

Isaiah 9:1-7

But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. [2] The people who walk in darkness

Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them. [3] Thou shalt multiply the nation,
Thou shalt increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Thy presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil. [4] For Thou shalt break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. [5] For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. [6] For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. [7] There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Summary: The people living in darkness have seen a Great Light. We compare here the great contrast between darkness and light. Darkness is the absence of light. As the sun goes down at night and darkness "rises," so when God turns his face away from us, spiritual darkness prevails.

But Behold! God does not turn away forever. He has sent a great light into the world. This light penetrates and darkness, exposes it, and eliminates it. For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will rest upon his shoulders. Halleluiah to the Lamb of God!

Unto Us a Child Is Born

Isaiah 9:1-7

Behold! The words of creation and light and darkness of the prophet Jeremiah, "For my people are foolish, they have not known me; they are senseless children, and they have no understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. *I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger*" (Jer 4:22-26).

Jeremiah's words demonstrate that as the prophets see things, when the punishment of God comes upon a people, it is for them a return to the formlessness and void filled darkness that presided over creation before God created light. So seconds Isaiah when he says, "And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness" (8:22). And again he says, "In that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if *one* look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heaven" (5:30).

What is darkness? This is an important question to consider. **Darkness has no existence by itself.** At night, there is no black sun that shoots dark rays towards the earth. Even so-called "black light" illumines things so that they will glow in the dark. Darkness in Scripture is always likened with evil. But it is important to understand that in God's world, good and evil are not forces that are fighting a cosmic battle for the rule of the universe where the outcome is uncertain as you might learn from Star Wars theology. And darkness is certainly not an equal force to light as Buddhist thought teaches. Rather, darkness is the *absence* of

light. Simply put, where there is no light, darkness prevails. When good disappears, evil fills the vacuum.

Let your mind wander back, before the opening words of the Bible to a time when all that existed was God. Before the beginning - when God was all there was - darkness had no existence. At most, it was an idea in the mind of God, something that he knew would come about once he began creating. For an eternity the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had enjoyed perfect fellowship, and this fellowship beamed between the members of the Godhead like a blazing sun that never ran out.

Now, at some point, God called a great counsel with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in attendance. Zechariah tells us what went on in this pre-historical meeting, "Even he [Christ] shall build the temple of the LORD; and he [Christ] shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he [Christ] shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both [Father and Son]" (6:13). The Scripture here calls this counsel: "the counsel of peace." We get a glimpse here into the very reason for our own existence. The Father is promising the Son that He should sit upon his throne as a king and a priest; and the Son will bear the glory of the Father as he builds the eternal temple of God. God is going to create *us* so that he might glorify the Son who in turn might glorify the Father.

Part of this pact was that the Son should be given a certain number of people as an inheritance and a gift from the Father. So we read more about this counsel in the New Testament, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day" (John 6:39). And we read in the Old Testament, "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance?" (Micah 7:18).

But now remember, when all these things were pledged – nothing existed except God. And God is light. This would mean that in order to carry out this plan, God would need to create out of nothing a whole universe for the glory of his own Name. And this is what we see taking place in those first moments of the Scripture. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. "God calls things that are not as though they were," says Paul in Romans. God is setting the stage that the drama or redemption will soon play upon.

But our thought is still to be on light and darkness. So that we will get the point as early as possible, God makes it clear even in these pages that light is only intrinsic to God. Only God is Light. John affirms this. "God is light, in him there is no darkness at all" (John 1:5). What living thing in all creation is like this? Nothing. So what do we see his creation enveloped in at the beginning? We read in the second verse of the Bible that it is formless and empty and darkness is over the surface of the deep. We see something important here, even at the beginning. Before sin had entered the world, darkness reigned over the creation. So I want you to see that the most basic difference between the creation and the Creator is the difference between light and darkness.

But this might lead some of you to ask a question. Did God create darkness? Well, in a sense, yes. God tells Isaiah later, "I form the light, and create darkness" (Isa 45:7). If all there was in the beginning was light, and then if at creation there is darkness, then we understand darkness must be a created thing. It had to get there somehow. But how? How can a God of light create darkness? This is why I qualified by saying that God created darkness "in a sense." For darkness is not creatable in the same way that light is for the reasons already explained. I can only solve this most difficult of problems in my mind this way. Because light is intrinsic to God alone, then by definition everything that is not God is

dark. Even the sun at some point in time will lose its light and will cease to have its place in creation, showing that even it is not intrinsically light. God had to put light in it. God had to give the sun life and light. **You see, if God created a world with light in it by nature as he has light by nature, then he would be creating himself – and this is not possible.** God cannot create God. Scripture later declares that even the light in a believer is only there because he or she is hidden “in Christ.” Our light is an alien light. **So the meaning of Genesis 1:2 is that God wants us to understand how basic the darkness is to anything that is not God.** He wants us to see that any hope of light in a created world must come from his speaking light into it. The darkness has no hope to bring light about by itself – which just goes to show the foolishness of Satan and sinful man.

I realize that many will say that this idea impugns God with sin, as if by the very act of creating something that is not intrinsically full of light God becomes evil. **“That will not do,”** they say, as the zealously try to guard God’s goodness. But friends, this is what the Scriptures clearly teach. Darkness was there at the beginning. It did not come into existence on its own. **The reason why this creation of darkness does not make God evil is because God cannot be blamed for creating something that is not itself God.** Remember, darkness has no existence in itself. It is not a substance (a black sun?) to be created. It is an absence that exists when another substance is not present (the light goes down). Can God be blamed for not being literally in everything he creates? Only if the pantheists who teach that everything is God – a tree, a rock, a bug, a mountain, a man are all god because god is everything and god is in everything – are correct? But Christians are not pantheists. Everything is not god. Nor is God in everything (panentheism).

All of this is fundamental to understanding the drama that unfolds before you in **Isaiah 9**. We have read one verse from our text already this morning. The spectacular words that unfold before us here presuppose that you all understand this truth.

The nation of Judah had a problem. What was Judah’s problem? They had come to believe that they deserved the light that God had shinned into the nation as a free gift of grace. Again, we should go back to Genesis to understand this.

With God’s eternal plan still in our minds, we can see better what God is doing, as if we have a front row seat or our sitting on a high peak watch all unfold before our eyes. Notice how darkness does not stay in the picture for more than this one verse in Genesis, (or in Isaiah 8-9 for that matter). For what we see even here from the beginning is that God the Holy Spirit is active in presiding over creation, making sure that the darkness will not gain a foothold on this creation, ensuring that God will do exactly what he has planned. Though God did not the earth with light in it by nature, his very first creative act is to bring light out of darkness as a sign that we might read to see just what kind of a God he is. The narrative even calls the lights in the sky “signs.” Recall what you already know. God spoke this light into existence. God said, **“Let there be light, and there was light.”** **Because this command follows the same pattern as the other creative commands, we must understand that this light source was itself a creation.** Therefore, God himself is not the light source of the first day.

Now we know that by at least day 4 the sun is created. It presides in the sky to rule over the day, just as the stars and moon rule in the night sky to preside like kings over the night. **But ancient people worshiped these created rulers.** Romans says they exchanged the Creator for the creation, and worshiped and served it rather than God. But God gives us the lights – not to worship – but in order to show that his plan for this world is to ultimately make light shine upon the darkness. **It is not that we should worship the sun, but that we should worship God for bringing light out of darkness.** But something else happens here in

Genesis 1. Immediately after the creation of the light, we see that there is a *separation* between light and darkness. In this too we see that in this eternal plan. *God had designed that forever and ever there would continue to be a darkness and there would continue to be light in his creation.* Ultimately, the darkness is confined to hell – along with all those who walk in the darkness. But the light is transformed into an everlasting creation that will never be destroyed, and the light of God will take the place of the sun to shine upon this part of his creation so that the darkness will never again surround it. (I'm getting goose-bumps thinking about it).

All this we see at the very beginning of the Bible. Judah should have known better. She should have remembered the beginning of history as she began to expect the light, to presume upon the light, to take the light of God for granted, and even to complain when it was taken away. Thinking through a very brief history of Judah and Israel we remember that for centuries the light of God had been kept hidden or relegated to a few families of the earth (the line of Shem until the birth of Abraham). But with Abram, God decides to bring another level of development to his eternal plan to give his Son an inheritance.

For the first time, instead of families, God will shine his light into an entire nation of people. Here was the promise given to the nation of Israel, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'" (Ex 19:5-6). The problem was with Israel that they failed to obey the covenant. Somehow they thought that it didn't matter how they acted, that being God's treasured possession was their birthright.

Light is never a birthright. Light is not intrinsic to us. Light is not what we deserve. It comes only because God is a merciful God. Think about it. John says, "Men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" (John 3:19-20). How can any people rationally think that they deserve light? Even more, why do so many of us continually think that light is something we actually even want in our lives? We run from the light – even as Christians – when we sin because we do not want God to expose our dark deeds to the light of The Day.

How can you appreciate the light if you still love the darkness? How can you truly love God's mercy if you expect that he is just going to give it to everyone? So now I have set you up, prepared you to see the shock that begins in [Isaiah 9:1](#). Isaiah's oracle of judgment is most unexpectedly put on pause and we are catapulted some 700 years into the future. Here we are asked to consider events that will come to pass as Second member in the counsel of peace is brought down to earth to fulfill his destiny by obeying all that he had covenanted with the Father before creation.

Imagine yourself a Jew in Jesus' day. As you look back and read the scroll of Isaiah, now that 700 years has passed, you understand far too painfully that God has virtually destroyed his people. Both Israel and Judah have gone into captivity. Most of the people have either been killed or brought into slavery to brutal dictators. The few that were left to work the land were the poorest of the poor. Your temple is destroyed. Your worship can no longer be rendered. Your culture, your way of life is all but gone. And God has even told you that you are now have to live in the land of your captives, never complaining for your lot, and even learning to live in a culture that you not only despise, but that is out and out pagan.

For a moment you remember that God had mercy upon your people and brought them back to the land. You remember that the temple was rebuilt, but you also remember how the elders cried when they saw how inferior the second temple was to the glory of the first.

And then you remember how for a time God seemed to show favor upon you again by giving his word to you through Ezra and Nehemiah and the later prophets. But God has been silent now for nearly 400 years. You fear that God is so angry with you now that he will not even talk to you again. The silence is worse than fighting with God. And so, as a faithful Jew living around turn of our calendar, your gloom and anguish is complete – just like Isaiah said.

Isaiah 9:1

But suddenly, as you come upon 9:1 you see again the next words of Isaiah. “There will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious” (Isa 9:1a). You can remember people like Simeon and Anna who were watching for the coming of Messiah and when they saw him, they died happy for they had seen with their eyes the Salvation of the Lord.

Contrary to the *Divinci Code*, Jesus Christ really did live in relative obscurity for the first thirty years of his life. We only know a very few (factual) bits and pieces of his life until the beginning of his ministry around age thirty. The gospel of Matthew then begins to explain the beginning of the ministry of Jesus from an Old Testament perspective. First, Matthew records Jesus’ baptism into the Jordan. With images that we do not have time to explain in detail, Jesus baptism marks a new creation for the world.

As if to say that the heavenly kingdom is arriving, Jesus comes “up out of the water” into the expanse between the lower (the deep) and upper waters (the rain clouds). And we read, “the heavens were opened.” Overseeing this new creation, same as the first creation, the Spirit of God hovers and then descends upon Christ as a bird hovering over its young child. In this way, the imagery of Christ’s baptism is taken directly from the first few verses of the Bible!

Next Matthew say that, just like Moses led Israel from the Red Sea into the Desert of Shur, so the Holy Spirit leads Christ from the Jordan into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. The entire wilderness temptation of Christ is a fulfillment of the 40 years of faithlessness of the children of Israel.

But then we see what happens immediately after the angels attend Christ in the wilderness after Satan had left him. We read beginning in Matthew 4:12, “When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee [from the wilderness]. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali.” If you take out a map of Israel you will notice that the lands that these two brothers took as their inheritance were located in the far northern regions of Israel, just west of the Jordan River and the sea Galilee.

In other words, Jesus very first steps of ministry were to move some 100 miles from his home, in the land the farthest away from his home that he could be in while still staying in Israel. Jesus leaves the land of Judah and returns to the place where the first Jews went into captivity. He returns to the northlands. But Matthew explains that this is done in order to fulfill prophesy. “To fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah, ‘Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.’” Mathew quotes Isaiah 9!

You see now why it is that we say that Isaiah’s oracle of doom is put on pause in order to fast forward our minds into the future coming of Messiah? Isaiah 9:1-7 is here to instill

hope in the people that in their darkest moment when all seems formless and empty, the light will shine out of the darkness again, just as it did at creation and has continued to do throughout the different acts in this divine drama. [Why is God doing this? Because he is now acting out and fulfilling that covenant that he made in the Trinity before time.](#)

Verse 2

Do you see how it is God who makes the light shine upon Israel even as he made the light shine upon the surface of the deep at creation? It is only when you are broken of your sin and understand that no light resides in you by nature that you can possibly be prepared to accept this truth. Until then, you will continue to think that you deserve this light and for you the light of God will make no sense. But for you who are broken, you understand Isaiah's precious truth, this is a [Great Light](#). As a Christian, do you understand what those in Israel surely would come to understand; that you too live in a dark, dark land – and that you are part of that darkness? Does your heart skip a beat when you understand that the God is making his light to shine upon you?

Verse 3

I have already told you that God does all of this so that his Son might be glorified. The catechism wisely teaches us that the [chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever](#). John Piper has wisely explained the meaning of this truth. The catechism says that there is [one chief end](#) for man, but it gives us [two acts to do: Glorify and enjoy](#). Because of this, Piper understands that our glorification of God takes place AS we enjoy God forever. He says, "[the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him forever](#)." And so he has a motto for his church that says, "[God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him](#)."

There is truth to this that many Christians desperately need to hear, including many Reformed Christians, because they have a view of God that says they are *not* to take delight in him – that God *only* does things for the Son and not for us as well. The problem with this thinking is that it creates a false dichotomy. It is not that God either makes us happy or he makes Christ happy. It is that God glorifies the Son and one of the ways he does this is to make his people happy in Him. So the Psalmist says, "[Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart](#)" (Ps 37:4).

You should understand that this is exactly what is promised In Isaiah 9. When the light shines upon us, God will [multiply the nation](#) (an allusion back to Genesis 1 – be fruitful and multiply). God will [increase our gladness](#). [We will be glad in His presence](#). The attitude of the Reformed Christian must never be one of disassociated gloom and dejection. Sometimes I fear that in our zeal to take the law of God seriously (in reaction to so many in our day who do not believe the law applies at all), that we subconsciously replace law with gospel. You can tell when this happens to a person. They get so caught up in keeping very good things like the Regulative Principle, the Sabbath, or getting our theology exactly perfect that they become miserable people that no body wants to be around. They never smile. They blame everyone else for not being obedient enough or whatever.

But to act like this is to act as if you are still in darkness, as if you still live in gloom and anguish of the heathen who know not God. [Beloved, we should be the most happy and most glad people on earth – not the most cantankerous and most bitter people!](#) Again I remind you of these words. "Thou shalt increase their gladness, they will be glad in Thy presence." How can any of us say that the light of God has shined in our hearts if we are not seeing this very fruit of the Great Light displayed in our desires and affections for God and each other? How can a person who is not glad be saved?

Just as I get frustrated when people say that the fear of the Lord does not mean in any sense that we are to be absolutely terrified of God (rather it just means we are to respect him), so I also get frustrated when people say that the gladness of being in God's presence is not to be in any sense a feeling of euphoria and giddiness at the sheer wonder that God would make his light shine in my dark heart. Does not Paul repeat himself when he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice!"

Do you see all of the wondrous good news here? Isaiah puts an illustration on it for us, just so that we will not mistake his gladness for some sort of quiet, proper, Victorian gladness. What is this gladness like? Just as a farmer is glad after harvest – in the day of hard physical labor with no John Deere's around, I'm sure he was down right giddy after harvest – just as men rejoice after a battle when they divide the plunder amongst themselves, so we are to be glad in the presence of God.

Verse 4

Why should we be this way? Because we understand what has happened to us. Isaiah says that *those whom God has crushed and brought into slavery, He shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian when God saved Gideon and his people from a mighty horde.* Anyone who is overwhelmed by either their own sin (the spiritual) or by the physical afflictions of this world should shout for joy at these words, for this burden that is relieved is both spiritual and physical.

Verse 5

Now, this is eschatological language, and we live in the already/not yet. You must remember that. But still, God promises here that our eschatological hope is that he will put an end to oppression. *The flow of the text explains how God puts an end to oppression. He does it by putting an end to warfare upon which oppression rests.*¹ Verse 5 explains God's ultimate plan for warfare and darkness. He will conquer both. But not by replacing one warfare with another. "God will do away with wars (cf. Ps 46:10,11; 2 Cor 10:4). "Every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, and cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire."

Notice how many boots and cloaks are bunt in the fire? All of them! On this day, there will be *no more* warriors among men, because God will decloak them so that they will not fight. He will deboot them so that they cannot walk. He will burn all of man's battle plans in the fire. As John Oswalt says, "Wars will have ceased to the end of the earth. Speed the day."²

But now I want you to behold something even more fantastic. We have seen that there is joy because of God, because God has delivered his people from oppression – both physical and spiritual. He does this by putting an end to warfare, both physical and spiritual. But how God will do this – here is the incredible part. In all *begins* in the coming of a child. The coming of this child will start the eschatological clock in motion.

Again, *children are the theme of these few chapters of Isaiah.* God gives a sign to Ahaz – a child named *Immanuel*: God with us. God gives Isaiah *two children* as signs of the impending disaster. And now, we see the return of the child again. "For unto us a child will be born, to us a son will be given." "To us" is the theme because God is *with* us. God is Immanuel. *What we now learn from the words that follow is that God himself is going to become a little child.* The foolishness of God confounds the wisdom of mankind. *God will*

¹ Oswalt, Isaiah, p. 244.

² Ibid.

put an end to all warfare and hostility and darkness through the coming of a little child. It is astonishing.

Verse 6

Before us now one of the most well beloved verses in all of the Scripture lays open for us to ponder. God is opening up his mind to us in ways never conceived of previously. We are going to learn more of this child than we have seen in the past, more than we could possibly imagine. **The government will rest on His shoulders.** Why? Because this child is to be David's son, the king of Israel. But he is not just the last of the kings – he is the King *par excellence*.

Four (or perhaps five) titles are given to this child (I go with five). And as Calvin rightly reminds us, each of the titles are related to the subject at hand. These are not just random titles. It is because this child carries these titles to his name that he will be able to finally deliver believers and the earth from all wars. When you think about these titles from now on, you should remember the context of why they were given in the first place.

Wonderful, Counselor

The first title is the one where the biggest controversy lies regarding number. Is this child a "wonderful Counselor" or is he both Wonderful and a Counselor? The translations are divided on this issue. The word *counselor* carries with it the idea of wise king. **Micah 4:9** uses counselor and king as synonyms. **"Why do you now cry aloud-- have you no king? Has your counselor perished?"** But to give counsel is itself to be a man of great wisdom. So this child will be unlike the kings of the nations who have to surround themselves with wise men. He is Himself as king, Counselor.

I do not think he is just a wonderful counselor. But I rather think that the King James (as you are familiar with because of the Messiah) is probably correct to separate these two terms from each other. He is a counselor and he is wonderful. I think this is important for this reason. His name is "Wonderful." This child has in his very nature something of "wonder," something secret, something beyond understanding. **The Hebrew (*peh*) "wonder" is a term that describes the deity of the Angel of the Lord as he appeared to Manoah in Judges 13.** There the Angel tells Manoah that his name is "beyond understanding," that is "wonderful." His name is Wonderful! At this Manoah fell down on his face because he knew that he had seen the Angel of the Lord. This child is to be the Angel of the Lord incarnated. It is because the child is wonderful and because he is the king of wisdom that he will put an end to warfare, that he will pardon the iniquity of Jerusalem.

Mighty God

The second (or third) term used to identify this child is that he is mighty God. Do not let anyone try to convince you that *El Gibbor* means merely a mighty hero and not God as liberals are fond of doing. This child is no hero like Hercules was a hero in Greek mythology. The term "El" in the OT only refers to God himself. Thus, what we have before us is another clear reference to the deity of this child-king. This is Heroic God, or as the translations usually say, Mighty God. Because he is God, he is able to put an end to oppression and to make the face of his people glad in his presence. Anyone looking for proof of the deity of Christ in Scripture need go no further than **Isaiah 9:6**. This verse says outright that Jesus is God.

Everlasting Father

And he is the everlasting father. You might have had a question about this term as I have had in the past. How can Jesus be the Father if the "Father" is the father? You need not wonder how it is that the second person of the Trinity can be called an everlasting father if

he refers to the first person as the Father. Father is being used in a different sense, with a different context. The Father/Son relationship is what makes these persons differ from each other. This child is always the Son of the Father. As a person, he is not his own father. The reference to an eternal fatherhood is with respect (not to the Godhead), but to this child being the father of his people whom he is going to save, who he represents. He is OUR father, even as he is our brother.

Now, even in English we refer to those men that founded our nation as "fathers," though most of us are probably related to none of them. And we call the first Christians the church "fathers." This small child is the firstborn over all creation. He is the eternal and everlasting one. He is the firstborn among many brothers. He is the second Adam. And as Adam was the father of those he represents, to Christ is the father of those he represents. Because he is our father, we may be sure that he will act in our stead accordingly to do all that was purposed by him and for him in that eternal covenant prior to creation.

Prince of Peace

The child that is given to us is finally called the Prince of Peace. As he is a child and a father, so he is a king and a prince. Again, his royal role is that which gives him the power to carry out his desire. But it is this idea of *shalom*, peace, that is so nicely ties off the list of titles of this amazing child. How does the child bring peace? Because he himself is peace!

Verse 7

There will be **no end to the increase of His government or of peace**. Once he begins to rule, the will expand his kingdom throughout time and eternity, ruling with wisdom, ruling with peace, ruling as a father, ruling as a prince. In his three year ministry on earth, He inaugurated his kingdom on this earth.

His coronation ceremony took place the day he entered Jerusalem on a donkey. Through his resurrection he ensures that his kingdom will last into eternity. And one day he will take his seat as he hosts the greatest wedding feast in history – as the king finally takes his bride the church to be his own. **On the throne of David and over his kingdom, he now sits to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from that point on and forevermore.**

Though to many it does not appear as if Jesus is ruling anything, it is the fact of his resurrection that ensures the skeptics are wrong. Even now he is preparing mansions in heaven for those who love God. He is eliminating his enemies and the last enemy to be conquered is death. From then on there will be no more war and God's people will finally understand what it means to glorify God by enjoying him forever.

Make your faces glad for your hope is in such a great child as this. Unto us a son is born, unto us a child will be given... **The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.**

How does one attempt to do justice to one of the greatest portions of God's word? The mind sits in awe at what lies before it here. The unexpected mercy of God is overwhelming. Everyone acquainted with any of the prophets understands how often theirs was a message of doom and darkness. The last words of chapter 8 remind us of just how true this is. "Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness."

I wrestle over how to best communicate the message of the words of Isaiah 9 to you. To me it is like the ant trying to carry a telephone on his back as he runs to tell his friend that he has a call from an important person. It seems like an impossible task. I suppose that the best way is to try to get you to glimpse just how stark the contrast between darkness and light is, and how surprised each of us should be at the mercy of God.

I wonder how often I have been asked the question, "Why doesn't God give everyone a chance to accept or reject the gospel?" I also wonder how many times I have heard in the secular world the question, "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?" For all that we could say about these two questions (and there are many), I want you to understand what they reveal about our theology of God. What they tell me is that man in his natural condition actually expects the mercy of God. We presume upon it. We take it for granted. When it does in fact come, we are not surprised at all by it.

I think one of the reasons why we are not surprised about the mercy of God is because we simply do not understand just how wicked and evil we are sinful creatures actually are. Likewise, it is as if we no longer think that God is a judge who must uphold the law and punish lawbreakers. Both of these questions attack the justice of God, don't they? It is as if we are saying, "How dare God not do exactly what I want him to do!" "How dare God not act like I want him to act!" What a dangerous position many of us are in this morning.

I have this belief that when a society gets too many blessings from God that they quickly forget all sense of right and wrong. That was certainly the case with Judah and God was soon to make it clear that their rebellion was not something that he looked kindly upon. You see, friends, if you are not surprised by God's mercy but instead do nothing but question his justice, then I'm just not sure how you can ever be in a position to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Darkness is a condition that we are all in by nature. John tells us, "Men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" (John 3:19-20). In the beginning, before God's creative activity, the earth for formless and empty and darkness was over the surface of the deep. Why do we expect light when the natural state of our existence is darkness? This is a question you really need to ask yourself.

The judgment of God to the people of Isaiah's day was that he would take the light away from them. They had grow accustom to simply expecting that it would always be there, that God wouldn't care what they did because they were his chosen people. So the prophets were sent to tell the people that the day would soon come where the light would be turned off and they would have to grope about in darkness.

The gloom of the night has been rolled back by the morning light of a new dawn. In Isaiah 9, Isaiah's prophesy of the destruction of Judah pauses. During this intermission we get another glimpse of Him who is to come. Why? Because though God is angry at the sin of his people, his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime (Ps 30:5).