

# Written Copy: Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7 “The Light that Banishes the Darkness Christmas Eve

Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## Text: Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for the land that was in anguish. In former times, he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will cause it to be glorious, along the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles.

<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned. <sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born. To us a son is given. The authority to rule will rest on his shoulders. He will be named: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> There will be no limit to his authority and no end to the peace he brings. He will rule on David's throne and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from now on, into eternity. The zeal of the LORD of Armies will accomplish this.

## Exegetical Statement

The land of Zebulun, Naphtali, and the rest of God's people had lived under the darkness of foreign domination for hundreds of years as God's punishment for turning away from Him. But now He promises a light would dawn there, a light that would spread throughout the land and beyond to the Gentiles around the world. The light would come in the form of a human child, who would at the same time be the Mighty God who would reign and rule through wondrous acts, with a power and authority that would be everlasting, that would establish peace with God and among men. He would come not to discipline His people, but to break the rod of oppression the forces of darkness held over us that are manifested in sin, death, and the devil, and call us into the light of His gracious reign and rule now that will never end. All this is the LORD God's doing. And He would win the victory for us by the work of His own hand just as He did when He fought and won the victory for His people by the zeal and control over all things. And as with Midian, He would accomplish this in a manner no one would ever expect, through the birth of a child to a virgin in Nazareth.

## Focus Statement:

The Son promised to the virgin Mary is God fulfilling His promise to bring the light of God's reign and rule, and the salvation it brings to the hearts and minds of all who are living in the darkness of this world. The Father brings this miraculous gift about in a miraculous way, the virgin birth where the Messiah promised to David is the Mighty God incarnate, who does wondrous things in His reign and rule that break the power of darkness that is sin, death, and the devil in our lives by His suffering, death, and resurrection. He replaces that darkness with His Peace: peace with God now, and through that peace we begin to have peace with one another, which will find its fulfillment when death is banished forever in the eternity to come.

## Function Statement:

### Why it's important to know:

We live in a world where darkness seems to rule, darkness in the world around us, darkness in our own lives and hearts, darkness of strife and discord among one another. No amount of holiday cheer can lift this darkness or break its hold over us.

### What the hearer should do as a result:

Rest in God's miraculous working out of His salvation plan for you, bringing His light of faith by which He guides you through this dark world, confident of His reign and rule now, that will lead to the banishment of darkness forever in the eternity to come.

## Subject Sentence: The darkness banished by the light of Christ's rule

## **Walking in the Darkness of This World**

Does it feel like Christmas to you? It really doesn't to me. I mean you think it would. After all we've got the snow outside that one needs for a White Christmas. We've got the endless parade of Hallmark Christmas movies. We've got the schmaltzy generic Christmas songs on the radio and playing in the stores, and banks, and even in some of our homes. We've got homes and businesses decorated for Christmas. We've got the favorite Christmas movies on TV interrupted by all the commercials on what to buy your loved one for Christmas. And we've got the stores that are chock full of people. When I was driving home from the doctor's yesterday around noon, I couldn't believe how busy it was, you would've thought that it was 5:00 PM rush hour. Only people weren't on their way home from work, they were headed to the malls and stores. Still, it just doesn't feel like Christmas yet to me. There is a darkness that has kind of settled over me that keeps that Christmas joy from filling my heart and mind.

Do any of you feel that way too? Do you feel it when you watch the news on TV and see the darkness and the evil apparent in our world today, the wars and fighting abroad, the fighting and discord in our own country and even our government. Then there is the darkness that touches your life such as financial problems, uncertainty about the future, medical worries, and the darkness that is sorrow and mourning over loved ones that will not be with us this Christmas. Compounding all of that there is the physical darkness as the result of the shorter days of winter. Any and all of those things can add to that dark melancholy that tries to invade, take over, and rule our hearts and minds.

We can try to chase this darkness away looking to the same stuff the world looks to: more Hallmark Movies, more Christmas Music, more shopping, more football, more holiday gatherings with family and friends. These things by themselves are not bad. And they can work for a while to take the blues away, but they're not a permanent fix. At the end of the day the darkness and gloom remain and make us feel worse than ever.

## **Walking in the Darkness of Isaiah's Day**

In our Old Testament Lesson Isaiah gives a description of the life of those living in the Northern portion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This was the territory allotted to the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. When the LORD brought His punishment upon both the Northern and Southern kingdoms which was His discipline for looking to and trusting in other gods and themselves to find joy and happiness instead of the God who gave them the land, He allowed powerful nations to sweep and conquer them. The empires of Assyria and Babylon marched in from the north to conquer the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. These two tribes were their first victims to experience the full destructive force of these conquering armies. They left God's people languishing under enemy oppression, living in darkness and gloom.

The darkness we are subjected to is caused by the same thing. It is caused by our looking for light, joy, and peace in all the wrong places. We live in a sin darkened world that encourages us to look for answers within ourselves, and through what the world offers. But the fixes it offers is temporary and leaves us feeling worse than before.

## **The Promise of the Light to Come**

**Isaiah 9:1b-2 <sup>1b</sup> but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.**

Isaiah is prophetically speaking into the future to those who will return from exile in Babylon and be planted back in the land, settling in the territory that once belonged to the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. They live along the trade route known as “The Way of the Sea”, that stretches from Egypt, up along the Mediterranean Coast and then angles over to the Sea from which flows the headwaters of the Jordan River, the territory that was named after the Sea called Galilee.

While they have returned from exile in Babylon they were still living in the darkness that was the ruling control of the Empire of Persia, followed by Alexander the Great, followed by an even greater empire, the Roman Empire. It had been over 400 years since the LORD had spoken to them. For many it seemed that the LORD had forgotten about them. But He hadn't. Far from it.

**Isaiah 9:6-7 <sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this**

At just the right time the gift that is light of God's power, mercy, and love was brought into the world, coming to free them from their darkness and gloom. It came not as a warrior with trampling boots, but as a child, a very special child. It was a child that would grow to have the authority to rule rest upon His shoulder. He would rule over not just the chosen people of Israel, but over all the earth and all the people. His reign and rule would spread to cover not just one area of the world, but the entire world itself. It would be a reign and rule marked by what most other kingdoms lacked, true justice and righteousness, not only for the king and his elite friends, but for all men and women, especially the downtrodden, disenfranchised, those living in darkness and gloom. And His reign and rule would last forever.

It would come with the birth of a child, a very special child, who came into the world in a very unlikely way. He was not born in a palace as the offspring of a princess. He was born to a poor young virgin girl named Mary who was from the backwater town of Nazareth. A town that was not known for producing anything of importance. He was born to a virgin who was promised in marriage to Joseph, yet had not and would not know a man until after this very special child was conceived and born. In other words, the birth of this child would be a supernatural miracle, the kind that only the zeal of the LORD could do.

Mary asked the question of the day: how could this be? As the angel Gabriel explained (Luke 1:35) **The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.** What exactly is meant by “the power of the Most High will overshadow you”, or another way to put it is “the power of the Most High will envelop you”? I have no idea exactly, nor does anyone else. And that doesn’t matter. It is the powerful miraculous working of the LORD God bringing about His plan and promise of establishing the light that dispels the darkness, the light that is His reign and rule coming into the world, the light that is the baby Jesus.

This certainly was no ordinary child, and He would grow to be no ordinary man. He is the One promised by Isaiah, the One who is the **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** In His life and teaching He would become the best Counselor and advisor on God’s mysterious will, and how to live to please God. And He would do this in wondrous ways: teaching with the authority that only belongs to God Himself, doing miraculous healing, feeding 5,000 plus, healing every kind of sickness and disease, walking on water, calming the storm, and raising the dead. He could do these things because He wasn’t just a man, He was the Mighty God incarnate, sharing the power and authority with the Everlasting Father. And His mission and goal was to establish the peace that the world does not have.

## **The Light of The Son That Comes into Your Life**

This is the child named Jesus who is the long promised Messiah, the Savior. He lived His life on this earth always at perfect peace with God the Father, because He always obeyed the Father’s will. He came not just to enjoy that peace Himself but to share that peace with humankind. He did this by taking our place and our punishment for all the ways we love to walk and live in the darkness of the world around us, seeking comfort and peace in things that cannot help and will not last. He came to forgive all the ways we disobey God by becoming our atoning sacrifice that removes these sins from our record forever. His suffering, death, and resurrection forgives them all. In this work He removes the darkness from our hearts forever, so that when God looks at us He doesn’t see the darkness anymore but sees the light that is faith in His Son, our Lord and Savior.

Only God in human flesh could do this for you. And only He can give this gift of forgiveness, salvation from the devil and eternal suffering, and the promise of eternal life to come. And He offers this to all, including you, as the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes through the Gospel Message and the waters of baptism to deliver the faith that makes Jesus work of His life, death, and resurrection for you, your light of faith. He comes to you and remains with you to keep you walking and living in the light of His faith, which dispels the gloom and darkness of the sin in our hearts and the sin around us in the world. He makes you to be at peace with God, His Peace, and works to keep you living in that Peace through Word and Sacrament.

## **A Light, Joy, Peace to Share with Others**

That same Spirit wants to be at work in you to bring and establish that Peace in the hearts of those around you, who you may be sharing Christmas with, those who are living in the darkness of gloom and sin, looking to the world for help. You can show them the true answer is not found in the world, but in the gift of life that came into the world at Christmas.

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## **Conclusion**

This baby, whose birth is the real reason for our Christmas celebration, is the fulfillment of the promise in Isaiah to bring the light of God's reign and rule, mercy and love into the lives of all people. It is the light that is Jesus Christ and His life, death, and resurrection for you. Through the Gospel Message that describes all Jesus has done to save you comes the light that is faith to shine in your heart and life. It is the light that brings true Peace and hope into this sin darkened world whenever we share that message with others. And it restores that Peace and hope within us. It is the light that shines looking forward to the day to come when the reign and rule of that Christmas Child will fill the earth without sinful opposition from the darkness. It is when that peace we have with God now will fully rule our every day interactions with one another in eternal life to come. Let Christ and the Christmas message restore His light, joy and Peace to your heart and mind this holiday season, and into the New Year. Amen.