

The Light Shining in the Darkness (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Amen. Sunday as well.

And so we're looking at some prophecies that pertain specifically to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ or the coming of Christ.

Although these prophecies really look beyond just his birth and we'll especially talk about that next Sunday. But this morning, though I'm going to be quoting a number of times from chapter 8, just in the course of my preaching this morning, I do want to read to begin with verses 1 through 7. So Isaiah chapter 9 verses 1 through 7. I guess I didn't tell you what chapter it was, did I? Chapter 9 verses 1 through 7. And as soon as I start reading, you're going to say, well, yeah, I know this prophecy very well.

Nevertheless, the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed. As when at first he lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.

[1 : 38] And afterward more heavily oppressed her by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan to Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy.

They rejoice before you according to the joy of harvest. As men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For you have broken the yoke of the burden, of his burden.

And the staff of his shoulder. The rod of his oppressor. As in the day of Midian. For every warrior's scandal, or sandals, excuse me, from the noisy battle.

Garments rolled in blood will be used for burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born. And to us a son is given.

[2 : 39] And the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom. To order it and establish it with judgment and justice.

From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Now, of course, the last part of that text is the one that is most familiar to us.

And the one that we hear possibly more often quoted and preached on during the Christmas season. Has everything to do, of course, with the coming, the first coming of the Messiah.

His birth, his miraculous birth. But what we need to remember as we kind of move our way to this familiar passage. Kind of set the groundwork for it.

[3 : 40] We need to remember that this was a very, very dark time for God's people. Some 700 years before the birth of the Messiah. And so Isaiah is prophesying that birth.

He started back there in chapter 7. We looked at that last week. Here again, a reference to this child that will be born. This son that will be given.

And so we have the birth of Christ that is coming sometime out in the future. At least when Isaiah made this prophecy. Some 700 years it would be before the Messiah would come.

And in this time, for Israel, for God's people, it was a very, very dark, dark time. The nation Israel, God's chosen people, is a divided kingdom.

Divided into two parts. The northern kingdom, known by the name of Israel, with Samaria as her capital city. And the southern kingdom, known as Judah, with Jerusalem as her capital city.

[4 : 50] The holy city, Jerusalem. A divided kingdom. And now, as I mentioned last week, as we studied out of chapter 7, Israel ruled by the murderous dictator Pekah.

And they form a holy alliance with Syria, ruled by a pagan king by the name of Rezin.

These two have threatened Judah, the southern kingdom, to quote, terrorize them and conquer them, as the Bible tells us. And then, in Isaiah chapter 8, even though there's an allusion to this, a forecasting of it in chapter 7, in chapter 8, there's Assyria.

Assyria, the superpower of the day. With King Tiglath-Pileser on the throne there in the great city of Nineveh. We're familiar with that city, aren't we?

Israel has, or Isaiah rather, has prophesied in chapter 7 that they would be coming. We saw that last week.

[5 : 56] And they do come. Eventually, they do come, invading and conquering first Syria. And then Israel, the northern kingdom, conquering Israel and taking God's people into captivity.

They would be the first of the divided kingdom that would be taken into captivity. And now they are knocking, the Assyrians are knocking on the door of the kingdom of Judah, ruled by wicked Ahaz. And we talked about him last week. So it's a dark time, isn't it? Very dark time. And yet, it is clear from Scripture that God himself has brought all this upon his people.

And why is that? Well, because the darkness, though there's darkness all around, and the threat of war, and the threat of being conquered by cruel nations and pagan nations, even though there's darkness all around in that sense, the darkness really exists in their hearts, the hearts of God's people.

They have turned their hearts from God. They have rejected his word, his law, and they have rebelled against his authority, God's authority, which, by the way, sounds pretty familiar, doesn't it?

[7 : 08] And the last verse of chapter 8 describes the darkness that had overtaken God's chosen nation. And I want you to look at it, verse 22 of chapter 8.

Then they will look to the earth and see trouble and darkness, gloom and anguish, and they will be driven into darkness. That's a pretty good description of the darkness that they faced.

Not only the darkness that was on the inside, but as a result of that darkness, the darkness that God had brought upon God's people. Now, what I want us to see, of course, and this was what we talked about last week.

We'll talk about it again here this morning. What I want us to see is the light that shines in the darkness. The light shining in the darkness.

And that light is Jesus. It is the Messiah. It is Jesus the Christ. Though the people, of course, did not know him by that name at this point in history, but Isaiah did prophesy of his coming.

[8 : 15] Jesus, the Messiah, is the light. The light for whom, or for those groping in the darkness.

Now, this, as we saw last Sunday, is the sovereign promise of God that is given to a certain kind of identified group of people, identified under the name of the remnant.

The remnant, remember? And who are they, this remnant? Well, generally speaking, they are those who stand firm in their faith.

The remnant, the remnant are those who trust Yahweh God. The remnant are those who trust in his promises. The remnant, in the larger sense, are the faithful of all the ages.

And remember, I said this last week, Isaiah had two sons. And God gave them their names, their unique names. Isaiah said in chapter 8, verse 18, The Lord has given me these sons to be signs and wonders in Israel.

And we saw the first son when we looked at chapter 7 last week. And his name, of course, was Shir Jeshub, remember? Shir Jeshub. And his name means something.

[9 : 32] And it means, literally, a remnant will return. All right, so as the story goes in chapter 7, Isaiah the prophet and his son, Shir Jeshub, a remnant, will return, come and they stand before King Ahaz.

And God, through Isaiah, announces to this wicked king an incredible promise from God. Although the promise is really given beyond King Ahaz, really to all of the world.

And as we analyze this passage, we can come to this conclusion about the promise. The promise, in essence, is that the blessing of the Most High God shall one day come out of the house of David, at the end of the house of David, and he will be the way to salvation.

That's basically the promise. And to prove it, to prove that God is going to do this, that the promise is sure, God gave a sign. He gave a sign to the world. He offered a sign to Ahaz, and Ahaz refused any sign.

And so, Isaiah gave a sign for the whole world that would prove this promise, the promise of a Savior.

[10:47] And what was this sign to prove it? A virgin will conceive, have a son, and he shall be called, what? Emmanuel.

Which means what? God with us. We have the interpretation in Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew. All right, now again, as I said last week, the promise is to the remnant.

The promise wasn't really given to Ahaz. Ahaz refused it. The promise is given to the remnant. The promise is hope to those who put their faith, their trust, in God's Savior, whose name is Jesus.

But now, as we move into chapter 8 and on into chapter 9, we find that Isaiah has a second son. I mentioned that last week. Two sons.

And God chose the name of this second son as well. In fact, remember Isaiah said in Isaiah chapter 8, 1, or rather God said in Isaiah chapter 8, verse 1, He said to Isaiah, write the name of this second son on a, quote, large piece of parchment.

[12:01] Now, if you've read ahead here, then you're going to know why he needed a large piece of paper to write the name on because the name's a doozy. The name of Isaiah's second son is Meher Shalal Hashbaz.

How would you like to have a son by that name? But now remember, God named him. And so God intended that his name be a sign, a sign to the people of Israel.

And the sign is, of course, in the meaning of the name. And the boy's name means the spoil speeds and the prey hastens.

That's why he had to have such a long name. The spoil speeds and the prey hastens. Well, what in the world could that mean? Well, there's some parallelism in this name.

And so both the spoil and the prey in this name are references to the same group of people. They're references to the people of God.

[13:01] And so Meher Shalal Hashbaz is a prophecy, really a prophecy and a name, a prophecy of the coming panic and flight of God's people in the face of invasion.

That's what his name is intended to mean. Remember, the Assyrian army is coming. They're coming. They're coming. And their spoil will speed.

That is, God's people are going to run. They're going to run away. The Assyrians are marching on the land of Judah and Israel and their prey will hasten.

That is, they will flee in sheer panic. That's the meaning of the name. Now, we need to pay attention to this because we have to get this down before we're ready to move into chapter 9 and see what God has to say about the coming Messiah.

Because you see, whereas the name of Isaiah's first son is associated with the promise of salvation, we studied that last week, given to the remnant, the remnant of all the ages, the faithful, but the name of Isaiah's second son is associated not with the promise of salvation, but with the promise of judgment.

[14:21] The promise of judgment given to the nation as a whole. And so judgment is to the unfaithful, the many, the unbelieving, but salvation is to the remnant, the remnant, the few, the faithful.

And even the faithful, by the way, sometimes suffer in the dark times as they did in Isaiah's day, but the faithful stand firm in the midst of it.

The faithful stand in hope of God's sovereign promise of salvation. All right, so these people trusted the light that God promised out of the darkness of their time.

And here's the point for us today. The same light the prophet Isaiah spoke of over 2,800 years ago now is the same light that will lead you, me, out of any darkness that we may face today.

Now how do we know that? Well, we know that from chapter 9, verse 2. So let me read it again. Verse 2 of chapter 9 says, The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

[15:30] Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. All right, so if you have any doubt in your minds that the prophet Isaiah is speaking of Jesus, then all you have to do is go to Matthew chapter 4, verses 13 through 16.

I'm not going to read it right now, but just go to that passage and you'll discover that Jesus himself quoted this prophecy out of Isaiah chapter 9 and he connected that prophecy directly to himself. So Isaiah is speaking of the Messiah, of course. No debate about that. The coming of Messiah. But we know from the New Testament that that Messiah, that one coming out of the darkness, the light in the darkness, has a name and his name is Jesus.

It's Jesus. So he can be your hope, your light in the darkness, if you will trust him. All right, so that's all introduction to perhaps one of the most famous Messianic prophecies, certainly the one pertaining to the birth of Christ in the Bible.

So the one to whom Isaiah prophesied is the one who Isaiah says in chapter 7 would be conceived of a virgin and that he would be named Emmanuel, meaning God with us.

[16:52] And so let's see then for the rest of our time this morning how Isaiah describes him. How he describes him. And that starts in verse 6. The first thing that we need to see and consider is his fame.

His fame. The fame of this one that Isaiah is prophesying would one day come. His fame. Verse 6 says, For unto us a child is born.

Now a lot of children have been born down to the ages of time, right? I mean, even today, countless thousands upon thousands and thousands of babies being born every single day.

But the birth of this particular child is the most famous of any child ever born to man. Even pagans would admit that.

I mean, the birth of Jesus was famous. It's the famous birth. We celebrate his birth this time of the year. And it's famous primarily because it is supernatural.

[18:01] His birth was supernatural. And you can think of that in three ways. It was accomplished by supernatural means, meaning he was born of a virgin. And he really was, by the way.

He was born of a virgin. Mary did not know a man. And the child that was conceived in her was conceived of the Holy Spirit. This is a miraculous conception and birth.

So it was accomplished by a supernatural means. No wonder that this birth was the most famous of all births.

Accomplished by supernatural means. But also, it was announced by supernatural messengers.

Alright, think about that. First of all, to both Joseph and Mary by the archangel Gabriel.

And then, to the shepherds, remember, by the multitude of the heavenly host. And the angels saying to them who would be born and where they would find him and so forth. So, it was, then this birth is supernatural.

[19:00] It was accomplished by supernatural means. It was announced announced by supernatural messengers. And it was accompanied by a supernatural marker.

And that marker was the star that came out of the east. And these wise men, probably astrologers in some sense, and they could see that star. But this was not like any other star.

Don't think that this was a star that's still shining in the heavens today. This star was supernatural because it moved. And it stopped. And it moved again. And it would stop. And it was a marker for the place where Jesus was born.

So, it was a supernatural birth. The birth of this child is the most famous of any child ever born to man. And the fame, so the fame of his birth.

It was certainly a menace to kings because Herod wanted to have him killed. But it was a, he was a Messiah to the world. Shepherds came and worshipped him.

[20:01] The wise men opened their treasures to him. What a famous birth. He was visited by the poor and the wealthy, the humble and the exalted.

He is God in human flesh, born of a Jewish peasant girl, born in a lowly stable in Bethlehem, cradled in a feeding, animal feeding trough, for unto us a child is born.

His fame. The second I want you to consider, not only his fame, but his shame. His shame. Unto us a son is given.

It's given. That's saying something else. And it speaks not only of his humanity, but it speaks of his humility. His humility.

His shame in that sense. This light in the darkness is God the Son. Right? He's God the Son. He's the, he's eternal God.

[21:03] He is the second person of the Trinity, the Holy Trinity. The eternal Son of God added to his nature humanity.

humanity. Paul said in Philipians that he took upon him the form of a servant. Slave. Becoming a man.

He added to his nature humanity. He humbled himself in that way. Didn't think it to be something to hold on to for dear life, his deity.

But he set it aside and came to this earth and clothed himself in humanity. And we needed him to do that. It was absolutely crucial to our salvation.

We needed an infinite God to offer himself as a perfect sacrifice, the kind of sacrifice that we would have to have. A perfect and eternal sacrifice for our sins.

[22 : 04] See, the word given there in a son is given literally means delivered. Actually delivered up. That really adds kind of more insight into that famous passage in John 3.16.

God so loved the world that he gave. Delivered up. His only begotten Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

Acts 2.23 Peter is preaching and he's speaking of Jesus and he said of Jesus being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God you have taken by lawless hands have crucified and put to death.

See, his shame. His humility. Jesus, you see, was delivered up to death on the cross and those who trust in him will be delivered up from sin and judgment.

That's the basic basis of the gospel. That's the basic gospel. Jesus delivered up from life to death so that we might be delivered up from death to life.

[23 : 16] His fame. His shame in our behalf. And then third, consider his name. His name. Still verse 6.

And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He shall be called.

When the Bible says here, when Isaiah says that the Messiah's name will be called these things, he's not talking about name or names in the sense that we use or understand that word.

The word name. See, in Hebrew thought, a name did not just distinguish one person from another person so that you could identify them. In Hebrew thought, a name expresses the nature and character of a person.

We know that, don't we? When we read the Old Testament especially, and names always had a meaning, and names always pointed to the nature and character of the particular person. And so these names listed here describe who Jesus is, what he came to do and did do and will do for you if you will trust him.

[24 : 29] But let me point out another thing about this word. The word name here is singular. It's not plural. And so, you know, what follows is not a list of names for Jesus.

You can just pick one. But rather, what follows is his name. Singular. Therefore, it is his character, his nature.

That is, Jesus is all of these things at the same time. You see. He is always wonderful counselor, always mighty God, always everlasting Father, always Prince of Peace.

And so here's what these descriptions of his nature and character mean. First of all, he is the supernatural one. The supernatural one. He is, what does it say?

Wonderful. You know, we use that word wonderful in a different way in which it's used here, from which it's used here. Wonderful here means miracle.

[25 : 35] Miracle. It means supernatural. Something that is outside the realm of the natural. Wonder. Like signs and wonders. Wonderful means miracle.

So he's the miracle man. He's the supernatural one. You might remember when we studied through Judges on Sunday night several months ago in Judges chapter 13 verse 19, or verse 18 rather, the angel had come to Manoah to announce the birth of his son Samson.

And, but this was no mere angel, right? I mean, this was the angel of the Lord. We know that a couple of ways how Manoah responded to him, but we also know in what the angel said.

Because Manoah asked him for his name. Remember, what's your name? After he announced the birth of his son, Manoah asked, what's your name? And the answer was, why do you ask my name?

Since it is wonderful. There's that same word. Wonderful. I'm the supernatural one is what he is saying to Manoah. And we understand then that this is a pre-incarnate appearance of the second person of the Trinity.

[26 : 53] We know him as Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ. So he's the supernatural one. Second, he is the supervising one. The one who supervises us.

He is counselor. He's our wonderful counselor. Our advisor. Our counselor. Our guide. In Psalm chapter 37 and verse 23, the Bible says a man's steps are established by the Lord and he takes

pleasure, this man takes pleasure, in his counsel.

He is the supernatural one. He is the supervising one. Also, he is the sovereign one. He is mighty God.

Mighty God. Literally, he is the one who is invincible. Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 57, thanks be to God who gives us the victory.

The victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. He's the invincible one. The victorious one. Alright, now you're getting this. See, the people who walk in darkness or were groping in the darkness have seen a great light.

[28 : 00] Those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light has shined. The light in the darkness. And who is he? He's the supernatural one. The supervising one.

He's the sovereign one. He's wonderful, counselor, mighty God. And, number four, he is the sustaining one. The sustaining one. He is everlasting father.

He is everything a father should be to his children. We ought to take note here. He's loving. He's strong but tender.

Faithful, wise, provider, rewarder, protector. He's teacher. He's corrector. Yes, yes, he is that as well. He's all these things and many, many more.

And then finally, he is the satisfying one. The satisfying one. He is the prince of peace. The prince of peace. See, Jesus made peace with God for us when he died upon the cross.

[29 : 03] We were at enmity with God. We were enemies of God. We needed to be reconciled to God. And Jesus, by his cross, made peace. He established that peace and that reconciliation.

Romans chapter 5, verse 1. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Alright, so Jesus made peace by his cross and then Jesus gives peace to those to us through faith.

John chapter 14, verse 27. My peace I give to you. So this peace with God is accomplished by the cross. He made peace with God for us through his sacrifice and he gives that peace to those who will believe in him and Jesus keeps us in this peace.

He keeps us secure in this peace with God when we are in the valleys of life and when we begin to doubt, when we have troubles. He keeps us in peace. Philippians chapter 4, verse 6.

Don't worry about anything, but in everything through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses every thought will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[30 : 18] By the way, the word guard there, when you look at the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 9, the word prince of peace, the word prince literally means guard.

It means guard. It can be translated keeper. It can be translated steward, guard. The peace of God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

So he makes peace. He gives us this peace. He keeps us in this peace. He guarantees our peace for all eternity. He is the prince of peace.

So the light shining in the darkness. His fame born for us. His shame delivered up for us. His name wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace.

And then one more this morning. His claim. His claim. You know, for most of us the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 is so familiar that we fail to see that it's somewhat strange.

[31 : 27] There's some strangeness here. For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And what about this child? What about this son?

Well, Isaiah says immediately the government will be upon his shoulder. Now that's pretty amazing. It ought to startle us. It's startling to read what Isaiah says about this child that is born.

This son that is given. Look at verse 7. Of the increase of his government and peace. That means of the expanse of his dominion.

There will be no end. No end to it. Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward even forever.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. See, I really am convinced that this is the problem that we, many people have with this time of the year.

[32 : 31] Because here's what Christmas is ultimately about. It's ultimately about the birth of the king. That's what it's about. Birth of the king of kings.

This little baby born in very humble surroundings, this nativity, king of kings. In Bethlehem is king. He's king Jesus.

Now, I think that identifies a really big problem with Christmas as it is generally celebrated by many today. Because most do not see or refuse to see a king in Bethlehem's stable, in Bethlehem's baby. And yet, remember, according to the story, wise men from the east gave him gifts worthy of royalty. They even said, where is he who has been born, what?

King. Clearly. Now, the problem extends beyond the birth of Jesus, though. Because most do not see a king or refuse to see a king in Nazareth's carpenter.

[33 : 41] And yet, at his baptism, God the father, the sovereign ruler of the universe and of all time, he said, this is my son, in whom I am well pleased.

See, he's king. And most do not see king, see a king in Galilee's preacher. And yet, the great scholars and religious leaders of Jesus' day, they had to admit, no man has ever spoken the way this man speaks.

He speaks as one having authority. Even the Jewish leadership admitted that. And even more importantly, of course, most do not see a king in Calvary's savior, and yet, he stood before Pilate and he said, you call me a king, and for that purpose, I was born.

My kingdom is not of this world. Now, folks, one day, all will see him as king. One day, all will see king Jesus for who he really is.

And when will that be? Of course, that is second coming. Paul describes Jesus in this way in 1 Timothy 6.15, he who is the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings and lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power.

[35 : 16] Amen. What a statement about his kingship, his deity. All right, so, listen, kingship, lordship, is his rightful claim over all things.

And, therefore, kingship, lordship, is his rightful claim over me and you.

over our heart, our lives. And, sad to say, far too many people will realize the truth of all of that when it is too late.

The kingdom that he lays claim to is a kingdom of light, revealed in darkness, and he invites you to be one of his royal, loyal subjects.

Handel's hallelujah chorus says it just right, doesn't it? And it says it over and over again. Lord of lords, king of kings, he shall reign for forever and ever and ever.

[36 : 34] Hallelujah. Hallelujah. That is praise the Lord. Thank you.