

Christmas 2019
Isaiah 9:1-7
“The Greatest Gift”

Introduction

“But now, apart from The Law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by The Law and the Prophets.” **Romans 3:21**

Christmas has always been my favorite time of the year. It seems that no matter how old I get, every Christmas my mind goes back to when I was a child. Me and my two brothers would sneak into my parents room when they were out, and we would shake the presents that mom had hidden under the bed or in the closet. She always wrapped them up as soon as she brought them home, so we wouldn't figure out too soon what gifts we were getting. We usually did anyway. At least some of them.

My parents were so great at Christmas. I wish sometimes that I could just go back to that time of my life. No deadlines. No stress. No cell phones. Yes, it was a simpler time. There were no VCR's or CD recordings back then either. So, if you wanted to watch “*Frosty the Snowman*” or “*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*”, you had to be sure that you were at home watching, when it came on TV. My brothers and I looked forward to those Christmas specials (which was what they called them back then) all year long. Now, they are not so “special” anymore, because you can buy the CD and watch them in July, if you want. Takes all the waiting out of it, and in my humble opinion, some of the magic as well. But I digress.

The prophet Isaiah lived in a difficult time in Israel's history. The great kingdom that had formerly been under the reigns of King David and Solomon had been fractured in two after Solomon's death. The northern, as well as, the southern kingdom had both fallen into idolatrous rebellion. God had no choice but to punish the nation that He had so loved and prospered. The Northern Kingdom was being besieged by the Assyrians, who had no intention of allowing the Israelites to remain a sovereign people. No, it was the custom of the Assyrians to conquer and assimilate, blending their godless heritage with that of those they defeated, until there was nothing left of their former enemies.

Israel was under siege. Some of the northeastern most tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali (the 10th and 5th sons of Jacob, respectively), had already fallen. And many more were yet to follow suit. God had shown great restraint up to this point, but in His holiness and justice, He could no longer allow the rebellion of His people to go unpunished. But God is also a God of mercy and grace, and even in her rebellion, He still had a plan for the restoration of Israel. A great King would come and restore the throne of David and once more unite the tribes of Israel. It was the greatest gift that God would ever send to the world, but it came wrapped in a package that was difficult for the Jews to recognize. This Wonderful King would come and make things right again, but it would be in God's time and according to God's plan. And what a beautiful plan it was.

One of the most famous *Old Testament* passages that we often recite at Christmas time is the passage in *Isaiah Chapter Nine*, where the old prophet foretells of the King that will one day come to sit upon the throne of David. As Believers, we know exactly Who this Great King is, but the nation of Israel as a whole is yet to recognize Him. He did not come upon the scene dressed in the splendor of a prince, not at all. In fact, His first advent was one of humility. A simple babe born into the poor family of a carpenter. Not exactly what the people were expecting. But God didn't just send His Son to save the rich and famous. He sent Him to save us all, no matter how high or low born we are. He came as the greatest gift to all mankind, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. But He is, and shall always be, the true meaning of Christmas. Israel had suffered long and patiently waited for her redeemer to come, but sadly, many of them were not able to recognize Him when He came.

Isaiah describes Him for us perfectly, not only speaking of His birth, but also of His splendor. In those days, Kings were often given “throne names” to describe their greatness. Isaiah lists for us the “Throne Names” of The LORD Jesus. They are *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace*. These Names represent what Christ is to all who would believe in Him. These are the greatest gifts of Christmas wrapped up in our Wonderful Savior. This Christmas, let us unwrap these gifts one by one as we take a moment to remember all that Jesus is to us.

Wonderful Counselor

“Nevertheless, the gloom of the distressed land will not be like that of the former times when He humbled the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. But in the future He will bring honor to the way of the sea, to the land east of Jordan, and Galilee of the nations. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness. You have enlarged the nation and increased its joy. The people have rejoiced before You as they rejoice at the harvest time and as they rejoice when dividing spoils. For You have shattered their oppressive yoke and the rod on their shoulders, the staff of their oppressor, just as you did on the day of Midian. For every trampling boot of battle and the bloodied garments of war will be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child will be born for us, a Son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor...”
Isaiah 9:1-6a

Yes, these were dark times in Israel. But God had not written them off completely; for that is the very nature of God, to restore what has been broken by the ravages of sin. I am reminded here of the words of the wise woman, who came to persuade King David to forgive and restore his rebellious son Absalom. She reminded the king of God’s nature of mercy of grace. The words that she spoke to her king are words that bear repeating:

“...But God would not take away a life; He would devise plans so that the one banished from Him does not remain banished.”
2 Samuel 14:14b

What a beautiful picture of the wondrous grace of God! He devises plans, so that those who have rebelled can also be restored. This is exactly why Jesus came into this world, to seek and to save that which was lost (**Luke 19:10**). It is interesting to note that Isaiah’s prophecy mentions the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali. They were among the first to fall into the hands of the Assyrians. Their darkness was most certainly great. Did you know that this was the area in which Christ first came to set up His headquarters, when He started preaching? You see, God sent His Son first to bring light into this dark place when He came. These people, (known in Christ’s day as Samaritans) whose doctrine had been so corrupted by the false religions of the Assyrians, were among the first to hear the gospel of Christ. He brought His light into their darkness, before He shared it anywhere else. Sadly, these regions in Galilee by and large rejected His message and chose to remain in darkness.

Isaiah also prophesies that Christ will come and enlarge the nation and increase its joy. This is reminiscent of the days of Solomon, when the nation was growing and enjoyed the benefits of peacetime. Not since King Solomon had Israel enjoyed such prosperity and growth. The Christ would come to build a great kingdom. He preached about it everywhere that He went. He called it “the kingdom of heaven” (**Matthew 13:44-46; 31-43; 47-52; 16:19; 18:3; 19:23; 22:1-14; 25:1-30**).

“...the government will be on His shoulders...”
Isaiah 9:6

This Great King that would come to sit upon David’s throne would put an end to all war and bloodshed once and for all, bringing **“peace on earth and good will to those on who His favor rests”** (**Luke 2:14**). He shall overthrow the evil in this world, much like the famous Judge Gideon had defeated the Midianites so very long ago (**vs. 4**). These things will all be fulfilled, when Christ returns and firmly establishes His reign upon this earth. Weapons of war will be shattered, and He will usher in a time of peace and prosperity. But even as we wait for the coming Kingdom of the Messiah, we are not left alone as orphans, for He is our “Wonderful Counselor”. Before Jesus went to the cross He told His disciples:

“I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. On that day you will know that I am in My Father, you are in Me, and I am in you. The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And the one who loves

***“Me will be loved by My Father. I also will love him and will reveal Myself to him.”
John 14:18-21***

So you see, one of the gifts that we have in Christ is His continuous “counsel”. His Holy Spirit indwells us and guides us in the ways that we should go. One thing that I have learned over the years by walking with Jesus is that He cares about every aspect of my life! There is nothing that I cannot take to Him in prayer and receive His counsel. I believe that this is my favorite part of being a Christian. To feel the presence of The Almighty God guiding my paths. It is a reality for every one who has been born again in Christ. Friends may forsake you, but He never will.

The word that Isaiah uses here for “wonderful” actually means supernatural. We, as Believers, have access to the “supernatural counsel” of God, available upon request. This is why we ought to be a continually praying people. What an amazing gift that we have been given! In **Psalm 25**, David shares this amazing truth:

“The secret counsel of The LORD is for those who fear Him, and He reveals His counsel to them.” **Psalm 25:14**

I just recently discovered this verse, and I absolutely LOVE it. Why? Because the word that David uses for “secret counsel” literally means “whisper” in the original Hebrew. Have you ever prayed earnestly about what to do and felt the “whisper of God” in your spirit guiding you in the way that you should go? If you have ever walked with Jesus, you have. And that is why I love this verse. Those who have placed their faith in Christ have indeed the most Wonderful Counselor! Wouldn't you agree?

Mighty God

“...Mighty God...”

Isaiah 9:6b

First and foremost, make no mistake, Jesus IS GOD. There are many false religions out there who do their best to take away His divinity, but the fact eternal remains that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. The book of John tells us:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” **John 1:1**

And just a few sentences later John proclaims:

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” **John 1:14**

This Son, the one that Isaiah promised that would be “born for us”, the Son that John the disciple beheld with his very eyes, was none other than The Almighty God Himself. Born to save us from sin, for God always devises a plan, so that those who are banished from Him do not remain as banished!

Eternal Father

“...Eternal Father...”

Isaiah 9:6b

This promised Son is as we said previously, The Alpha and The Omega. He always was, and He always will be. This is why that He makes the promise:

“Be strong and courageous; don't be terrified or afraid of them. For the Lord your God is the One who will go out with you; He will not leave you or abandon you.” **Deuteronomy 31:6**

You can be sure that He is able to keep this promise. For He is so much more than just our God, He is our Father. No matter what trials we face in this life, our Eternal Father is still on the throne, and as our Father, He loves us with an everlasting love! In fact, He has given us an advocate Who sits at His right hand earnestly praying on our behalf forever! His Name is Jesus, and:

“Therefore, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, since He ALWAYS LIVES to intercede for them.” Hebrew 7:25

Prince of Peace

“...Prince of Peace. The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever. The zeal of The LORD of Armies will accomplish this.” Isaiah 9:6b-7

When Solomon, King David's son, took over the throne of Israel, it was an unprecedented time of peace and prosperity for the nation. The land has never again experienced such joyous times, since the reign of Solomon. But another “Son of David” has been promised by the prophets to come and sit upon the throne of Israel. This Son will establish an everlasting kingdom. A kingdom of justice and righteousness. Never again will there be any war, for this King of Kings and Lord of Lords will have no rival to stand against Him. He, in his humility, shall receive all the glory that is due Him:

“...Christ Jesus, Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when He had come as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow — in heaven and on earth and under the earth — and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God The Father.” Philippians 2:5b-11

The last of this Great King's “throne names” given in Isaiah is “Prince of Peace”. Jesus Christ came to be born in a manger and die upon the cross to usher in a time of peace, even greater than in the days of Solomon (Whose name “*Shlomoh*” means “*peace*”). Christ has given us peace on two separate levels. First and foremost, His sacrifice on the cross served as propitiation for our sin, and all who believe in Him have been given peace with God. The wrath of God was fully satisfied by Christ's sacrifice, and His anger for our sin is appeased.

Secondly, when Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will permanently establish His throne and will reign in perfect peace forever. All the sins of this world will be vanquished, and there will be no more violence upon the earth. These are the promises of Scripture. Jesus has already begun to and will ultimately fulfill each and every one. So take heart in this joyous Christmas season. No matter where you are or what you may be going through, if you believe in, and belong to Christ, you have received the very best of Christmas gifts. Gifts that make up the very throne names of our King Jesus: *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace*. And THAT is what this season is really all about! Merry CHRISTmas!

And let all of God's children say... TRUTH!!!