:11

"In the time of those kings, the God of Heaven will set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever." Daniel 2:44

"The nations on every shore will worship Him, everyone in its own land." Zephaniah 2:14

"And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14

"The kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15

This is what the Great Commission calls us to: **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations ...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..."** Matthew 28:18-19.

There is no authority that is not under Christ. This is what it means to pray the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Matthew 6:10

As Isaiah 11:9 declares: **"The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."** Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Philippians 2:10-11)

"The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this"

This is the message of Christmas - not only of the **CRIB**, but also the **CROSS**. Not only the Cross, but also the **CROWN**. At Christmas we celebrate the advent of the Eternal, All-powerful, All-knowing, Everywhere present, Holy and Glorious Creator, God into our world.

The first recorded reaction to the Birth of Christ was from the shepherds *"who returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen."* Luke 2:20. *"Simeon took Him up in his arms and blessed God."* Luke 2:28 *"And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him."* Luke 2:33.

You rejoice that a child has been born.

Q But do you recognise that He is Emmanuel - God with us - the Son of God?

Q Do you submit to His Government?

Q Do you obey Him as Lord of your life?

Q Is He your Wonderful Counsellor?

Q Is He your Mighty God?

Q Is He your Everlasting Father?

Q Is He the Prince of Peace in your Life?

If so rejoice - His Government will never end. His Kingdom will endure forever. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.

"The Zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

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