

¹ 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, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressors in the day of Midian. ⁵ For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning and fuel of fire. ⁶ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ 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.

Text: Isaiah 9:1-7 A 12-15-24 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 1:26-38 Psalm 40 Responsive Psalm: 2
Hymns: 75, 61, 106, 87

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN!

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Throughout their history, the majority of the Old Testament Jews turned away from God in unbelief. God often sent them earthly judgments to humble them and turn them to Him in repentance and faith. And God kept reminding the Jews that the Messiah was coming, to give to all who believed in Him true hope and joy and peace by faith in that Messiah!

Under Joshua, the northern territory of Israel was divided among the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. In the coming centuries Israel's enemies who defeated them often transplanted many foreigners into that area. By Jesus' time what was Zebulun and Naphtali had become combined and was known as Galilee. The different religious beliefs of all those foreigners had become mixed with the Jewish religious beliefs, causing much confusion.

Our text begins, "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, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in 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." The nation of Israel was so often in distress. But God promised them that a time was coming when He would take away their distress. The glorious time God promised for His people Israel would come when the Messiah came. Matthew informs us that Jesus is the Messiah Isaiah spoke of (Mt. 4:13-16). John says about Jesus, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness..." (Jn. 1:4-5). Jesus

says, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”* (Jn. 8:12)

We’re told, *“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.”* When Jesus came, the physical number of the Jews didn’t increase significantly. God is speaking here, not of increasing the number of Jews, but of increasing the number of all believers. With the coming of Jesus, believing Gentiles were added to the number of believing Jews, increasing spiritual Israel: Christ’s Church. (Ro. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; 11)

Every time God brought judgments against the nation of Israel for their unbelief, the believing Jews also suffered. The hope for the believers was in knowing that God was with them to help them, protect them, and bless them in the coming Messiah. We Christians suffer ridicule, opposition, and persecution from unbelievers in this world. We also suffer in this world from the consequences of the unbelievers’ rebelliousness against God. But God promises He will *“[increase our] joy.”* God is always with us to protect us, help us, and bless us for Jesus’ sake.

We’re told, *“For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.”* The Lord reduced Gideon’s fighting force from 32,000 down to only 300, and then gave Gideon the victory (Judges 7-8). The Lord through Isaiah reminded His people that their deliverance from their earthly enemies, and especially from sin, was not by their own strength, but by His might alone. It’s the same for you and me.

We’re told, *“For every warrior’s sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning and fuel of fire.”* The Lord is using figurative language here to picture our warfare with Satan and sin (*“the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood”*), and the total victory in that battle that Jesus won for us when He said, *“It is finished!”* (Jn. 19:30, my emphasis)

God at times set His Old Testament people free from the oppression of their enemies. But because of the on-going unbelief of Israel as a nation, eventually God would allow other enemies to oppress them. Israel’s true freedom, during times of earthly peace and during times of oppression from their enemies, was by faith in God and His promised Messiah.

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” God sent Jesus *“Unto us”* – to be your Savior and my Savior, too!

The Messiah would be more than only human. God had already prophesied, *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel”* (Is. 7:14). The Child would have a human mother, but He would also be God. Matthew explains, *“They shall call His name ‘Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’”* (Mt. 1:23). Miraculously, this Child would be born of a virgin mother, and God would be His Father. This Child would be true God and true Man!

“And the government will be upon His shoulder.” The government prophesied by Isaiah would not rest on human shoulders. This government would rest *“upon His shoulder”* – on the Christ Child. The people of Israel shouldn’t look for their Messiah to rule them as an earthly king who would raise up their nation as an earthly power. The Messiah would come as the eternal, almighty Son of God, bringing true, eternal light and joy and salvation.

“His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor.” In the original, the name *“Wonderful”* includes the idea of the Child’s incomprehensible nature. God is always incomprehensible to human reason (Ro. 8:7, 11:33; 1 Cor. 2:14). God makes Himself known to us through His Word. When God in His grace brings us to faith in Him, He enables us to understand and believe His Word, and believe what He reveals about Himself and His salvation for us in His Word.

“His name will be called ... Everlasting Father.” How can Jesus, the Son of God, also be *“Father”*? Jesus speaks of us believers as His children. In that sense it can be understood that Jesus is also our *“Father.”*

We’re told that the Messiah is *“the Prince of Peace.”* Unlike any earthly government established in war, the heavenly government of the Prince of Peace is established in peace. Through His death on the cross and His resurrection, Jesus has established peace between us sinners and God.

“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.” Earthly leaders and governments may bring their people peace and prosperity. But leaders die and, sooner or later, governments decline. When they do, the peace and prosperity they brought their people come to an end. But *“the Prince of Peace”* is the eternal God who rules over His people forever. The peace and blessings Jesus brings are ours forever!

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. Luke makes it clear that Jesus Christ is that promised Messiah: *“The angel said to [Mary], ... ‘Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’”* (Lk. 1:30-33)

We’re told that the Messiah would *“establish [His government] with ... justice.”* God’s people at the time of Isaiah and throughout the Old Testament often suffered at the hands of corrupt leaders (Is. 3:14-15; 5:20; Hab. 1:4; etc.). Human history is full of the suffering caused by the injustices of earthly leaders and governments. In His own way and in His own time, God justly judges the wicked. As His believing people, we know that our Lord Jesus rules over our hearts and lives in perfect *“justice.”*

The “*justice*” (other translations have “*righteousness*”) of the Christ Child includes so much more! We’re not God’s people because of any goodness in us. Our hope for heaven after this life isn’t based on any good things we do. It’s Christ’s perfect life and His death on the cross in our place that saves us. We are righteous in God’s eyes solely by faith in His Son. By faith in Jesus we have God’s guarantee that He is taking us to heaven. God’s people in Isaiah’s time shouldn’t place their hope in a messiah who would simply bring them earthly justice. They, and we, find real, lasting hope for this life and the life to come by faith in the Son of God who lived and died and rose again for our salvation.

“The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” “The LORD of hosts” is God of the angel armies. God’s people would find deliverance from all their troubles, not in any earthly leader and his army, but in the coming Messiah. Neither the rebellious, defiant unbelief of the majority of the Jews during the time of the Old Testament as well as at the time of Christ, nor the fury of Satan, nor the rebellious, defiant unbelieving world could stop God from fulfilling His promise to send the Messiah. In His great love for us and for the whole world, God kept His promise and sent Jesus to be the Savior of us all! “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11). Amen.