

A Governor for Us

Isaiah 9:1-7
Halifax: 26 December 2004

This morning we considered the birth of Christ as it is recorded for us in Luke 2.

- There we saw how the angels rejoiced in Heaven when He came,
 - And how they declared to the earth that:
 - “There is born **to you** this day a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.”
 - We looked at His coming to us from the angels’ perspective.

Tonight I want to look at His coming from the perspective of Isaiah the prophet who says something similar to the angels by prophecy over 700 years before Jesus came:

- Instead of saying “to you (from an angel’s perspective),” he says, “unto us (from the perspective of one of God’s people)”
 - “For **unto us** a Child is born, **unto us** a son is given....”
 - Let me read the entire passage to you: Isaiah 9:1-7
 - READ> Isaiah 9:1-7.

I. Isaiah speaks in the context of the distress of his nation under the ongoing attacks of Assyria.

A. And in this troublesome circumstance,

- he recognises that Israel’s only hope is found in Jesus Christ.
- Though Isaiah speaks on the one hand out of the troubles of his day when Israel was under the oppression of Assyria,
 - He speaks in a way that is marvellously instructive for we who live today—
 - that we might see our need of Christ under our own affliction.

1. At the beginning of chapter 9,

- Isaiah describes the territories in Israel that were hardest hit by the Assyrian invasion.
 - a. He comments that Northern tribes of Israel of Zebulun and Naphtali in Galilee were lightly esteemed by God,
 - for they had been the hardest hit when Tiglath Pileser attacked in 734 and again in 732 BC.
 - The idea is that God had turned them over to this because He did not esteem them.

- b. The Assyrians were ruthless oppressors who often tortured the nations they conquered.
 - They added to their attacks vicious insults and arrogant gloating.
 - Often they began by forcing their victims to pay tribute to them, promising them mercy if they did,
 - but as soon as the resources of that nation were drained,
 - then they invaded and took whatever was left,
 - displacing and taking all but the poorest among the people into captivity as slaves...

- 2. In this we surely have an example of God's dealings with His covenant people when He turns them over to Satan because of their sin...
 - They are promised great things in the service of sin—security and happiness...
 - “Think how well it will be for you if you cheat here—
 - Think how happy you will be if you indulge in a little immorality...
 - But the more you give yourself over to sin,
 - the greater your bondage and oppression...
 - Soon you are totally helpless under his dominion.
 - You have spent up all your spiritual strength and have nothing left with which to resist.

B. But Isaiah's message is very bright!

- 1. He opens verse 1 with the promise that the gloom will not always be upon her who is distressed!
 - In verse 2 he announces the good news of his prophetic vision as if it has already happened:
 - “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the Shadow of death, upon them a light has shined!”
 - This, was fulfilled by Jesus when He came.
 - Matthew quotes it when He speaks about Jesus Galilean ministry...
 - The light of the gospel of Jesus Christ first broke in at the same place where Assyria had first broken in!
 - The light came in to dispel the darkness and the gloom...

- 2. When Christ comes to establish His kingdom, He always dispels darkness.

- a. The gloom is driven away and the light comes!
 - 1) First, because the nation is multiplied...
 - There is an increase in the number of believers...
 - When Jesus came, it did not always seem that way because so many rejected him...
 - But truly the gospel began to extend to the nations...
 - The nation was multiplied as God promised to Abraham—like the stars of the sky in number!
 - 2) And with this light, joy also came to God's people
 - Whenever a people begins to turn to God, they experience the fullness of joy.
 - There is no great joy than being reconciled with God.
 - Isaiah describes the joy as like the joy of those who have just reaped a great harvest or brought in great spoils of war.
 - There is the fullness of blessing and of peace!
 - There is great satisfaction among all the people.
 - The gloom is driven away

TRANS> But not only is the gloom driven away,

- b. The power of the oppressor is broken...
 - Verse 4 describes the condition from which we are delivered by Christ as being that of a labouring animal pulling a burden with a yoke...
 - that is our service and bondage to sin...
 - but when Christ comes, the yoke is broken and we are set free...
 - “The staff of the shoulder” also signifies being under bondage,
 - under the rod of the oppressor where all our service is swallowed up for naught...
 - All the labour we carry out is for others and we receive nothing.
 - Such is the power of sin—we feed our selfishness and all it does is swallow us up...
 - the more we give to sin and Satan,
 - the more we lose and the more he demands of us.
 - Take the man who give Himself to immorality...
 - He tastes a little thinking it will make him happy...

- But the immorality demands more service...
- So he gives a little more and little more...
 - And more he gives, the deeper his bondage.
 - Oh, it is a miserable service!
- The bondage to sin and Satan becomes so great that you cannot escape...
 - Only God can deliver you.
 - And when He does, there is great rejoicing...
 - It is as it was in the day of Midian...
 - You remember—God reduced Gideon’s army to make sure that Gideon and all Israel knew that they could not possibly take on the huge company of Midian...
 - So that when God delivered them, all the glory went to Him.
- When God saves you through Christ, you know that you did not save yourself!
 - He is the one that broke the power of sin in your life and brought you to repentance...
 - You were completely helpless under the oppressor and He did it all!
- c. Service to Christ is just the opposite of service to Satan and sin...
 - Service to sin swallows up your life, but service to Christ sets you free!
 - In this service, we give up ourselves for Him and for others...
 - And the more you give to Him, the more you are enriched and blessed!
 - The more you suffer for Him, the greater your joy and blessing.
 - The more you say “my life for yours” the more you live.
 - I don’t mean to say that these things are not blessed to us in Christ—
 - but we are no longer in bondage to desperately latch on to them lest we die...
 - Our life is hid with Christ and we find it in Him instead of in grasping after all these things.

II. You see the glorious salvation that Isaiah is describing here!

- A salvation that sets us free from bondage and oppression to Satan who swallows us up into death.
- A. But now in verse 6 & 7 Isaiah comes to focus on the glory of this King that comes to set us free...

- He presents Him as a glorious governor who is given to us to rule over us...
- The weight of the government is placed on His shoulder and He bears that weight beautifully...
 - bringing His subjects out of oppression into the glory of His own service.
 - “Of the increase of His government and of Peace, Isaiah says, there is no end!”
 - Unlike the Assyrian and Satan who soak up everything we have until we are left with nothing and die...
 - Christ has a never ending supply that will never run out...
 - We are able to give and give and give, and the more we give, the more He supplies.
 - As I showed you this morning, of the peace (the Shalom) that He gives, there will be no end...
 - He gives you that absolutely fullness and completeness that we all long for...
 - Perfect satisfaction for all eternity in Himself...
 - living in the realm of His glory!
 - Perfect fullness of life,
 - even a life of fruitfulness that He delights in...
 - with the result that we are perfectly happy in Him and He is happy in us.
 - And this goes on and on and on forever and ever!
 - Of the increase of His government and of peace, there will be no end.

B. Isaiah tells us all about this excellent governor in verse 6.

1. He says first of all that He is given to us...
 - “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given!”
 - Here is the gift of God’s only Son...
 - “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life...”
 - Life free of oppression, life in eternal shalom.
 - He is given to us and for us, to be our governor.
2. And with this language Isaiah shows us both His humanity and His divinity...
 - a. He is a child who is born—
 - He is born into the world of a mother,

- true human flesh born to His people...
- He is truly one of us in order that He might represent us...
- He came in our flesh in order that He might offer Himself for us as our Saviour...
 - He goes out ahead of us to pay the penalty of our sin...
- He says,
 - “I am their governor.
 - I am one of my people.
 - I will bear all the responsibility for their sin.
 - I will pay the full penalty...
 - Let it all fall on Me!”

TRANS> But not only is He a child born to us, and so of our flesh...

b. He is also a Son given to us...

- He is the Son of God who lived for eternity past in the glory of heaven before He was born...
 - He was given from Heaven because He dwelt in Heaven...
- He is fully God from all eternity and to all eternity...
 - now come in our flesh to be our governor!
 - Given for us to be our Saviour!
- Surely He must be God...
 - How else could He have shoulders to bear such a weight of government as is promised here if He is not God?
 - Who could bear the curse of sin for an entire kingdom?
 - Who can even bear His own sin?
 - Who but God can offer to give us Shalom that known no end...
 - Who else can give and give and give to His subjects and still have so much more to give and give and give forever and ever?
 - Who else can deliver His people from oppression when they are in such bondage that they could never escape even with ten thousand times ten thousand?
 - He is not merely a child given (of mere human flesh)
 - but also a Son given (with full inexhaustible divinity)
 - What a gift this Son that God has given!

III. To reinforce this great blessing and to more fully set forth this glorious Saviour, Isaiah goes on to give us His names in verse 6...

- Consider who He is according to these names!

A. His name will be called Wonderful (*a1p peh'-leh*)

- a. This name speaks of Him as the One who is indescribably glorious and excellent.
 - The One who makes us shut our mouth in wondering awe.
 - The One who brings us to our knees in worship.
 - The One who leaves us speechless and feeling very small because we realise there is so much more to Him than we can comprehend.
- b. Samson's parents were given this name in Judges 13:18 by the One who came to declare to them Samson's birth...
 - The angel of the Lord appeared to them and after he had spoken Manoah asked:
 - "What is your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honour You?"
 - And the angel of the Lord said to him,
 - "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful (*Peh ley*)?"
 - Upon hearing these words, Manoah immediately began to prepare a sacrifice to worship the angel!
 - And the angel gladly accepted the worship and performed a miracle for them, showing that the angel was in fact the Lord...
 - No angel will accept such worship...
 - And Manoah said to his wife: "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!"
 - Manoah knew that this was God because He said His name was wonderful!
- c. Because the Son born to us is wonderful (*a1p peh'-leh*) He is the One who works wonders (*a1p paw-law'*)
 - A **wonder** in the Bible is always something that is beyond human ability.
 - Something that only God is able to pull off.
 - In Psalm 98 we sing of "the wonders He has done."
 - It speaks about things that we cannot do.
- d. When Jesus was among us He performed wonders...
 - He cleansed lepers, gave sight to the blind, healed the sick, cast out demons, made the lame to walk, raised the dead.

- He is also the One who created the worlds by speaking a word, the One who sent the flood upon the earth, the One who will create the world again.
- e. Everyone craves a governor who could do such things—
- and in Jesus Christ we have One.
 - But He is not a cheap sort of miracle worker like a Genie in the bottle...
 - He is also glorious in holiness and majesty—
 - He is wonderful, His presence is numinous.

B. His name will be called Counselor

- a. An earthly king always surrounds himself with many counselors and wise men to advise him.
- But our Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the embodiment of all wisdom.
 - Colossians tells us that
 - “in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
 - There is no piece of wisdom in the whole universe but what is found in Him.
 - He never acts with only partial information,
 - never makes a bad decision,
 - never passes an unjust law,
 - never renders an unjust judgement.
- b. How comforting it is to have a governor with perfect wisdom.
- There are many governors who never admit to making mistakes,
 - but here is a governor who never does.
 - There is no warrant for you to be uneasy about anything He does—
 - When He chastens us, it is just what we need.
 - When He moves us into battle, it is because battle is necessary.
- c. And not only that, but this governor also instructs us—passes His wisdom on to us.
- When His laws are obeyed, we are made beautiful and perfect.
 - He tells us how to love one another and He guides us into worship that truly honours God.
 - He tells us how to deal with those who sin against us
 - and He tells us how to conduct ourselves at work.
 - He tells us how to love our wives and how to serve our husbands

- and how to use of money.
 - When He reveals the glory of His Father and tells us about our inheritance, His words are perfect—we see the Father as He truly is.
 - But perhaps most important of all,
 - He reveals to us the way of salvation.
 - He shows us, ruined sinners that we are, Himself as the way to be reconciled with God.
 - We could not know the way of salvation unless He revealed it to us...
 - And He reveals it to us not only with words,
 - but also by giving us His Spirit to change our hearts...
 - to show us and convince us that we are sinners...
 - to show us and convince us that His way of salvation through is death on the cross is the only way to be reconciled to God.
 - He actually imparts wisdom to us by His Spirit so that we are renewed in wisdom and knowledge to salvation.
- d. How foolish you are to drink from other fountains of wisdom when we have a governor with perfect wisdom.
- He is the counselor...
 - He is the One who brings God’s wisdom down from heaven and makes it accessible to us!
 - He is the logos!
 - No wonder that Isaiah said in verse 2 that the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light!
 - This child is not just wise—
 - He is the source of all wisdom for us!
 - We can dig out the treasures of wisdom from this mine forever and ever.

C. His name will be called Mighty God.

a. **Mighty** refers, of course, to His power!

1) This particular word is frequently used to speak of military power.

- The Bible speaks of mighty men of war
 - They are valiant men, strong men, men who are able to overcome the enemy.

- We read, for example, of David's mighty men who broke through the camp of the Philistines to get David a drink from the well of Bethlehem.
 - We read of Benaiah who killed a lion in a snowy pit with his bare hands.
 - Our hearts are stirred when we read of these great warrior and their exploits!
- 2) Every governor or king must surround himself with a mighty men...
- He must have police officers or military men to enforce his laws and to establish justice and order.
 - He must provide for the protection of the people he governs.
- b. But for you, Christian, a child is born who is called the mighty God!
- 1) The word *El* is the word that is translated God, and it always speaks of His power, never of man.
- This clearly shows that Jesus Christ is truly God, truly divine.
 - No one else is called **El** but Jehovah Himself.
- 2) Again, what comfort there is to have a governor like this—who is the mighty God!
- He is a governor given to us—born to us in our own flesh!
 - Yet He is the mighty God whose power knows no limit.
- 3) Our Lord Jesus Christ needs no mighty men about Him to uphold His authority.
- He has all power in heaven and earth and judges all men and all nations...
 - Because He is the mighty God, there is no power that is able to resist His power,
 - There is no great army that is able to take one leaf from the trees in His kingdom or even scratch one stone!
 - He Himself is the source of all power, and no man can even move a finger unless Jesus lends Him the strength to do so.
- 4) While He was here,
- Jesus revealed this power when He cast out demons and made them do whatever He told them.
 - He could tell them where to go, He could forbid them to speak...
 - They had no power over Him at all.
 - But I tell you that at no time did He so exhibit His mighty power than when he rose from the dead!

- We have a governor who can not only defeat every army in heaven and earth by His own power...
- We have a governor who has power over death!
 - He went to the grave for us with all of our sins upon His mighty shoulders...
 - Sins that would have buried us under God's judgement forever and ever...
 - But all sin's weight could not keep Him in the grave because He is the mighty God.
 - Like Samson who carried the huge gates of the city away when they tried to shut Him in,
 - Jesus burst open the gates of death and hell for us and carried them away!
 - O death, where is your sting!
 - O grave, where is your victory!
 - Our governor, the mighty God, had conquered death and the grave!
- No king but Jesus is able to conquer death for His subjects...
 - He is our champion and our hero!
 - Before His majestic power every enemy will fall!

5) In His wisdom and patience, He does not destroy all our enemies now...

- He is waiting until He has gathered all His people into His kingdom....
 - He will gather His elect first, then He will destroy all our enemies—Satan, and all who are in league with Him...
 - But in the mean time,
 - He urges you not to be discouraged when you face persecution and tribulation.
 - In John 16:33, He says:
 - John 16:33: In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

D. His name will be called Everlasting Father

- a. At first, it may seem a little confusing to call Jesus the Father because we know Him as God the Son, the only begotten of the Father...

- But Isaiah is not referring to His relationship within the Trinity, His place in the Godhead...
 - He is referring to His relationship with us.
 - And to us, He is a father.

- b. This name, “everlasting father,” could also be translated “Father of Eternity!”
 - The idea is that He gives birth to eternity for His people!
 - In other words, He is the author of eternal life for us.
 - He came in order to give us life,
 - to deliver us from death that we might not perish but have eternal life.
 - He promises that all who come to Him will have eternal life.

- c. Sadly, today, it seems, that most people have a pretty bad relationship with their fathers...
 - But I think almost everyone wishes that they could have a good relationship with them...
 - To have a wise father’s love and care and support and protection and advice is something every child desires.
 - But the chief characteristic of most fathers is that they cannot be depended upon.
 - Even the best earthly fathers become old and cannot continue by reason of death...
 - But Jesus is not like that.
 - He is the Everlasting Father who supports His children, loves them, provides for them, and blesses them forever and ever!
 - When you are threatened by the transitory nature of this life,
 - remember that Jesus Christ is given to you and His name is Everlasting Father...
 - As Isaiah goes on to say in verse 7, of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.
 - He is there blessing His people forever and ever.
 - You will never be forsaken by Him if you belong to Him.

E. Finally, His name will be called Prince of Peace.

- a. God the Father is called the God of peace, God the Son is called the prince of peace.
 - What a marvellous name this is!

- The word **Peace** in this verse translates that Hebrew word **Shalom** that I keep talking about lately...
 - In the last four messages, I have preached about **Shalom**...
 - It is such a rich word...
 - Not only does it speak about all that we think of when we think of peace—harmony, absence of conflict and trouble, reconciliation...
 - It also speaks about the fullness of blessedness, happiness, wholeness, perfection.
 - It is that marvellous condition of being filled up to lack absolutely nothing!
 - to be all that you ought to be!
 - and to have that absolute fullness of life and blessing.
- b. Every prince has His territory, his inheritance, the place that is allotted to him...
- But Jesus is **not** the Prince of Wales or the Prince of Egypt or the Prince of some other territory like that...
 - Jesus Christ is Prince of Peace...
 - Peace is His inheritance from the Father.
 - For all eternity He lives in Peace with God the Father in absolute blessedness and glory.
 - But now that He has been given to us—to us a Child is born, to us a son is given...
 - this Prince of Peace brings us into His glorious kingdom of peace...
 - He gives us an inheritance in Peace—Shalom!
 - The place where we all become what we should be and live in complete harmony with God and with each other...
 - a relationship of maximum giving and maximum receiving!
 - Giving all that we were created to give so that we are contributing to others and to God’s glory everything we ought to contribute...
 - And receiving all that we are capable of receiving so that there is no more emptiness and no more longing.
 - This is Peace...
 - This is Shalom...
 - This the inheritance that Jesus has for you in His kingdom.
 - He is the prince of Shalom and He brings all His people to live in Shalom with Him forever.

So you see that Jesus Christ is the Governor we all need.

- He has been given to you—all you who trust in Him.