

Isaiah 9 – JESUS’ birth, Israel and the church

Isaiah 8.20 says, “If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.” This was about people rejecting God and his Word. People who reject God are likened to people who experience distress, darkness and gloom. This was also true at the time for Judah. Isaiah had told King Ahaz and the people to put their hope in God alone but they hadn’t done that. God used Assyria and then Babylon to bring judgement on Judah.

As we go into Isaiah 9.1, it says, *“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.”*



The places of Zebulun and Naphtali were in the north and this is where Galilee is and where Jesus would be. Galilee and Jordan was where Jesus walked and 90% of the miracles Jesus did were in this ‘Naphtali’ area of Israel. When the Romans were occupying the land of Israel in the time of Jesus, they called the road along the Jordan, ‘the way of the sea’. The Bible is so accurate and God so concerned with every detail of life, he even predicted the name of a road! Galilee was considered by Jews to be a ‘dark’ place, with Gentiles (non-Jews), who they saw as impure.

How typical of God to make this ‘impure’ place to be where Jesus was born and spent his time! God uses people like us although we mess up! The Gospel is about how God takes us from darkness and brings us into light, just like a light going on in a room. This shows how God is amazingly kind and good to us and is a clue to what will happen when Jesus comes.



Read Matthew 4.16



Read John 8.12

When we are kids learning something like riding a bike, one day we may suddenly understand it and say, ‘ah, so that’s how it works’. This is what will happen in Israel...

Verse 3 – “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.” (Another translation says, ‘the shadowlands of death’)

Verse 4 – “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.” If we really know God, it is an amazing thing and better than anything else. I heard of someone who was in a relationship and because of this they were happy. Great, but we should be happy in God first as he will never change and never let us down.

If you’ve done a hard day’s work, you’re happy when you get to eat and drink. But God does so much more for us – through Jesus we can have peace, joy, God’s favour, kindness, we get so much that we don’t deserve. And all of this happens because of Jesus!

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

So what was the battle of Midian?

Here's some history - in Genesis 25.1, we discover that Abraham 'took another wife.' This isn't God's idea of doing things! One of these sons from his new wife, Keturah, was called Midian. We then come across Midian in the story of Joseph, where he was sold to the Midianites. Then we learn that Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was a priest of Midian. But by Numbers 25, we find that God says to Moses to treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them, because they had led the people of Israel into sexual immorality and worshipping the idol, Baal of Peor including sacrificing infants / killing their babies. (One day Elijah would defeat the prophets of Baal, see 1 Kings 18).

By Judges 7, we have the battle of Midian referred to by Isaiah. This is the famous story of Gideon and the 300 men that God used to defeat the Midianites, Amalekites and others who were so numerous their camels were like sand on the seashore! God's plan meant Gideon attacking them at night with just trumpets and lights in jars. This worked and the enemies actually turned on each other, killing each other. God got the glory in an incredible victory! Gideon felt weak, there were hardly any soldiers, but God used them. One day, God promises to deliver his people again and break every burden and the rod of every enemy.

Both Israel and the church have enemies that come against them, because they are so key in God's plan. When we know Jesus, he promises to break off evil and to break the power of evil. We still have battles in life, but Jesus has said he has overcome the world...

 John 16.33 says

Back to Isaiah 9 - The people of Israel were judged by God because they rejected him. Isaiah said that in the future, God would just do them good and give them joy. This may be looking to the future in Bible prophecy and may be describing a future victory for Israel at the 'Battle of Armageddon'. See Ezekiel 38 for more about this, the future and what the Bible says about Armageddon. You can also look at the end of Joel 2.

As Christians, this is also what God does for each one of us!! See Psalm 30.11.

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 God promises even more for us. See Romans 8.28, Romans 8.31 and Romans 8.37-39

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Isaiah 9.6-7 – “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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 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.

God is a very personal God. The Bible says that ‘to us a child is born.’ Jesus was born so that we could each personally know Jesus. Jesus was also ‘given’ by God. This wasn’t something we deserved or could earn, but a completely free gift that we can say yes or no to.

 Read and write down Read Romans 6.22-23


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 Read and write down Ephesians 2.8-10

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 Isaiah started being a prophet around 760 years before Jesus was born. Yet God spoke to him clearly here (and in other chapters like Isaiah 53) about Jesus. See also Isaiah 7.14 where Isaiah also said something about Jesus. See also Daniel 2.44

 What kinds of things do we learn about Jesus from Isaiah 9.6-7? (eg that ‘the government would be on his shoulders etc)

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Some Jewish people believe that Isaiah was talking about a king at the time when the prophecy was written – like King Hezekiah. But this isn’t true. If you take all the verses in Isaiah alone, on this subject, you find that it is about the coming Messiah, Jesus.

 There are lots of names that Jesus is called in the Bible. Can you think of any?

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We know lots more about Jesus and the Bible that support what Isaiah said. Here are 4 names

 **Wonderful Counsellor**

John 14.15-16

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 **Mighty God**

1 Peter 3.22

Matthew 28.18

 **Everlasting Father**

John 1.3

Colossians 1.16-17

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 **Prince of Peace**

John 14.27

Finally, it's worth reading something that summarises a lot of what we've just said:

 **Read Romans 14.17**

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