

Christ Our Present Hope Part 3

Isaiah 9:1-7

Will you take your Bibles and join with me once again by turning to Isaiah's prophecy chapter nine. This is the third and final part of a series that I have preached to you, began preaching to you a few weeks ago entitled "Christ Our Present Hope," a series reflecting upon the incarnation of Christ during the Christmas season.

Let me read the text to you and I know it has been a few weeks because of the snow and my absence and so forth that we have been in this text. And so I will have to depend upon some of your memory with respect to the context. But this morning I want to focus our attention primarily on verses six and seven if Isaiah nine. Let me read those two verses to you.

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. 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.¹

The Christmas season is a time to marvel about the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, when God became man, to literally get lost in the wonder of it all. And I find that the incarnation of Christ is a humiliating defeat to Satan in so many ways for in it the creator of the universe, the Lord Jesus enters into Satan's kingdom of darkness here upon earth and he does so not as a conquering king, but as a human embryo. Staggering.

May I remind you that although the Lord Jesus was both God and man he was not a helpless babe. That is important for you to maintain this perspective.

Remember as we studied before, Jesus never abandoned, he never discarded his divine attributes when he took on humanity, but rather he voluntarily refused to display them. And even as an embryo in Mary's womb he was still sustaining the universe that he created.

As we are reminded in Hebrews one verse three, "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."²

Beloved, there has never been a time when the Lord Jesus ceased to do this, because there has never been a time when he ceased to be God.

In Colossians one verse 19 Paul says, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him."³

¹ Isaiah 9:6-7.

² Hebrews 1:3.

³ Colossians 1:19.

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He never became a partial God. He did not discard his deity, nor did he exchange his deity for humanity, but rather he willingly gave them up. And this is the whole thesis of Paul's words to us in Philippians two where he was underscoring the inconceivable selfless sacrifice of Christ.

So, again, bear in mind that when Jesus came even as a babe in the manger he had the full force of divinity at his disposal. The only time he ever accessed his divine power, however, was when he ministered to the needs of others. But as we revisit our text here this morning in Isaiah's prophecy, I want to challenge you to think about this prophecy and the Lord's life and his atoning work in very specific personal terms. I think it is important for us to do this.

Again, think of it this way. As an embryo he was not only sustaining the universe that he created, but he also had you and me in his mind specifically, personally. I know it is inconceivable to us, but as we study Scripture we see that we were a love gift from the Father to the Son, his bride, betrothed to Christ from the Father.

As I read earlier in John 17 verse 24 Jesus said before he went to the cross, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."⁴

Dear friends, we were promised to be saved by name specifically in eternity past even as Jesus says here that you loved me before the foundation of the world, we also know according to Ephesians 1:4 that he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

In his incarnation the Lord Jesus came to do the Father's will and God in his sovereign and perfect love determined that Jesus Christ would bear my sin in his body on the cross and he would do that in a specific personal way. He knew me by name. He knew you by name. When he came to this earth, when he lived his life he knew you, he knew me. My name and yours with all the elect who he had foreloved in eternity past were always on his mind.

In John 10 verse 14 he said, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own."⁵

The idea of an intimate knowledge.

And in verse 15 of John 10 he says, "I lay down My life for the sheep."⁶

While Jesus was maturing in Mary's womb he was able to reflect upon you personally. He would be able, therefore, to see your face, to hear your voice, to know the sound of it. For he was the one who would eventually create you even before it happened. He knew

⁴ John 17:24.

⁵ John 10:14.

⁶ John 10:15.

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you. He loved you. And he knew specifically every intimate detail of your being even the sins of your life that he would one day bear in his person on your behalf.

So when we gaze upon Jesus in the manger or when we gaze upon Jesus hanging on the cross, know full well that all along he had you specifically in his mind. He came to be your substitute and my substitute on the cross. He did not come just to die, but to die for you specifically, for me specifically, personally. As a man he became our substitute.

Remember, atonement biblically, theologically involves two things. Number one, satisfaction. The offended holiness of God had to be accomplished only by an acceptable, number two, substitution. So atonement requires satisfaction and substitution, substitution for the guilty party.

And, of course, this brings up the whole issue that we hear from time to time regarding for whom did Christ die? Did he come to this earth and die for everyone generally? If he paid the penalty for the sins of all then why would anyone be in hell?

If that satisfaction for the offended holiness of every person was accomplished, if he was the substitute for everyone, then why would anyone ever go to hell?

Or is the atonement, what we call limited or specific?

We all know that not everyone goes to heaven, so obviously it is limited to that extent. The question is who limits it, God or man?

Was his atonement a specific act of substitution or some general act? Did he do the same thing of those in hell as he did for those in heaven? Did he merely come to earth to die for no one in particular, but everyone in general hoping that some would be wise enough to somehow activate some kind of a potential atonement?

No, man is dead, the Bible says, in his sins. He is a spiritual cadaver. He is unable to respond to spiritual truth apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit of God. He is blinded by Satan. There is absolutely nothing in him that could activate anything.

Beloved, what I want you to think about is this. Never look at what Jesus did in his incarnation, in his atoning work in some vague way. But understand that he came to this earth with you specifically in his mind. He bore your sins specifically in his body on the cross. This was his plan all along. And that atoning work on your behalf was never dependent upon some decision that you might or might not make. That is what is so overwhelming. But, rather, God in his sovereign love determined in eternity past to love you specifically and to send his Son to die on your behalf specifically. We are part of this love gift that the Father would give to the Son. And do you really think that there is anything in us that could somehow mitigate that gift? That could somehow choose to say, "Well, I don't want to be a part of that package"?

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No. And then one day the Son is going to return this love gift of this redeemed humanity to the Father as a reciprocal expression of his love.

This is what motivated the apostle Paul to serve Christ in faith and obedience as we read earlier in our Scripture reading in 2 Corinthians 5:14.

He said, “For the love of Christ controls us.”⁷ Controls us... controls... this is the idea. This is what drives me.

“Having concluded this,” he says, “That one died for all, therefore all died.”⁸

Well, who is the all? Well, Paul qualifies this. He says, it is all who died in him. In other words, the one for whom Christ died were those who died in him.

He goes on in verse 15 and he says, “And He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”⁹

You see, this was what was utterly overwhelming to the apostle Paul, as it should be to each of us, that Christ came and died for all who would die in him, who would live in him and who will one day rise again in him. This is absolutely astounding. This is why it is so important for you think personally and intimately and specifically about what Christ came to do on your behalf and on my behalf.

Beloved, never diminish the purpose of the incarnation. Never in any way mitigate the power of the cross. Jesus came to live and to die with you in mind. His substitution was real. It was not some kind of potential atonement dependent upon the act of your will. Salvation is, from beginning to end, an act of sovereign love and grace. These magnificent truths never cease to grip my heart.

Whenever I think about them, whenever I think that Jesus had me on his mind in his life and in his death and that he felt my sin personally in his body and that he bore my sin personally, it is an overwhelming to thing to me.

By his grace I would be chosen to be one of the sheep for whom he would lay down his life.

Beloved, I don't think there is any other truth that more profoundly animates at least my worship, hopefully yours. What an unfathomable gift.

Now with this as an introduction we come to Isaiah's prophecy about this Savior that would one day come, this child that would come in Isaiah nine.

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:14.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:15.

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“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders.”¹⁰

Now by way of review we studied that he is the promised light. Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”¹¹ John 8:12.

And, secondly, we learn that he is also the perfect gift, this child that Isaiah promised that we know to be the Lord Jesus. This child it says will be born to us, a son will be given to us.”¹²

Again, bear in mind that this child was not made. He was not created. He already existed. He was the eternal Son and he was given to us. He was begotten by the Father. He was the Son of David. But more importantly he was the Son of God. He was Emmanuel, God with us.

And then, thirdly, we see that he is also the preeminent king.

There are four pairs of names each name that is given here foreshadows his coming rule upon the earth during his millennial reign. The first two names are linked to the earlier name, Emmanuel, God with us. And the second two names denote the conditions, the glorious conditions that he will eventually bring about.

You will recall in verse six the first name was... and it says, “And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor.”¹³ Literally wonder counselor. It denotes a supernatural counselor or one giving supernatural counsel. And certainly an everlasting kingdom would require the wisdom of an eternal, omniscient holy God.

But, secondly, we learn that he is also called mighty God, *rwbg la* (ale ghib-bore’), the mighty warrior, the mighty God, Emmanuel, again, God with us. And when he returns we know from other passages of Scripture that he will liberate his people Israel from the bondage of their sin. He will reconcile them unto himself even as he has us during the Church age. He will conquer their enemies once and for all.

But now notice the third in the quartet of predicted, preeminent titles. Thirdly Isaiah tells us that he will be eternal Father, literally Father of eternity. This is an amazing concept.

Think about it. The child who would be born, this Son who would be given will also be the Father of eternity. Now there is a wealth of information here and I wish to draw your attention briefly to four amazing truths that we should consider. First of all, this is a testimony to the Lord Jesus’ immutability and his eternality. Immutability, he is immutable. He will not change and so forth. He never changes. He has always existed.

¹⁰ Isaiah 9:6.

¹¹ John 8:12.

¹² Isaiah 9:6.

¹³ Ibid.

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Hebrews chapter one and verse 10 we read that—and this is, by the way, where God the Father attests to the superiority of the Son over the angels who will one day destroy his creation in judgment.

There we read:

THOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING DIDST LAY THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; THEY WILL PERISH, BUT THOU REMAINEST; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD AS A GARMENT, AND AS A MANTLE THOU WILT ROLL THEM UP; AS A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.¹⁴

So this child who would come would be an eternal, immutable God.

And, secondly, because of this there is a sense in which he is the one who created time. He is the Father of eternity. The Bible tells us that he is the alpha and the omega. He is the beginning and the end. He is the first. He is the last. And, again, this is what we see here in this text in Hebrews one.

John MacArthur put it this way, quote. “By the Father’s own testimony, the Son Jesus was the person of the godhead who created time out of eternity and fashioned the universe from nothing.”

Staggering, isn’t it? Our minds go blank here because we can only think in linear terms. Something begins and something ends. We cannot think of eternity past and eternity future. We cannot think of things that are infinite.

But the Lord Jesus Christ, we know, is and remains... well, remains to be. He was and he is the creator God.

John 1:3 says that, “All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”¹⁵

Pretty simple. I can get that.

And Colossians chapter one and verse 15 we read that, “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born,”¹⁶ in other words the preeminent, the superior one of all creation.

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or

¹⁴ Hebrews 1:10-12.

¹⁵ John 1:3.

¹⁶ Colossians 1:15.

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authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.¹⁷

You see, he would have to be the creator of time in order for him to be the sovereign ruler over all of his creation. In order for him to be the sovereign ruler, things have to exist in a time space dimension.

And remember what Isaiah said in chapter 46 verse 10, that he declares, “the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’”¹⁸

This is that child that would be born, that was born.

So, once again, we can be assured that Christ is our present hope. He is the one that is continuing to orchestrate all of the events in our lives to accomplish his purposes in our lives. He is accomplishing his good pleasure in us right now. Remember that the apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:10 that “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”¹⁹

Now, again, bear in mind that Isaiah’s words of prophecy to the suffering people of that day would have—and I shouldn’t say just sufferings, some of them were suffering. Many of them were just living in their sin and ignoring his warning. But this would have been a great encouragement to those who believe in God and wanted to walk with him, that believing remnant in Judah trying to survive their idolatrous country, awaiting divine judgment.

But notice, thirdly, something in this title of Father. And that is this term is one that points to his concern for the helpless. And certainly this will be a concern that will dominate the Lord’s rule in his kingdom age.

You will recall speaking of the Lord the psalmist says in Psalm 68 verse five that he is “A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation.”²⁰

It goes on to say, “God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.”²¹

And certainly we saw a glimpse of this, did we not, a glimpse of his compassion in his earthly ministry as he came to help the helpless. We continue to witness him doing that even today.

¹⁷ Colossians 1:16-17.

¹⁸ Isaiah 46:10.

¹⁹ Ephesians 2:10.

²⁰ Psalm 68:5.

²¹ Psalms 68:6.

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But, fourthly, his fatherhood points to the fact that he is the one like any good father who will care for and even discipline his children.

In Psalm 103 verse 13 we read about this care. There the psalmist tells us, “Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.”²²

And in Proverbs three and verse 12 we read about his discipline.

“For whom the LORD loves He reproveth, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights.”²³

And Isaiah speaks as well about the Redeemer being father. In Isaiah chapter 63 verse 16 there we read, “For Thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us, And Israel does not recognize us. Thou, O LORD, art our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Thy name.”²⁴

And then in chapter 64 verse eight of Isaiah we read, “But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father, We are the clay, and Thou our potter; And all of us are the work of Thy hand.”²⁵

Now I bring these things to your mind so once again when you think of Christ, especially the Lord Jesus in a manger, that your mind will be animated with these great theological truths rather than what is so typical for most people, just to see a helpless little baby in the manger.

So he is predicted to be the, “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father,”²⁶ and finally, the fourth preeminent title given to this future child who would be king, he will be the Prince of Peace.

In other words, this one who will come would be the embodiment of peace. But we must understand that the peace he will eventually secure among the nations of the world when he reigns upon the throne of David during the millennial kingdom begins, first, with the peace that he must secure between sinful man and the holy God with whom he wars.

You will recall in Luke chapter two, remember that great story? The angels come and they appear to the shepherds, the glory of the Lord shines around them and they announce the birth of the Savior. And in verse 13 we read, “And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying...”²⁷

And the King James version puts it this way.

²² Psalm 103:13.

²³ Proverbs 3:12.

²⁴ Isaiah 63:16.

²⁵ Isaiah 64:8.

²⁶ Isaiah 9:6.

²⁷ Luke 2:13.

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“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”²⁸

Now that is an unfortunate translation. It is somewhat confusion, confusing and it has been subject to misinterpretation over the years. Many assume that when Jesus came to earth he came to bring peace on the earth, the idea, as some would say, that his death is the ultimate symbol of non violent resistance that his coming really illustrates the potential of love for one another and sacrifice for our fellow man. And many would, therefore, misinterpret this text and they would think of this as we see in many of the yard decorations at Christmas time. We see the big sign, “Peace on earth.”

And when people see that they think of, oh, ok, Jesus came so that there would be a cessation of hostilities among the people, that there would be the absence of conflict, that all wars would stop or that we would experience peace of mind and tranquility, that there would be the relief of stress and these types of things.

And this is typical of our theologically ignorant and naïve culture. And sadly this even exists within many evangelical churches. But none of that is true. That is not what this text is talking about.

I want you to notice carefully the words of verse 14 as we think of Luke two. It went on to say, “Glory to God in the highest,”²⁹ and in the New American Standard version it says, “And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”³⁰

Whoa. Now that is a whole different deal. “Peace on earth among men with whom he is pleased.”³¹

You see, this does not mean that he is offering peace to those who are pleasing to him, some kind of reward for meritorious service, but literally he is saying, “Peace among men of his good pleasure or peace toward men on whom God’s sovereign pleasure rests.”

See, that is the idea.

Beloved, please understand. This is the glorious good will that God grants towards his elect. All those who will one day believe in his name for salvation, those who are a part of that love gift from the Father to the Son, those whom the Father gave to the Son, for whom Christ died specifically. These would be the ones that would one day have peace with God because they would be reconciled to him by the gift of grace and the gift of faith.

Jesus said that, “He who does not believe has been judged already,”³² John 3:18. And “The wrath of God abides on him,”³³ as he says in verse 36.

²⁸ Luke 2:14.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² John 3:18.

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In Romans five and verse 10 we read that we are enemies of God.

In Colossians 1:21 we read that we were once alienated. And, again, Paul says enemies of God.

But when we come to Christ by his saving grace that war is over. This was the good news the angels announced.

Romans five and verse one. “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”³⁴

This is referring to an objective peace, not some subjective peace that now, boy, I have got peace in my heart now that I have come to Christ. No. I mean, that is true. But the issue here is now we have been reconciled to a holy God. The wrath of God that was upon us is now over. We have been justified. We have been declared righteous.

Why? Because God made a way for us to be reconciled to those with whom he is pleased through Jesus Christ.

For this reason the angels said, “Glory to God in the highest.”³⁵

The Greek term for good will is found in three other passages in Luke’s gospel. And it is interesting that in each case it denotes God’s uninfluenced sovereign good pleasure, that he sets his love on those whom he chooses, that he reveals his truth to whomever he desires. This is the staggering truth of Christ’s birth.

Glory to God in the highest to those who are the sovereignly chosen recipients of his grace. Those who have been elected solely on the basis of his good pleasure, those who can now have peace with God through faith in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Prince of Peace.

That is the theology of this passage. And, beloved, the most fundamental truth of Christmas is simply this. Because of sin we were enemies of God. But now because of his great mercy, because of his great love he provides a means for us to be reconciled to God through faith in his only begotten Son, the one who is the prince of peace, because of the one who is the prince of peace, think of it this way. We can have peace with God.

So glory to God in the highest because he has provided for us a way to be at peace with him. What a humbling reality. What staggering truth that all believers are recipients of the gift of salvation solely on the basis of his good pleasure.

³³ John 3:36.

³⁴ Romans 5:1.

³⁵ Luke 2:14.

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We cannot share the glory, can we? All the glory belongs to him. Thus, the angels said, “Glory to God in the highest.”³⁶

Again, this was the theology that evoked such angelic adoration. I find it interesting, too, to think that these were the same creatures that sang at creation. Remember as we read in Job, “The morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy.”³⁷

And I think the hymnist captured this concept perfectly when he wrote:

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your downward flight to earth.
Ye who sing creation’s story,
Now proclaim Messiah’s birth.

Come and worship
Worship Christ the new born King.

And with those words I might say underneath all of those words are all of these staggering truths of theology that should evoke worship and praise and service in each of our hearts.

Oh child of God, how can we as the underserved recipients of such love do anything less than what the angels do?

Angels who will never ever even experience such grace and such glory.

I am sure that such a thought inspired Charles Wesley when he wrote:

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer’s praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace.

My gracious master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad,
The honors of thy name.

Well, this is precisely what the shepherds did when they heard the good news, that profound hope. Therefore this must have been many years before to the remnant of Judah and Israel. What God’s spokesman said to them that a child would be born to us, a son will be given to us.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Job 38:7.

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By the way, it is interesting in the original language who is the use? Well, it is everyone there in Israel. It is not the whole world. It is referring to the believing remnant of Israel. In fact, the context reveals that Isaiah is speaking only to those who believe in his saving purposes revealed in the child, the Son that he would send, this prince who is to come that would satisfy the justice of God of those he chose to reconcile unto himself.

He alone will procure that state of peace between God and man, hardening sinners, declaring them righteous before a holy God, granting us, as Romans 5:1 says, “Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we exalt in hope of the glory of God.”³⁸

Dear friends, for those and maybe some of you who for whatever reason reject the Savior, the battle rages on. It will continue to do so until God has had enough. And then it will be a day of judgment.

Will you not believe in him and be at peace with him? This is the salvation that is ours. But what an inconceivable kingdom that awaits us. Think about it. There is going to be an interim earthly kingdom that bridges the eternal kingdom, the eternal state. And this is what Isaiah goes on to predict there in verse seven.

Notice he says, “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.”³⁹

You see, this points us now, as it did to the people of that day to the Davidic kingdom. This would be the destiny of this child. He would some day sit upon the future throne, the throne of the Son, referring to the millennial kingdom which is constantly revealed in the Old Testament which will be inaugurated at his Second Coming, a kingdom of peace on earth when he reigns with a rod of righteousness, when he wields a scepter of iron.

Think about this time now. And this is what the people of that day were longing for even though they didn't fully understand. All that we can look back now and understand because of what Christ has done. But this will be a time when Jerusalem will be judged according to Micah chapter three. And then immediately after that judgment we read of the establishment of the mountain of the Lord in Jerusalem during the millennium. This would be a time when the New Testament saints and angels will rule with Christ. There will be the judging of the 12 tribes of Israel. It will be a time when Satan will be bound. Won't that be great?

³⁸ Romans 5:1-2.

³⁹ Isaiah 9:7.

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Even though there will still be sin upon the earth because man doesn't need Satan to sin. His nature is perfectly capable of pulling that off.

It will be a time when the sheep and the goat nations will be judged, Matthew 25. The tribulation martyrs will then be resurrected. We know things like the entire topography of Jerusalem will be miraculously altered. The millennial temple will be built there. We read about the details of that in Ezekiel 40 through 48.

The new Jerusalem, the city of God will descend from heaven and the only thing we can liken it to is a giant space module hovering over the earth. We read about that in Revelation 21. And like a magnificent chandelier suspended over the earth, the glorified saints will travel back and forth serving the King.

The prophet Amos tells us in Amos nine verse 11, "n that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, And wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old."⁴⁰

Zechariah speaks of it is as well. He says in chapter nine verse 10. "He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth."⁴¹

The blessings for both Jews and Gentiles during this time will be beyond description all because a child would be born and we now know he was born, a son was given.

But may I draw your attention, once again, to the promised light as we close our thinking here on this text. Remember in verse two of Isaiah nine we read, "The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them,"⁴² and so forth.

Again, keep in mind this was predicted some 2700 years ago. It was fulfilled at the first advent partially, but more will be fulfilled when Christ comes again. This is the theme once again of the shekinah, the glory of God that would be manifested in this brilliant light, the light that we see all though, especially the Old Testament, some in the New when the presence of God would be manifested. This is part of the story of redemption, this glorious light.

And later we know that the Spirit of God would reveal more to his remnant people through the prophet Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapter 60 verse one there is a description of the glory of Zion when he appears again in power and great glory. There we read:

⁴⁰ Amos 9:11.

⁴¹ Zechariah 9:10.

⁴² Isaiah 9:2.

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Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.⁴³

Now while only believers will enter the millennial kingdom, many generations of their offspring must also come to faith in Christ and many will not choose to do that. It is an amazing thing. But the glorious light of the King we find in the prophecies will draw the peoples of the nations to Christ in worship during that day.

But the glory of the Shekinah does not stop there. You will recall in Revelation 21 in the description of the new Jerusalem we read in verse 23:

And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it.⁴⁴

Oh, child of God, what more can be said to stir our hearts with the glorious anticipation of all that awaits us because of the light of Christ?

And we will worship this child who was born, this son who was given, the one upon whose shoulders the government will rest, the wonderful counselor, the mighty God, eternal father, prince of peace, the one who will one day reclaim the throne of David forever, the one whose light has shone brightly to all who have been given eyes to see, the one who came to earth as the light of the world.

In Jesus' day the Jews were very familiar with the light of the shekinah. They had the history of this light especially as it hovered between the cherubim over the mercy seat, the ark of the covenant and the holy of holies.

And, according to the mosaic law they would celebrate what was called the feast of Tabernacles. And this was a seven day festival that began on the 15th day of the seventh month which would have been around what we would call September and October. And it is also called the feast of Booths or the feast of Ingathering. And it is interesting. As a footnote, this is the only Old Testament festival that will be celebrated during the millennial reign of Christ, a graphic reminder of God's preservation and his deliverance of his people.

Now the purpose of this particular festival was to commemorate God's deliverance, to remind the people of God's past and present and future protection and especially to

⁴³ Isaiah 60:1-3.

⁴⁴ Revelation 21:23-24.

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remind them of his provision that they saw during the wilderness wanderings. And much of this festival centered around the light of his presence.

You will recall in the wilderness wandering that light protected against the Egyptians that came up upon them with the charioteers pursuing them there at the Dead Sea.

And among other things what would happen when the people would celebrate this festival, even in Jesus' days, they would build huts. And I might also add that many of the people still do this, many of the orthodox Jews in various parts of the world. But they would build little huts and booths out of limbs to remind them of the struggles of existing in the wilderness during that journey and also to celebrate God's provision during the autumn harvest.

But in Jesus' day after the temple we know that there were four great menorahs that were lit at night during this feast. We are told that the wicks for these lights were made from the worn out garments of the priests. And these great menorahs would illumine the entire temple area. And under the great torches of the menorahs the celebrants would dance a torch dance, a dance of worship to the accompaniment of the master musicians and the Levitical orchestra singers and so forth.

And the Levites would chant from the psalms of ascent which are Psalms 120 through 134, one each one every one of the 15 steps that led down to the court of the Israelites to the court of the women. This was a time of great rejoicing. It was a time when they would celebrate God's faithful deliverance in the past as well as think about his promised deliverance in the future. They rejoiced over the promises, for example, of Zechariah 14 when they read about how that Messiah will one day come as a consuming fire judging the nations, where we read about when the Lord returns his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives and he will personally intervene against the nations that have gathered to destroy the covenant people. And we even today see these armies begin to amass around an unbelieving Israel.

When the Lord returns that remnant will believe.

They would reflect upon this warrior king that would come that saved them in the wilderness and will one day save them again. They would reflect upon the prophecies there in Zechariah 14 about how the Mount of Olives will split. We read about it in Joel's prophecy, the valley of decision. There will be a great valley, that valley of Jehoshaphat and so forth.

So they understood all of these prophecies. And they would be aware of this time that was coming that they looked forward to when the Jews would escape through this valley, when a heavenly luminary, all of the heavenly luminaries would be extinguished. There would be darkness. In fact, Zechariah 14:6 tells us:

And it will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the

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LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.⁴⁵

In other words, he is going to turn them all on again during the millennial kingdom. And in verse nine we read, “And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.”⁴⁶

In other words, no more false religions, no more phony gods.

So during the feast of Tabernacles all of this is going on. This is what they are thinking. This is what is happening. And it is interesting. At the end of the feast the menorahs would be suddenly extinguished symbolizing the darkness that remains until the light of the Messiah would come. And I cannot be dogmatic about this, but it may well be that in that very moment in the midst of that darkness when you could hear a pin drop Jesus voice just may have pierced the darkness and the people heard him say, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”⁴⁷ John 8:12.

Dear friends, he has come as the promised light and he will come again and I pray that your hearts have been illumined by the light of his grace.

John 12:46 Jesus said, “I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.”⁴⁸

You see, the Messiah was and is a light unto his people. But like the children of Israel we must walk in that light lest we walk in our own darkness. May I challenge you with Jesus’ words in Matthew five verse 14. He says:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.⁴⁹

And then he says this. “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”⁵⁰

And Paul says in Philippians 2:15 in his prayer, “That you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ Zechariah 14:6-7.

⁴⁶ Zechariah 14:9.

⁴⁷ John 8:12.

⁴⁸ John 12:46.

⁴⁹ Matthew 5:14-15.

⁵⁰ Matthew 5:16.

⁵¹ Philippians 2:15.

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And may I challenge you to ponder these exhilarating, profound truths not only at Christmas, but throughout the year. Rejoice in Isaiah's prophecy knowing that Christ is our present hope. He is our own hope. He is the promised light. He is the perfect gift. He is the preeminent king. And may we embrace the light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ believing in him and reflect his glory in a dark and a hopeless world that many might be saved to the praise of his glory.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these truths. Thank you for your Word that gives them to us. Now, Lord, I pray that we will respond to them by living consistently with all that you would have for us, that we might bring glory to you. And, Lord, if there be one within the sound of my voice that has never seen the light of your grace, of your love, may today be the day that by the power of your Spirit their eyes are opened and they see their sin for what it is and they cry out to the only one that can give them peace with God, the prince of peace, the Lord Jesus. For it is in his name that I pray. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to pastor, Bible teacher and author David Harrell. For more information or to order additional tapes or CDs of pastor Harrell's messages, please visit OliveTreeResources.org.

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