

Christ Brings Hope

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Isaiah 9:1-7

Hope is a candle lit on a dark night waiting on the world to catch up to the light. Hope normally lives in a world of distress. In heaven, no one needs hope. They have all of God's goodness and glory. Hope is an earth-bound need in the soul to hold onto promises that will give life meaning or release from stress. If we had everything we need, we would not need hope Rom. 8:24. But as it is, we need hope because we live in a world full of darkness.

It was out of a world of darkness that God spoke the hope of the coming Messiah, or Christ. People lived in a land of darkness. War, death, disease – robbed people of the goodness of the land.

Isaiah 9:1-7 NIVO

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan--

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

³ You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

⁴ For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he 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. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

I. Christ brings hope to a world in darkness.

Isaiah gives the prophecy of the coming of Christ, the child to be born, in the time of distress among the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Zebulun is located west of the Sea of Galilee, about where Nazareth would later be located. Naphtali would be from the western side of the Sea of Galilee and northward. These were areas which suffered from the invasions of Aram, (Syria). During Isaiah's time, they suffered first under the Arameans, then the Assyrians. The people were eventually removed from the land by the Assyrians. They suffered death and destruction, and eventually removal to foreign soils.

For the northern tribes, there was not much light of hope. Yet, Isaiah proclaims that the people living in a land of the shadow of death have seen a great light. A light has dawned. Faint, it may be, coming from far away. It is the hope that God will bring an end to suffering and death.

One of the reasons I like Advent is because it reminds us that God made preparation for the coming of His Son long before He came.

Illustration: Vespers at Lutheran University, when a trumpet sounded the approach of the choir and its retreat. Each time, the trumpet started and finished in a faint sound. It reminds me of lighting a candle on a dark night. A candle is but a small light. In the darkness of night, you light the candle, and wait for the world to catch up to the light with the dawn.

In the same way, the light of the prophet's proclamations of the coming child to bring an end to the darkness of war and death, was but a faint light of a flickering candle. It would be a long time before the Light of the World would enter our world.

Have you ever endured a difficult time when your life seemed to have very little hope?

When you feel hopeless, what holds your heart?

What do you turn to find hope?

I tell you, turn to Jesus. He is God's Christ, the Messiah who is taking away the darkness of gloom, the gloom of sin and death, the gloom of being unloved.

II. Christ brings hope for a day of rejoicing at the release of the enemy's hold.

Joy that comes

³ You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

Isaiah proclaimed hope for the days of darkness and gloom brought on by wars. The northern tribes were very vulnerable to invasions. The Arameans were a constant threat to the safety of the land. Over the years, Israel would often lose land to Aram. Then at other times, they might get land back. This constant threat of war and bondage sets the background to Isaiah's proclamation. Isaiah declares a day of rejoicing, when the enemy no longer oppresses. His bonds are cast off forever.

You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

Wars and rumors of wars continue to plague the world. They will do so until Jesus comes back again. Yet, one day, Christ will come and cast the great enemy out who keeps stirring hate among people.

People are also under bondage to many kinds of mind and body controlling powers. Physical addictions, ideologies, philosophies, and dark satanic-spiritual darkness hold many people in hopelessness. Jesus has come to set you free from the powers of bondage. There is hope in Jesus that you can live free of addiction. Free of mind-controlling lusts. Free of the bondage to false ideologies and corrupted thinking.

The enemy has come to kill, steal and destroy. Yet, there is hope in Jesus Christ. He has overcome the power of Satan and sin. He can set you free. He can shatter the yoke that holds you to darkness.

Pray to Jesus. Confess His name. Ask Jesus to remove the darkness of your life. Ask Him to fill you with His righteousness and holiness.

III. Christ brings hope of the coming of God's eternal kingdom.

In Christ, wars will cease.

Isaiah wrote in a time of wars and threats of destruction by other nations. Isaiah declares that Christ will come to bring an end to wars.

⁵ Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

This statement is a reference to the end of wars. We usually focus on the child aspect of this prophecy. Jesus came as a child. Yet, his work was not done as a child, but as a man. Even as a man, even in his death and resurrection, Jesus did not bring an end to wars. However, he will when he returns the second time.

Messianic prophecies are often like an acorn that is planted in the soil of one setting, but the tree is grown in a time much later, and turns out to be much larger than the seed. However, the full life of the oak is present in the acorn.

So, this prophecy not only addresses Jesus coming as a child, but what he accomplishes as Lord.

The Christ child will bring an end to war when he establishes his eternal kingdom.

Christ will bring God's eternal kingdom.

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he 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. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

The Christ-child who brings hope does so because it is God who comes. God promised David he would always have a son to sit on his throne. The Davidic Covenant gave hope for an eternal kingdom. Yet, the Kings of Judah, the sons of David, were mostly failures. They failed to lead God's people in truth and righteousness.

The names of God

It should be striking for any Jewish rabbi to read this passage. The religious leaders in Jesus' day rejected Him because He inferred a direct connection with God the Father. Yet, here is Isaiah foretelling the coming of the Christ-child who would be called by the names of God.

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

These are names of God. It is God who was coming in the child to be born. Christians did not make this up. The divinity of Christ was told long ago. His very name, Jesus, Yeshua (Joshua) means, God is the Savior.

Only God could be the king, the Son of David who would lead God's people without sin. Only God in Christ would be able to bring an end to the power of darkness that lives in human souls.

The Christ has come. His name is Jesus, God who is the Savior. He was born in Bethlehem as a descendent of David. Yet, He was born of the virgin, Mary. His birth was a divine event. More than a miracle. It was the incarnation. The Living Word of God came to us. In Him is life, the Life of God. His life gives hope both now and into eternity.

If you are outside of faith and do not have salvation, call upon Jesus in prayer. Seek Him. He is the Savior. He alone can give you eternal life. When He saves you, you will be born again. Born into a new life, a life made alive with the Spirit of God living in you. It is His life in you which sets you free from the powers of darkness in the world. It is His life which gives you hope for eternal life in God's presence.