

What is it that you are looking to for salvation, redemption, for success?

Are you looking to money? A nice retirement portfolio?

How about a philosophy? Will that do it for you? The right principles for living?

Politics? Are you vigorously promoting your political views?

If only people would agree things would be great and the world would be saved?

How about family? You invest in your family in the right way and then life will be perfect?

The right church? That's it! If my church is perfect and teaches everything exactly right then...

The Bible says that all of this is misguided. Salvation, purpose, perfection, success... is all found in a person.

That person is a hero, a Savior, a King. He is the Christ, the Messiah of Israel.

He is the one who will make your life full, meaningful, perfect, forever.

Now, there is Biblical prophecy, vast and complex, and then there are texts like this one.

If all that we had was Isaiah and the Gospels, it would be enough to conclude that Jesus is the Christ.

Christ means Messiah and Messiah means King, Servant, Shepherd, Healer, Conqueror, and God Himself.

You have heard this passage before, I am sure, probably at Christmas.

What you may not know about it is that we have copies of Isaiah 9 that predate Jesus' birth by 300 years.

And Isaiah was probably written some 400 years before that.

The nature of this prophecy is stunning and alone ought to make every person on earth believe.

There are, of course, people who do not believe the Bible. Most of them have not read the Bible.

I have had conversations with some people like this over the years.

They claim to have read the Bible, but as I have talked with them it is clear that they have not.

Or maybe they did read it but then forgot every important part of it.

If people read the Bible and spend just a moderate amount of time thinking about what it says,

maybe getting some help in understanding some of the difficult parts, and if they have an open mind, they would find it utterly convincing. Passages like this are a case in point.

To really appreciate the power of this passage you must understand the genre.

Hebrew prophesy is poetic discourse, conversation between God, the prophet, and God's people set in verse.

And this kind of writing uses imagery, word play, metaphor, and simile to communicate truth.

Moreover, the truth communicated is usually not welcome to the people hearing it.

It is all the more remarkable then that it has been copied so carefully and handed down through millennia.

I just do not think that people who say that they don't believe the Bible have really considered these things.

Nor have they read this text that we will look at today and asked the quite simple question,

"Is there any other reasonable explanation for this writing, other than God?"

What was God saying through Isaiah 2,700 years ago to the people of Jerusalem?

The King has Come.

It is important to realize that this message was to a people who already had a king. His name was Ahaz.

No doubt this message would not have been extremely popular with that king.

And, yet the Hebrew people had a tradition of preserving God's words even when no one wanted to hear them.

This, too, is unusual and remarkable.

Even today, in Christian communities, we find it important to hear things that make us uncomfortable.

Of course, God's words will make us uncomfortable. He's God, for heaven's sake!!!

Or do you imagine that, when God speaks, He will just confirm the thoughts in your own little head?

Now there are four words from Isaiah in this passage that indicate that all is not well in Judah. (vss. 1-2)

"gloom" = it's depressing, and you cannot see very far. It's like fog at night.

I think things are gloomy right now in America. Sure, our society is wealthy beyond all sensibility.

But we cannot figure out right and wrong, families are collapsing, we riot in our cities, we hurt people.

"anguish" = pain, misery. In America, suicides are higher than ever in recorded history.

Moral confusion has never been greater, so we are drinking and drugging ourselves into senselessness.

“contempt” (NIV “humbled”) = is it a surprise that God would take this view when people ignore Him?

“darkness” (vs. 2, twice) = Of course, this is a metaphor, but why is darkness bad? You cannot see!

When you cannot see, what happens? You get lost. You have accidents. You step on your kids’ Legos. Why the gloom, anguish, contempt, and darkness?

What is going on? **Isaiah 8:5-22**

Though they just survived an invasion, and the economy is recovering, the future is dark in Isaiah’s day.

And it is going to get darker. But this prophecy is a message of hope amid the darkness. Light.

I. A light in the darkness.

Isaiah 9:1-2

As Isaiah looks into his future, the future of the people of Jerusalem 2,700 years ago, he sees a great light.

It is coming to the people in darkness, those living in the shadow of death.

But how is it coming? From where? Because the way that this light is presented is intentional.

Look at verse 1. Assyria would conquer Israel from the north, through the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Then the Assyrians approached Jerusalem from the north and besieged it. This is part of the darkness.

Following a similar path, the light will also come from the north, through Galilee, then south, to Jerusalem.

Galilee, which was the first to fall to Assyria, would be the first to see Messianic light.

This is why Matthew quotes this text in **Matthew 4:12-17**. The King is reinvading from the north.

So, we read about this light in **John 1:4-12**.

So, what will be the result? What will happen among the people of Judah when this light dawns?

This is where the prophecy goes next.

II. Bringing joy after suffering.

Isaiah 9:3-5

Three times in verse 3 we read the word “joy” or “rejoice” (which is the imperative verb form).

A related word, also for joy, shows up in the last stanza. Four joys in one verse. Do you get the point? God’s people are going to be really happy when this light comes from the north into Israel.

Why?

You will notice that the next three verses all begin with “For.” It means “because.”

(The NIV falls on its face in verse 5. I don’t know why it omits the conjunction.)

These are three reasons for rejoicing when the light comes.

1. Because “his” burden and “his” oppressor will be broken... no more burden, wrath, oppression.

like when Gideon rescued Israel from the Midianites. (Judges 6-9)

After all, the “he” is surely the sons of Israel, God’s special people, forsaken and oppressed.

2. Because the trampling warrior and his gear will be burned up, no longer present, gone.

What warriors are these? These would be the Assyrian warriors, and every other oppressing army.

Oppressing armies will no longer be a threat. God is not threatened by armies, or anything.

3. Because... The last reason is the birth of a child. What? How does this fit into the prophecy?

Why would the birth of a child make any difference whatsoever?

And what child could this be?

The last of these three reasons for joy is the focal point and climax of the whole passage.

Why will our joy be increased when this light comes?

Who is the “you” in verse 3? Did you notice that and wonder? It shows up again in verse 4.

The light is not a “what”... it is a “who.” And who is it?

III. He is the conquering child-King.

Isaiah 9:6-7

This coming child, who is the light for God’s people living in darkness, is a reminder that the child to be born according to Isaiah 7:14 must have more than just a present fulfillment.

The child who is “God with us” is more than a message of reassurance to Ahaz, that he rejects.

This child who is “God with us” (Isaiah 8:10) is more than a sign of God’s judgment. Though He is that.

This child who is “God with us” will be a great King, “the government will be upon His shoulder.”

This King is Jesus and “all authority has been given to Him.” **Daniel 7:13-14**

Matthew 28:18-20 You and I live now under His authority.

“His name shall be called...” = Literally in the Hebrew, “has been called.”

This is a typical use of the Hebrew past tense to indicate future certainty.

In this case, it points not only to future certainty, but to the character of this King from eternity past.

And we then read four words that describe the nature of this light, this child, this King.

“Wonderful Counselor” = In contrast to every leader this world has ever known, this King never lies to you.

He always tells you the truth and he always is interested in blessing you. He wants what is good for you. Sometimes He does not tell you stuff because knowing it would not be good. **Isaiah 41:25-42:4**

“Mighty God” = lit. “Warrior God.”

This is the picture of Messiah that we get in the Book of the Conqueror, Isaiah 56-66.

Isaiah 42:13 and **Isaiah 10:20-23**, “Warrior God” again and “Lord of Hosts” = military term.

He is the Mighty Warrior who leads the angel armies. **Exodus 14:14** and then **Exodus 15:1-3**

He shows up finally in **Revelation 19:11-16**.

“Everlasting Father” = This is a name only given to God in Torah and the prophets.

Think of the indictment of **Isaiah 1:2**. We are His children. **Malachi 2:10**

There is the lament of **Isaiah 63:15-19** and **Isaiah 64:8-12**. We need our Father God forever.

“Prince of Peace” = Peace between God and people. Without this Messiah King we are God’s enemies.

But Jesus said to His disciples in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

There is a great song of trust in this King in **Isaiah 26:11-13**.

This light, this child, this King will be the fulfillment of God’s promise to David. 2 Samuel 7:16,

“Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”

And peace, justice, and righteousness will be upheld by this King forever and ever.

But how? One might have asked in Isaiah’s day.

After all, the best kings Israel had were often followed by sons who were disasters.

What is to keep this kingdom from falling away and falling to pieces?

It is because the King of the Kingdom of God will be a King who lives forever. He is enthroned forever.

How can this be? It is because He has already died and has risen again, alive forevermore.

The light has come from Galilee. This prophesy has been fulfilled just as Isaiah said.

The light of men came as a child and began His ministry in Galilee and then came south to Jerusalem.

He came conquering sin and sickness and oppression and entered Jerusalem to destroy death itself.

His light shone into people’s hearts, and they were rescued from darkness into the kingdom of his light.

This kingdom is not only an alternative and a destroyer of the kingdoms of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome... this kingdom ultimately topples every other kingdom the world has ever known.

Our nation, America, will eventually collapse... but the Kingdom of God will endure forever.

People throughout the ages have been joining this kingdom and following this King, for millennia.

This King has paid the sin price in His blood to purchase men and women for Himself all over the world.

This Kingdom is growing and has been increasing ever since the King has come.

So, trust this King and become a part of His Kingdom.

There is no greater enterprise in all the history of this entire world. There is nothing more meaningful.

Sure, you can live for your own little thing and get a house and a car and some money and die and lose it all.

Or you can trust in this King who came as a child and died as your sacrifice and reigns forever.

And then what you build will last forever and you will live forever in the light of this King.