

## Isaiah Chapter 9 Advent 2015

When we open the Book of Isaiah to chapter 9 we find ourselves in the middle of a story and it seems that we are witnessing a turning point in God's dealings with His people.

- I hate walking into the middle of a conversation. I don't know the context, I didn't hear the background and then someone looks at me and says, "What do you think?"
  - Deer in the headlights! They are looking for me to give my opinion say something wise, but I am completely lost...
- Isaiah 9 opens up with the phrase:

Isaiah 9:1 **But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.**

- Obviously the people of God have been experiencing anguish and God is about to intervene. He is about to break the darkness with light. That raises a few questions:

Those questions form our outline for today:

1. What is this gloom?
2. How will God remove it?
3. What will be the results for the people of God?

Have you ever come home to a gloomy house?

- You walk in and the controversy is already boiling over.
- The kids have been fighting with each other all day long and your wife is literally pulling her hair out. She meets you at the door like a tag team wrestler and slaps your hand and you run into the middle of the chaos.
- That is something like what we face entering the prophecy of Isaiah in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter.

POINT #1 - What is this gloom?

- Just like in our own households, there is always a long story behind the chaos and gloom that we walk into.

Judah was blessed to have two very good Kings: Uzziah and Jotham, BUT they are gone and Ahaz a very bad king was now ruling.

2Ki 16:2 **Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, as his father David had done,**

- Ahaz was an idolater, he stooped so low that he offered his own son as a burnt sacrifice on the altar to Moloch and worshipped idols in the high places of Judah.
- The corruption of his idolatry opened the door for the discipline of the Lord that would come through the enemies of Judah and they began to plot against him.

Isaiah 7:1 **In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. 2 When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.**

- This was a dark time for the people of Israel they faced mounting threats from a coalition of enemies.
- Fear gripped the people and they shook like the trees of the forest in a strong wind.
- When I think about it, it is much like OUR own day when Iran gets together with Hezbola and the rockets begin to fly through the skies of Israel.
- When the threats begin to arise from their enemies, God sends Isaiah the Prophet to counsel and to comfort Ahaz.

Isaiah 7: 4 **And say to him, ‘Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, (burned out enemies)**

- Sadly Ahaz rejected the counsel of Isaiah and spurned the wisdom of God. He chose to trust in his alliance with the Assyrians rather than on the power of God.
- BUT God is so faithful, so longsuffering, so patient that he sent Isaiah again to Ahaz and He offered to prove himself to Ahaz. This is very unusual for God.

Isaiah 7: 11 **“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”**

- The SKY is the LIMIT Ahaz ask the Lord to give you a sign, he will prove himself to you. All you need to do is ask.
- BUT Ahaz turned his back on God. Oh, he tried to sound righteous in his answer but in reality he refused to trust the Lord.

Isaiah 7: 12 **But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.”**

The Word of God has come, the hound of heaven is calling Ahaz to repent and believe. In a time when Israel was walking in the darkness of idolatry, the Lord shined the brilliant light of Christ.

- In the midst of darkness and confusion God brings clarity.
- In the gloom of pending war God reveals the Prince of Peace.
- At the height of rebellion God points his people to the Messiah.
- In his foolishness Ahaz refused to ask for a sign but God gave him one anyway.

Isaiah 7: 14 **Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**

- God pierces the gloomy darkness of sin with the glorious light of Christ.
- His plan of redemption is moving forward in spite of Ahaz.
- I am NOT saying that Ahaz sin did not matter to God. Rather It was because man was lost in sin and unable to redeem himself that the light of Christ MUST be proclaimed.

God is the God of LIGHT, he speaks words of Hope to his children when they are in the gloom of despair.

In Chapter 8 Isaiah foretells the dark days that are ahead for Israel. With stunning words he paints a fearful picture of coming judgment for the rebellious descendants of Jacob.

- Because the people refuse the gracious provision of God which is pictured as a gentle flowing brook bringing life and refreshment to all that it touches; because they have

refused him, HE will send a torrent of water a tidal wave, a rushing river that will sweep into Judah, overflow its banks and reach up to your neck!

- We know from O.T. history that the Assyrian army conquered every city in Judah with the exception of Jerusalem which was only saved by the direct intervention of God.
- So in chapters 7 & 8 we see the darkness of sin, rebellion, the gloom of WAR.

POINT #2 How will God remove the gloom?

Isaiah 9:1 **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.**

- That Gloom, the darkness of war which covered the land in the time of Isaiah will be shattered by the light of Christ's appearing.

The Land of Zebulun and Naphtali is the region that we know today as the Galilee.

- In the former times, when the discipline of God came upon the nation Israel, the region of Galilee was covered with darkness.
- Throughout their history, whenever Israel was attacked the first provinces to fall were Zebulun and Naphtali.
  - They were the first to fall by the sword, the first to go into captivity.
- The region was nicknamed, "*Galilee of the nations*" because the people of the land had been deported and the area was resettled by Gentiles and half breed Jews.
- BUT that same land which endured such darkness would see a great light.
- The very region known for dishonor would one day experience great honor.

Isaiah 9: 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.**

- What does Isaiah mean when he speaks of a people who walk in darkness?
- These are people who live in the shadow of death, people who are separated from God and under his judgment because of their sin.
- Theirs was the spiritual darkness and folly of idolatry like that of Ahaz.

Paul uses this description as he writes to the Church at Corinth:

2 Corinthians 4:4 (those who are perishing, unbelievers are those whom) **the god of this world has blinded the minds... to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

- When you stop to think about it there are multitudes of people walking in darkness today, the god of this world (Satan) has blinded their eyes to the light of the Gospel.

Isaiah predicts a day when the VERY same region that was first to go into captivity, the people who lived in the most remote, distant, offensive part of Palestine would be the FIRST to have their eyes opened, they would be the first to bask in the light of the coming Messiah.

- The town of Nazareth where the Lord Jesus was raised was situated in the region of Zebulun.
- His first miracle took place in Cana of Galilee which was also in Zebulun.
- Jesus made his base of operations in Capernaum by the sea of Galilee which was in the land of Naphtali.

- God chose to reveal his Son in the place of historic darkness.

God would remove the Gloom of his displeasure, he would remove the wrath of his discipline by sending his one and only Son to be the Light of the World.

- HE would be born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem (as Micah foretold)
- He would be a descendant of King David as 2 Samuel 7:12 Foretold
- He would give his life as a ransom for many as Isaiah foretold
- He would rise from the dead as David foretold in Psalm 16

During the Season of Advent we remember the darkness of night that was shattered by the light of the glory of God as the host of heaven proclaimed the good news: “**Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.**”

My Friends, Light is a gift from God it cannot be produced from the human heart which is itself darkness. The whole work of Christ and all of the blessings of New Life that He graciously provides to us may be characterized by the one word, “LIGHT.”

Eph 5:8 **for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.**

Here in Isaiah God makes His promise of LIGHT to the region known as “**Galilee of the Gentiles**” and by this promise He foreshadows the light of the Gospel that would spill out from the borders of Israel like a rushing mighty river and flood the entire Gentile world.

- Later the book of Isaiah the Prophet would say:

Isaiah 54:1 “**Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,**” says the LORD.

- The Gentiles who were considered Barren, left to the darkness of God’s wrath have seen the glorious light of Christ and the people who were not a people have become the people of God.
- This is cause for singing

Last Point: What will be the results of Christ’s appearing? (for the people of God)

- Very Simply: The light of Christ shining in the darkness will result in great rejoicing.

Isaiah 9:3 **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 people of God (in darkness) will be multiplied with the appearing of Christ. HOW?

- Gentiles who were foreigners to the covenant promises will be brought into the community of God’s beloved people.
- The JOY of God’s people will not be a temporary or passing joy but will be a deep and lasting joy. Isaiah describes that joy for us.
- FIRST: Isaiah describes this JOY as the joy of an ecstatic farmer when his fields yield an abundant crop. And while Andy and Tim would be able to understand the joy of a bumper crop, you might liken it to the joy of a HUGE Christmas bonus!
  - It is the joy of abundant provision.
  - The joy of rest. The Harvest is completed and the season of rest has come.
  - It is a time for the giving of thanks.

SECOND: Isaiah likens this joy to that of a returning army who has been victorious in battle.

- They ride triumphantly into their home town and the people fill the streets with cheering as the spoils of their victory are distributed.
- This is the joy of victory, the joy of lasting peace, the joy of great reunion.

The New Testament portrays Jesus as Our Triumphant King who returns victorious from battle in joyful procession sharing the spoils of war with his people.

Col. 2: 15 **He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.**

Eph 4:8, **When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”**

- Isaiah describes the Messiah’s victorious jubilation for us.

**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.**

1. He breaks the rod of the oppressor.
2. He removes all evidence of war and gives everlasting PEACE!

Isaiah reminds us of the great victories that God has wrought in the past:

- Moses over Pharaoh and Gideon over the Midianites

**BUT** The Day of Christ will be a greater intervention of God than anything Israel ever experienced in all of their history.

- Those who believe the Gospel, those who submit to the Lordship of the Messiah will walk in true freedom, they will experience victory over sin and death and no manner of darkness will be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.
- Jesus will bring everlasting peace.

Isaiah 11: 9 **They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.**

As it was in the land of Israel, in the days of Isaiah, so it is in OUR DAYS:

- We live in times of great idolatry and national rebellion.
- We live under the darkness of war and the rumors of war.
- The threats of our enemies cause the people to shake like the limbs of a tree in a great wind.

**BUT** we remember that it was in the gloom of darkness and idolatry that the light of the Messiah was revealed.

With the same boldness in which Isaiah the prophet proclaimed his words, WE stand and declare:

**Isaiah 9:6** 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.