

Christ Our Present Hope Part 1

Isaiah 9:1-7

It is with utmost joy that I minister the Word of God to you again this morning. I would like for you to take your Bibles and turn to Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah chapter nine.

Let me read to you the text that I will be preaching from this morning beginning in verse one through verse seven.

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. The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them. 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. 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. For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. 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

In this text we see a wonderful truth emerging and that is that Christ is our present hope. And I want you to see that this morning as we look into this Old Testament passage. And I find it interesting that as we approach the Christmas season we find ourselves in a world that is doing all that it possibly can to eradicate any vestige of Christ in its culture. But this morning I want us to be drawn to the reality of who Christ is and marvel at what he is doing despite the world that is against him.

In fact, John tells us in 1 John 5:19 that "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."²

We know that Satan is the temporary ruler of this world. God has permitted him to usurp his throne for a period of time and he will ultimately dethrone Satan to glorify himself when he claims his power when he returns again in great glory.

And it is painfully clear that Satan is using his temporary power and this world's system whose moral order is in willful and culpable rebellion against God to systematically remove Christ, to remove God from everything. Yet isn't it interesting that it is this very

¹ Isaiah 9:1-7.

² 1 John 5:19.

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world which is called the *kosmos* (kos'-mos) in the original language, this very *kosmos* (kos'-mos) that John had in mind when under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he wrote:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.³

Beloved, there can be no greater example of the love of God than in his commitment to save sinners in this fallen world, sinners like you and like me. This is a loving plan that God put into motion even in eternity past when he decreed it. And we have now witnessed it down through history and we will continue to witness this plan.

And I believe there is, perhaps, no greater portion of Scripture in all of the Bible than here in Isaiah's prophecy to remind us of this plan of redemption that he decreed in eternity past.

In fact, Isaiah's very name means the Lord is salvation.

You will recall that in Luke one the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.⁴

Moreover, in Luke two the angel of the Lord appeared in terrifying glory to the terrified shepherds, those lowly shepherds on the hillside near Bethlehem and he said to them:

And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."⁵

Now you must understand that these announcements would have been no surprise to the Jewish people who were looking for the birth of their Messiah, a promise that was given to them here in Isaiah as well as other passages.

And I invite you to join me as we go back into history to better understand not only what the Lord was up to then, but what he is up to now and what he is up to in the future. And I might add that this is a portion of the Christian story that is seldom included. Very seldom do people think of this Old Testament passage. But as we go back into history

³ John 3:16-17.

⁴ Luke 1:31-33.

⁵ Luke 2:10-11.

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some 700 years before Christ was born, we know that it was a time of profound spiritual and moral darkness, not at all unlike the one in which we find ourselves today.

The kingdom of Israel was divided, Israel to the north, Judah to the south. And Isaiah was a prophet primarily to Judah. And he prophesied for at least 34 plus years during the reign of four different kinds. He began prophesying during or at the end of Uzziah's reign, at his death. And he prophesied then through Jotham, through Ahaz, through Hezekiah and then, finally, through the reign of Manasseh.

And when we look back at ancient Judah we see some amazing parallels to the United States. During the 52 year reign of King Uzziah Judah prospered greatly. As we study ancient history some of the things that we see in the Bible as well we learn that Judah had a very strong powerful economy. They were very wealthy. They had developed a powerful commercial as well as military state. They were very proud. They were basically militarily invincible at that time. But they were also a materialistic people. They were filled with crooked politicians. They were apostate in terms of their spiritual leaders and their religion. And, indeed, they were a very religious people, but their religion was basically filled with spiritual hypocrisy and the whole country was morally corrupt.

In Isaiah chapter three verse eight Isaiah says, "Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, Because their speech and their actions are against the LORD, To rebel against His glorious presence."⁶

And in verse nine he went on to say, "They display their sin like Sodom; They do not even conceal it. Woe to them!"⁷

He condemned them for their immaturity and for their ignorance in terms of their leaders. In fact, Manasseh was later born as king and he began to reign when he was 12 years old. Can you imagine that? And his indictment continued in the first chapters of Isaiah by describing how even the women were obsessed with outward rather than inward beauty. They were seeking to lure other women's husbands with their luxurious and their seductive dress.

In verse 16 of chapter three he says, "The daughters of Zion are proud, And walk with heads held high and seductive eyes, And go along with mincing steps, And tinkle the bangles on their feet."⁸

When I think of this passage it reminds me of the fashion runways. I think that is what you call it, where you see anorexic models strutting their stuff wearing ridiculous clothing.

And so God promised judgment upon the people of Judah.

⁶ Isaiah 3:8.

⁷ Isaiah 3:9.

⁸ Isaiah 3:16.

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Now, it should not be hard for us to have some sense of what it would have been like in those days because those people, like our country, saw themselves as spiritually and economically and morally elite. They saw themselves in terms of the world around them as kind of the superior of all of the other nations. And when you look at the United States you certainly see the same thing. There is really no fear of God. We perceive ourselves in the same kinds of ways. We really even have no fear of other countries. We perceive ourselves to be militarily invincible. And the attitude back then, as it is here today, is that basically life is good. Therefore, God must be happy with us.

This was the attitude of Judah just a few years before her destruction. In fact, in chapter five of Isaiah God pronounced judgment upon them and he indicted them with six categories of wickedness, number one for their greedy materialism; secondly, because of their drunken dissipation; thirdly, because of their defiant moral debauchery, the idea that they flaunted their sin before God and dared him to act in judgment; fourthly, he cursed them because they redefined morality. They called evil good and good evil. He cursed them because of their haughty humanism where they considered all opinions to be equal and important except God's opinion. And then, finally, for their corrupt leadership. Again, the parallels with our country and countries around the world are undeniable.

In fact, I might add that if God did not judge America he would owe Judah an apology. But I believe he is judging America and will continue to do so. Yet isn't it great that the mercy, the door of mercy remains open to those who will enter in.

And this was the same as in the days of Judah. God was merciful to the remnant of believing Jews in that day just before their demise.

Now as we think about the history—and it is important for me to build this for you so you really understand Isaiah's magnificent prophecy about the birth of the Savior. At the end of the Uzziah's we know that he violated God's command and attempted to assume the role of a priest and go into the altar and burn incense and the consequences were devastating. God struck him with leprosy which soon led to his death. It was at that time that God calls Isaiah to be a prophet in the year of King Uzziah's death which would have been around the year 739 BC.

Now although God warned Isaiah that your life and your ministry to the people calling them to repent would be fruitless, basically, even though he warned them that he would encounter nothing but ridicule and rejection, nevertheless, Isaiah responded with joyful obedience because he had seen the glory and the majesty of God and he had personally experienced his cleansing work in his life.

So God's prediction concerning Isaiah's prophecy in his life, we know, ultimately came true. The people didn't listen to him. They rejected his warning. Only a small remnant believed. And finally, according to tradition, it is said that under the reign of king Manasseh he was ultimately tortured and murdered. Tradition says that King Manasseh had him cut in two with a wooden saw.

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Now during King Uzziah's illness, his son Jothan took the reigns of leadership as a coregent of the country. He was about 25 years of age. But during that co-regency Judah continued to decline spiritually, morally. They were a victim of their own self deception, their own pride, their own hypocrisy. And after Jothan, his son Ahaz became king of Judah at the age of 25 and reigned until he was 41.

Now during that time politically it was a very volatile period for two reasons. First of all because the Assyrians had now emerged as a new international power under Tiglath-pileser III, threatening to overpower all of their neighbors.

By the way, we see the same thing continuing to happen in the same region today.

But, secondly, Israel to the north had allied themselves with Syria to protect themselves from the Assyrians and a potential invasion. But Ahaz in the south refused to join with Israel and Syria's alliance and so Ahaz, because he rejected that, infuriated Israel and Syria and it resulted in war. So now he has got Israel and Syria coming down on him. And what does he do? He runs to the Assyrians to form an alliance with them.

Isaiah pleads with him not to do this in Isaiah seven. Isaiah warned that he could either trust in the Lord or he could fall into the hands of the enemy. Or, worse yet, the Lord would permanently harden his heart and the hearts of the people against the most high God. In fact, in Isaiah seven we read something very interesting. God offered Ahaz an opportunity to strengthen his faith by asking Ahaz to ask him for a sign.

But, instead, Ahaz pretended to be humble and said, "No, I won't do that." And that resulted in God's judgments.

Because Ahaz refused to ask the Lord for a sign, the Lord chose one for him. And that would have implications far beyond the life and the reign of Ahaz. We read about that sign in chapter seven verse 14 if you care to look there.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign."⁹

"You" in the Hebrew is plural and so it is given to the house of David, not just to Ahaz.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."¹⁰

Now this is a prophecy that was ultimately fulfilled when Christ came. It was a prophecy that pointed to the virgin birth of the Messiah. We know this to be truth because of what Matthew tells us in Matthew 1:23. And the term or the title Immanuel was applied there to Jesus in Matthew's gospel and it means God with us.

⁹ Isaiah 7:14.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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Now let's pause for a moment. This is a portion, once again, of the Christmas story, the story of the birth of Jesus that can be traced all the way back to Isaiah's prophecy some 600 years before his birth in Bethlehem. It was a sign that was hated then and it is a sign that is hated now.

But what is fascinating in the verses that follow there that follow Isaiah 7:14 pertaining to the virgin bearing a son named Immanuel, we see that this implies a fulfillment in the immediate future. So how could it be something that applied to something that happened some 600 years later?

It implies that somehow this child's birth would be a sign for the immediate, not the distant future. Notice what it says in verse 15 through 17.

The prophet says:

He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken. The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria.¹¹

So what is Isaiah saying? How are we to understand this?

Beloved, an all sovereign, all powerful God is saying that he is going to cause an unmarried young woman within the royal house to shortly marry and conceive and have a child and name him Immanuel, God with us. Now since this prophecy was probably given only to Ahaz the king, this woman would not know anything about it. And then in fulfillment of the prophecy this child would, Isaiah says, eat curds and honey. That would be food that is characteristic of Palestine. But before he is old enough to have good discernment, it says here, "Before he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good," the Assyrians are going to sweep down upon Judah, down ultimately upon Ephraim, Israel, and conquer them as well and eventually, as we are going to see, conquer Judah which they did less than two years from this prophecy.

So God's sign here was given to the house of David. So we must understand this not only speaks to something that would have happened in the immediate future, but something that was going to happen in the distant future because we see that this child not only speaks to Isaiah's contemporaries of his saving promises, but that it would ultimately be a child that would foreshadow the Christ child, the Messiah who would in the fullness of time become a symbol of God's saving purposes to his people, saving them not simply from their physical foes, but from a much more dangerous and deadly foe and that is from their sin.

¹¹ Isaiah 7:15-17.

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I have to pause here. As I think about what the Word of God tells us and now we can look back in history I have to say, “Isn’t it amazing? Isn’t it astounding?” Our God reigns, doesn’t he? Our God is a sovereign God. He writes through the prophets and tells us what he is up to, what he is going to do. We look back and we can see that his Word is true. His promises are certain. His salvation is from generation to generation. And therefore no matter how difficult life gets we can come to these passages of Scripture and we can have hope.

As the writer of Hebrews says, that hope that is an anchor for our soul, a hope that is sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, the idea that our salvation is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ that was prophesied all the way back some 700 years before he came to earth as a baby. And now we know that he is the one who lived a perfect life, who died on our behalf, who was raised from the grave and now sits at the right hand of the Father. Therefore he is the one who has entered in through the veil on our behalf as our forerunner.

What a comfort that is in days of trouble, isn’t it?

We all have trouble, don’t we? Every one of us in here. There are various things in our life. And so we can come back and we can look at these great truths and not look at them just as, boy, that is some interesting history, but say, “Oh, my, what an amazing God we serve, a God who is sovereign and all powerful and who has declared the end from the beginning and who can accomplish all that he has promised.”

What a motivation to love and serve him come what may.

So for Judah the threat of Tiglath-pileser III to the north was an ominous one. And we know that in 701 BC the Assyrians invaded and less than 100 years later the Babylonians invaded and carried Judah away into captivity. And all of this, of course, was just a partial fulfillment of what was promised. The rest will be fulfilled when the Lord returns at his Second Coming.

But the real threat for Judah was something that was internal in their hearts. The God of Israel has never left his people without hope.

In chapter eight Isaiah describes the hope of this believing remnant that gave direction to how they would live their lives. You see, they bowed to the God of Israel, to his authority.

In Chapter eight verse 17 we read:

And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.¹²

¹² Isaiah 8:17-18.

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Now that hope is very different from the hope of the wicked even as we see today. In verse 19 the wicked are described as those who inquire of mediums and the necromancers instead of God. They go to the occult, to the spirit world and, as a result, verses 21 through 22 we read:

And they will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness.¹³

Now, beloved, it is against the blackness of this history, the blackness of this spiritual degradation that the light of salvation emerges, the light of a child who would one day be born.

And this brings us to our text here in chapter nine verses one through seven. And from it emerges three messages of hope that underscore the reality that Christ is our present hope. Why? Number one, because he is the promised light. That is what we will look at for the remainder of our time here this morning. And, secondly, he is the perfect gift. Finally, he is the preeminent king. And we will look at those the next time we are together.

Now, we will see that much of these first seven verses here in chapter nine are couched in past tenses, although they speak of something future. Well, that is an interesting thing. Why would the Spirit of God do that through his inspired prophet?

And the answer is because the future is so absolutely certain that it is written as though it has already occurred. For this reason Christ is our present hope.

Hebrews 11:1.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”¹⁴

You see, the remnant of that day lived as we must with an eye that looked back to all that God had done for them, that looked beyond the darkness that seemed to hide the face of God and gazed upon the glorious, shining light of the glory of God in the face of Christ. Even though they didn't understand who Jesus would be, they knew that a Messiah would one day come, a child that would be born.

So let's look at this idea of Christ being the promised light.

Notice in verse one of chapter nine.

¹³ Isaiah 8:21-22.

¹⁴ Hebrews 11:1.

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“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.”¹⁵

Now Zebulun and Naphtali were on the northeast borders of Israel in the Galilee, the region that is now bordering Lebanon and the Golan Heights if you are familiar with that territory, bordering Syria. And this was the first of the region of Israel that would fall to the coming Assyrians. And although there was, as the text says, “gloom and anguish,” we know that there is a day of bright glory that was promised.

It goes on to say, “But later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.”¹⁶

Now what is this a reference to? Well, it is a reference to the region where the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ would come, where he would ultimately minister.

How do we know that? Well, in Matthew four beginning at verse 13 we read about Jesus leaving Nazareth, the text says.

He came and settled in Capernaum which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, "THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES—THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND TO THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED."¹⁷

You see, just as Isaiah had prophesied, the light of life pierced through the darkness in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who would come and take away the sin of the world.

Isaiah continues in verse two.

“The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light.”¹⁸

Walk has the idea of living out your life. The people who live out their lives in darkness will see a great light. Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.

You see, the people had perceived that the Lord had been hiding his face from them because of sin as we read in chapter eight verse 17 of Isaiah. They were living in darkness. And yet isn't it amazing that despite their rebellion, their rejection of God's

¹⁵ Isaiah 9:1.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Matthew 4:13-16.

¹⁸ Isaiah 9:2.

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Word, God speaks through his prophet and in his mercy he is telling them that he still plans on giving them the light of salvation. What an amazing thought.

And Isaiah is basically saying here to that remnant of believing Jews in that day, “Keep looking forward to what one day will happen. For God has already done it.”

You see, the believing remnant could look back to the past deliverance such as the exodus where God proved himself powerful over and over again, where... or they could look back to when God proved himself mighty on their behalf when they came into the land of promise and so forth.

God both delivered and judged as he promised and nothing could thwart his purposes.

You see, we learn from this that the eye of faith must never be transfixed upon the darkness in this present world, the things that we are dealing with in our lives. It must never conclude that somehow God has abandoned us, that God has forsaken us. Instead, what we are going to continue to see is that the eye of faith is called upon to constantly be looking backward and recalling the mercies of the past so that we can look forward with confident hope to the promises in the future. In fact, the psalmist tells us in Psalm 77 beginning in verse five.

I have considered the days of old, The years of long ago. I will remember my song in the night; I will meditate with my heart; And my spirit ponders. Will the Lord reject forever? And will He never be favorable again? Has His lovingkindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?¹⁹

Do we sometimes think in those terms even though we don't want to admit it?

The psalmist goes on and said:

Then I said, "It is my grief, That the right hand of the Most High has changed." I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; Surely I will remember Thy wonders of old. I will meditate on all Thy work, And muse on Thy deeds. Thy way, O God, is holy; What god is great like our God? Thou art the God who workest wonders; Thou hast made known Thy strength among the peoples. Thou hast by Thy power redeemed Thy people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph.²⁰

Dear Christian, this must be our focus. This must be our practice. We must be able to look back in order to look forward especially when life is difficult. That is what we see modeled here. And what a welcome promise this must have been.

¹⁹ Psalm 77:5-9.

²⁰ Psalm 77:10-15.

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Can you imagine living in that time knowing that the prophet has told you that the north is going to fall and we are, too. It would be difficult, wouldn't it?

So what do you do? Do you say, "Well, God has abandoned us?"

No. You look back and say, "My, look at all the mighty acts that God has done. His promises are true. He is faithful. And some day, we don't know when, but some day the light of salvation will dawn and we will enjoy all that he has promised."

Well, with these promises igniting their imaginations we see a crescendo of praise beginning to develop here in verses three through five.

He says in verse three, "Thou shalt multiply the nation."²¹

In other words he is saying not only here is the Lord going to be faithful to his covenant promises to Abraham and in Genesis especially chapter 22 verse 17 he says to multiply his offsprings as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. But also he is ultimately saying that through Christ, through the Messiah he is going to bring many sons to glory as the writer of Hebrews tells us. And ultimately we know through the prophets that he is going to establish his glorious kingdom. All of these things are promised.

He goes on to say, "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."²²

In other words, the prosperity and the abundance of both spiritual and physical blessings that will occur during the kingdom age when the Lord returns is going to bring great joy to the people all because of this child that is going to be born.

This is what is at the heart of the Christmas story.

Verse four. He says, "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."²³

See, once again, the prophet looks back in order to look forward and he uses here language that is linked to their past. Notice the terms yoke and burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. All of these terms point back to their bondage and their suffering in Egypt where the people of promise endured enormous, enormous physical and spiritual pain.

And then it is as if he is saying, "Has not God been faithful in the past? Therefore will he not be faithful in the future?"

²¹ Isaiah 9:3.

²² Ibid.

²³ Isaiah 9:4.

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You see, the exodus from Egypt was the preeminent act of God to save his people. And you must understand that now the prophet is setting the stage for the Christ child to enter. He is preparing them.

Notice at the end of verse four he also reminds them of God's deliverance from the oppressive Midianites at the battle of Midian which is recorded in Judges six through eight. And this is a fitting reminder. Why? Because Gideon was the deliverer of Asher, of Naphtali and of Zebulun. And, as you read the narratives of that great defeat you will recall how God greatly reduced the number of all of the soldiers with Gideon. I think it started out with 22,000 and finally it ends up with 300. He has got 300 and he is going to face the Midianites?

Why did he do that? To prove that the victory belonged to the Lord, not to man.

And will you also recall that story—and this is, again, why Isaiah is reminding the people of it. You will recall that Gideon surrounded the camp of the Midianites at night and he had his 300 men take a torch and put a jar over that torch. They had the jar, I believe, in their left hand and a trumpet in their right hand. And then suddenly they were to break the jars so that the light would blaze forth and blow their trumpets and shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon."

And you know the rest of the story. The Midianites were terrified and they began to kill one another and God won the victory.

But, guys, all they did was just trust God and break the jar and let the light shine.

Do you see where he is going with this? Another deliverer is some day coming. It is going to be a child. That light is going to shine and God, once again, is going to deliver his people. That is the point.

The day is coming when not only will there be no more burdens, no more blows on your back from the rod of the oppressor, no more tyrants, no more suffering as in the days of Egypt, but a day is also coming when God is going to once again deliver you by his might, even as he did at the defeat of the Midianites all because a child is going to be born.

Even as a great force was defeated by an insignificant means at the battle of Midian, think about it, even a greater force is going to be defeated by what will appear to be an insignificant child. It will be that child will defeat Satan, sin and death.

Beloved, bear these historical realities in mind, these prophetic truths during the Christmas season. You see Jesus was the promised sign of salvation.

We read in Scripture that every boot here in verse five he is going to go on and talk about this. He is going to say in verse five:

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“For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.”²⁴

So he is going to, once again, vividly portray Israel’s history here, their suffering. And he is saying, again, that a day is going to come when all of the alien powers that have gripped the Lord’s chosen people will finally be defeated, all the tools of war will be turned into tools of peace. And the imagery here is fascinating, isn’t it? It is like that of a great bonfire where the bloody garments and the weapons of war are all going to be burned.

In fact, in Isaiah chapter two and verse four we read that one day, “He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.”²⁵

And in Zechariah nine verse 10 we read, “And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And 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.”²⁶

Yes, he is saying, all war is going to end. But the victory is going to belong to the Lord alone. Never do we see, even in this text in Isaiah, that the people ever set foot on the battlefield. The victory all belongs to him.

You will recall when the Lord returns in Revelation 19 we see that it is he that does all of the fighting, not we the saints or even the angels that come with him.

So Isaiah here offers this hope to those who are walking in the darkness. A day of deliverance is coming. And it is made certain by the deliverances in the past. And what is the basis of these magnificent promises?

Verse six.

“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.”²⁷

You see, herein is the glorious light that has been promised, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one whose light of glory would be veiled in human flesh, a babe in a manger who would one day come and say, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.”²⁸

²⁴ Isaiah 9:5.

²⁵ Isaiah 2:4.

²⁶ Zechariah 9:10.

²⁷ Isaiah 9:6.

²⁸ John 8:12.

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Isn't it sad? We look around us today and we see a lot of darkness, don't we? I find it especially difficult to look at some of our young people in the malls. They are dressed in all of this gothic stuff and then you have got all of this black and, you know, tattoos everywhere and body piercing and it just screams, "I love the world. I love the world."

The world of the occult is celebrated today in everything from cartoons to Harry Potter. The sinister darkness of evil has just dominated the world down through history and continues to happen.

You know, according to the psalmist in Psalm 107:10 that men apart from Christ are going to continue to live in spiritual darkness.

There we read, "They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are shaken."²⁹

And what is even more tragic is that men reject the light of Christ. For this reason the Lord will judge them.

In John 3:19 Jesus says, "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil."³⁰

But we can rejoice, can't we, that because of Christ, because of his grace, because of the gift of faith that we have in him he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, Colossians 1:13.

Now, as we close this morning may I remind you that this promised light was given in various other passages of Scripture in the Old Testament? I will just allude to them a bit here in closing.

In Numbers chapter 24 verse 17 the prophet Balaam says, "A star shall come forth from Jacob, And a scepter shall rise from Israel."³¹

A star, Hebrew a *bkoh* (ko-kawb'), a blazing forth, a blazing forth like lightning. That is the idea. It is going to come froth from Jacob.

"And a scepter shall rise from Israel."³²

A king is going to come.

We know this was fulfilled, for example in Matthew chapter two verse one.

²⁹ Psalm 82:5.

³⁰ John 3:19.

³¹ Numbers 24:17.

³² Ibid.

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“Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star...’”³³

asterh (as-tare) in the Greek, a blazing forth.

“We saw this blazing forth in the east and have come to worship him.”

And we know that not everybody saw that blazing forth. It wasn't a star like you see in Christmas cards. It was, I believe, an example of the glorious shekinah of the living God, his presence that appeared. And we know that it disappeared and then all of a sudden it reappeared and it even stood over the place where Jesus resided. This is a reference to, again, I believe, to the shekinah. We know that God whose spirit would often materialize himself in this glorious resplendent light, it was the effulgence of his glory. We saw it, for example, in the burning bush when Moses met with God. We saw it when it was a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire, a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night when the presence of the Lord led the Israelites through the wilderness.

We know that it was that glorious shekinah that hovered between the wings of the cherubim in the holy of holies over the ark of the covenant, over the mercy seat and the tabernacle, late on in the temple.

We saw it when Moses saw the glory of the Lord on Mount Sinai, you will recall that. And he came down and he continued to glow from that light. We know that the glory departed from the temple in Ezekiel because of the constant wickedness and rebellion of the people and they did not see the light of his glory for 400 years. The light of his presence was gone and, finally, on a Bethlehem hillside we read that the glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds. That is when the angel announced the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Suddenly the shekinah would be contained in a child, Immanuel, God with us, even as the prophet prophesied. The glory of the Lord shone around them.

In John 1:14 we read that, “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld [what?] we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”³⁴

We know in John one that John the Baptist was the one who was sent to bear witness of the light in verse seven. In verse nine we read, “There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”³⁵

We saw this glorious light of the glory of God emerge from Christ himself on the mount of transfiguration when he peeled back his flesh. And you will recall even as well when

³³ Matthew 2:1-2.

³⁴ John 1:14.

³⁵ John 1:9.

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Paul was converted on the road to Damascus in Acts chapter 26 verse 13. We read, “at midday [he says] I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.”³⁶

It was a terrifying thing. Dear friend, this is the light that the prophet prophesied, the child that would be born. Indeed, he is our present hope. He is our only light in all of the darkness that we experience today.

I ask you this. Are you walking in the light of his glory, in the light of his grace? Do you worship and serve the king or do you live for yourself? Do you find yourself being ruled by your lusts, being ruled by your emotions rather than being ruled by the king of glory who loves you and who is going to return again to take you to be with himself?

I pray that these truths would dominate your thoughts this Christmas and all the days of your life.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these prophecies. Thank you that we can look back and see how you have been faithful to fulfill all that you have promised. And, Lord, on that basis we can look forward to the fulfillment of all that you have promised us in Christ. May these truths rule our hearts. May we shine with the glory of Christ in our lives that others might see him through us. I pray all of this in the precious name of Jesus and for his sake. 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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³⁶ Acts 26:13.