

# To Us A Child is Born

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Preacher: Rev. Hugh Ferrier

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, friends, would you turn with me, please, to the words that we read in Isaiah chapter 9. Isaiah chapter 9. I'm reading again verses 6 and 7.

We read, For to us a child is born, and 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.

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. I always find myself scratching my head as to what I should preach on at Christmas, because the Christmas events, the Christmas narratives, are so familiar to so many.

I don't know how many sermons many of you will have heard on Matthew chapters 1 and 2, and Luke chapters 1 and 2. I was saying that to your minister even this week, that he's had nine Christmases in Bonnie Barvis, as he calls this area, and I've had eight Christmases in Stunning Stornway, as I call the area that the Lord has placed me.

[ 1 : 28 ] And there seems at times that you feel that there's a limit to what you can actually say. But as I was giving thought to what I should preach on this Christmas, I came across an article by an American writer, Kevin DeYoung, entitled, Pastor, Don't Get Cute This Christmas.

Pastor, Don't Get Cute This Christmas. DeYoung writes, Our people don't need us to find something new. Our people need the gospel.

They need to hear about the miracle, and the majesty, and the mystery of the incarnation. Don't be cute. Don't be clever. Just preach Christ.

And so tonight, I'm not going to be cute. I'm not going to be clever. Instead, I simply want to lift up Christ from these well-known verses that we find here in Isaiah chapter 9, under two headings. We're going to look at the deliverance, and then at the deliverer. First, we have the deliverance. You see that in verses 1 to 5, where Isaiah focuses on the Lord's promised deliverance.

[ 2 : 35 ] Now, before proceeding, it's important to remember who Isaiah was and the context in which Isaiah was prophesying. He was the son of a man named Amos.

The burden of his prophetic message was concerning the southern kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. He prophesied during the reigns of King Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, over 700 years before the birth of Christ.

He prophesied during a time of political upheaval. The empire of Assyria were very much on the ascendancy and about to swallow up the northern kingdom of Israel.

Meanwhile, it was a time of spiritual declension and spiritual decline where the nation of Judah had abandoned the Lord and abandoned His Word and were facing the very real prospect and the very imminent prospect of the Lord's righteous judgment through the Babylonians.

And it's into this context that we find Isaiah speaking about the prospect of restoration, the hope of deliverance. In verses 1 and 2, Isaiah speaks about the darkness being dispelled.

[ 3 : 44 ] Isaiah begins by claiming that there will be no gloom for those who are in anguish. Verse 1, he speaks here about the former times when the Lord brought contempt upon the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.

These were territories in the very far north of the northern kingdom of Israel. Naphtali lay along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee while Zebulun was a little further south.

And because they were so far north, they bore the brunt of the Assyrian aggression. They were the first territories to be invaded by the Assyrians, the first territories to be deported by the Assyrians,

the first territories to become Assyrian provinces.

But Isaiah says here that in the latter times, the Lord will make glorious, or he will honor the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

Gloom and anguish aren't going to be the last word spoken on these northern territories. The Lord is going to change their circumstances. The Lord is going to honor them.

[ 4 : 47 ] And Isaiah continues by claiming that those who walk in the darkness have seen a great light. Verse 2. Isaiah speaks here about people walking in darkness, living their lives in darkness, conducting themselves in darkness.

That refers to the darkness of unbelief, but it also refers to the darkness of divine judgment, the darkness of despair, the darkness of disorientation.

And Isaiah says here that those walking in darkness have seen a great light. In Psalm 27 that we just sung, the Lord is described as being a light to His people.

In Psalm 119, the Lord's Word is described as giving light, giving revelation to His people. And here Isaiah speaks about those walking in darkness, living in darkness, seeing a great light.

The Lord revealing Himself, manifesting Himself to a discouraged, despondent people. And Isaiah goes further by claiming that those dwelling in a land of deep darkness have experienced a light shining on them.

[ 5 : 55 ] Verse 2 again. These people aren't simply living in darkness. They are living in the darkness itself, living in this dark environment of unbelief, a dark environment of divine judgment, a dark environment of despair and disorientation.

But Isaiah says here that the light of the Lord's favor has shone on them. Now, before proceeding, it's interesting to note the tense that Isaiah uses here.

He speaks here about the people seeing this great light and the light shining on them in the past tense. He speaks as if these things have already happened.

He speaks as if the darkness has already been dispelled. But that is not the case. The invasion by Assyria is about to take place. The invasion by the Babylonians is still another 150 to 200 years away.

And so this idea of the Lord delivering His people from that darkness is still a long way off. But Isaiah is saying here that it's so sure, it is so certain, it is so concrete, that He can speak about it in the past tense as if it has already occurred.

[ 7 : 11 ] We can move from the darkness dispelled to the deliverance described. Look at verses 3 to 5. Isaiah speaks about the celebration. Look at verse 3. He speaks about the Lord multiplying the nation and increasing its joy.

Speaks about the nation rejoicing before the Lord. They recognize that their joy has come from the Lord. That is the ultimate source of their joy. He speaks about their joy being like the unbridled joy when a good harvest has gathered in.

Speaks about their joy being like the unrestrained joy when a battle has been won and the spoil is divided up and dispensed. The people are celebrating.

And He goes on. And He speaks about the liberation. Look at verse 4. Here's why the people are so full of such unbridled joy. Why they're so full of such unrestrained celebration.

Isaiah speaks here about the Lord breaking the yoke of their burdens. He speaks about the Lord breaking the staff being used to strike their backs or strike their shoulders.

[ 8 : 17 ] He speaks about the Lord breaking the rod of their oppressors. All the equipment of slavery. All the instruments and implements that are being used to subdue the people, subjugate the people, reduce the people to slavery.

All these instruments, Isaiah says, are going to be shattered. They are going to be smashed to pieces. Isaiah is saying, the Lord is going to liberate His people.

He is going to liberate them in a glorious way, in the same kind of way that He liberated them from the Midianites in the days of Gideon back in Judges 6 and 7. Isaiah is saying, look at your former deliverances.

Look at the way the Lord saved you in the past. And he's saying, the Lord is going to save you. He is going to deliver you. He is going to liberate you in the same way, in fact, a greater way in days to come.

And then finally, Isaiah speaks about the pacification. Look at verse 5. Isaiah has just spoken about the people celebrating and spoken about them celebrating because the Lord is going to liberate

them.

[ 9 : 26 ] And now Isaiah makes it clear that their oppressors will be unable to regroup. He says here that the boots of their warriors that went into battle will be burned up as fuel for the fire.

He speaks here about their blood-soaked garments, garments soaked in the blood of those whom they were oppressing being burned up in that fire. He's saying here there is going to be a total defeat, a total annihilation, a total destruction of those oppressors, those aggressors.

There will be no prospect of them ever regrouping and ever enslaving them ever again. They will be completely pacified. Now, friends, as we consider these verses, we've been given a reminder that the Lord is faithful.

A reminder that the Lord is faithful. That is what we see in Isaiah chapter 9. Isaiah speaks here about deliverance being promised to the northern tribes who had been so faithless to the Lord and who were about to, as it would seem, be completely wiped out by the Assyrians.

And Isaiah is saying here that the Lord will dispel the darkness. He is saying here that the Lord will deliver them. Dale Ralph Davis writes, The Lord never forgets His people.

[ 10 : 45 ] Even a people beaten down, even a people clobbered by enemies, even a people living for the most part in their own self-chosen spiritual darkness, dwelling in a land of deep darkness.

The Lord never forgets His people. And that is so important for us to reflect on this Christmas. We have a God who refuses to let His people go.

We have a God who never forgets His people. We have a God who is faithful. And sometimes we just need to be reminded of that, especially at Christmas.

We often hear that Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year, and I'm sure for many people it is, but for some of us it might be a time of gloom. For some of us it might be a time of anguish.

For some of us it might be a time of darkness. Perhaps it's the darkness of an illness where we feel that we have been driven, thrown into what's same corner.

[ 11 : 47 ] Perhaps it's the darkness of a depression, a despondency, a discouragement of heart that will not lift. And people tell you, pull yourself together, come on, be joyful.

And you're thinking to yourself, I can't feel any joy. Right now. Perhaps it's the darkness of a personal loss where you see the absence of a loved one, the absence of a husband, the absence of a wife, the absence of a parent, the absence of a child at your dinner table, someone who is such an integral part of your life, someone who is such a large part of your life, and now they are no more.

Perhaps it's the darkness of financial uncertainty, worries over what the coming weeks and the coming months are going to bring, wondering to yourself, how am I going to pay my electric bill?

How am I going to afford to pay for my oil, my gas? How am I going to be able to afford the groceries at the co-op and the supermarkets over the coming weeks and the coming months? And maybe you're thinking, well, I could support myself, but how am I going to support my children who are also struggling financially?

How am I going to support my grandchildren? How am I going to support my elderly parents?

Perhaps it's the darkness of a spiritual failure, where you're sitting in this building tonight and you're thinking to yourself, I've let myself down in a particular way, or maybe you're sitting tonight thinking, not I've let myself down in a particular way, but I've let my Lord down in a particular way.

[ 13 : 14 ] And into the midst of that gloom, and into the midst of that anguish, and into the midst of that darkness, we are given this glorious reminder of a God who is faithful, a God who doesn't let go of His people, a God who never forgets His people.

Many of you might be familiar with the hymn written by George Matheson, O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go, but you might not be so familiar with the context in which it was written.

George Matheson was a young man, and at the age of 20, he began to go blind, and his fiancée broke off the engagement. She couldn't face being married to a blind man.

And he was left alone in that moment, and his sister came to look after him, to care for him, to see to his different needs, and with her help and assistance, he became pastor of a congregation of 1,500 people, completely blind.

But the day came when his sister fell in love, and she was engaged to be married, and on the night before the wedding, George's family went for a time of celebration, and they left George behind in the manse.

[14:29] And he was left on his own, left with his own thoughts, left in the darkness of his own blindness, but also the darkness of his own spirit. And in that darkness, as he thought about the fact that this one sister who had come through for him, this one sister who had stood by him, was now going to leave him, and going to be married, he wrote the hymn, O love that will not let me go, I rest my soul in thee.

This evening, this Christmas, I want to encourage you by drawing your attention to the God who is faithful, the God whose love doesn't let go of his people, the God who doesn't forget his people. Some of you might be leaving this building tonight, and you will be going into homes that are empty. But there is a God who goes with his people into their empty homes.

And some of you may be going into homes, and even though there are many people in these homes, they still feel empty because you feel that they don't understand what you're going through at present.

And this reminds us that there is a God who goes with his people. There is a God who is faithful. But this brings us second to the deliverer, and you see that in verses 6 and 7.

[15:57] Here Isaiah focuses on the Lord's promised deliverer, the Lord's promised deliverer. In verses 6 and 7, Isaiah gives a description of the deliverer.

Up to this point, Isaiah has spoken about what the Lord will do. He has spoken about the Lord delivering his people. And now Isaiah speaks about the one through whom the Lord will deliver his people.

Look at verse 6. He starts by saying, for to us, a child is born, to us, a son is given. Isaiah is making the point that those things spoken about in verses 1 to 5, this great prospect and promise of deliverance is going to come about because a child will be born.

The Lord's answer to everything that has terrorized his people, victimized his people, brutalized, and oppressed his people, the Lord's answer is a child. The Lord's answer is a son.

That is the Lord's appointed deliverer. And Isaiah says here that the government will be on his shoulders. This will be no ordinary child. He will be a king. He will be a ruler.

[17:00] He will be a sovereign. And Isaiah goes on to tell us the names of this child. Look at verse 6. He will be called Wonderful Counselor. Isaiah often speaks about the foolishness of human wisdom, the folly of human counsel.

But this child, this king, will possess a wisdom, a counsel that is wonderful. He will know exactly what to say and exactly what to do for all his people on every occasion.

He will be the Wonderful Counselor. He will be called Mighty God. Throughout the Old Testament, the Lord is the one who is referred to as Mighty God. And now this child, this king, is given the title Mighty God.

He will be one who is powerful, one who can deliver his people, one who can defend his people, and not only able to deliver and defend his people, but also one who can defeat the enemies of his people.

He will be called Everlasting Father. That term Father indicates that this child, this king, will have a care for his people, a concern for his people, a compassion on his people, and it will be a care, a concern, a compassion that's everlasting.

[18:14] There's no end to it. There will never be a moment when this child, this king, will stop loving his people. And then he will be called Prince of Peace.

That word peace carries the idea of wholeness and well-being. It's about bringing an end to hostility, an end to warfare. And Isaiah says here that this child will be the Prince of Peace.

He will establish peace, not simply between men, but ultimately peace between God and man. And having drawn our attention to the names of this child, this king, Isaiah draws our attention to the rule of this child, the rule of this king.

Look at verse 7. He starts by saying that of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end. This king's government, his kingdom, the sphere and scope of his reign will only increase.

It will only expand. It might appear to be small. It might appear to be lacking substance. It might appear to be lacking in significance at first. But it will make slow, steady, spectacular progress.

[19:28] And there will be no end to the progress that it makes. Isaiah continues by saying that this king will establish and uphold the throne and kingdom of David.

If you remember in 2 Samuel 7, the Lord promises David that he will establish the throne of one of his descendants. And here we find this child, this king, being spoken about as the legitimate descendant of David.

He will be one who sits on David's throne. And not only will he sit on David's throne, but he will establish and uphold David's kingdom. And Isaiah concludes by saying that this king, this child, will reign with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

That is what characterizes his reign. Justice. Righteousness. There won't be any allegations of scandal, sleaze, spin when it comes to his reign.

There won't be any accusations of conspiracy, cover-ups, compromise when it comes to his rule.

When people look at the rule of this child, when they look at the reign of this king, they will say there is a rule, there is a reign, there is characterized by justice and righteousness.

[ 20 : 52 ] And Isaiah says that it will continue from this time forth and forevermore. You know, so often we hear about people who became corrupted by power.

When I was in fifth year in high school, we had to spend about a year studying Shakespeare's Macbeth. And there was a stage, believe it or not, that I could quote Macbeth off by heart. I could quote the whole play. And it's a fascinating play because you've got this character, Macbeth, who starts off as quite a good character, but someone sows the seed into his head that he could become king.

And he becomes driven by this desire to become king, to have that power, and he ends up murdering King Duncan. But then he's driven not only by a desire to have that power, but a desire to hold on to that power.

And he becomes increasingly corrupt as he starts to murder more and more people just to hold on to his power, just to maintain that power. It's that phrase, isn't it, that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

[ 22 : 04 ] But despite this king and Isaiah's increasing government, he will continue to be one who reigns in a just manner, a righteous manner, a manner that is above reproach.

And at the end of verse 7, we move from the description to the determination. Isaiah has just spoken about this great deliverance, and he has just spoken about the deliverer who will accomplish that deliverance.

But remember, Isaiah's addressing a people who are living in anguish. He's addressing a people who are living in gloom. He's addressing a people who are facing the shadow of darkness and about to enter into that darkness.

The deliverance and the deliverer that Isaiah's speaking of seems neither probable nor even possible. And so Isaiah rounds things off here by saying, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Isaiah's saying that what he has been announcing isn't simply credible, it is certain. And he's saying that it's credible, it is certain, because the Lord of hosts has a zeal, a holy jealousy, a burning determination to accomplish this.

[ 23 : 22 ] The Lord of hosts, Isaiah's saying, the God of the armies of heaven, the God who is reigning, will concentrate his efforts and energies into accomplishing these magnificent, marvelous promises.

We might put it this way, the Lord has staked his name, he has staked his reputation on doing this. And so friends, as we consider these verses, we are being given a picture of the Lord's appointed deliverer.

A picture of the Lord's appointed deliverer, that's what we see in Isaiah chapter 9. Isaiah claims here that this deliverer will start out as a child being born, a son being given, nothing spectacular there.

Isaiah continues by saying that the name of this child will be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah goes further by saying that there will be no end to the increase of his government, that he will establish and uphold the throne and kingdom of David, and that his reign will be characterized by justice and righteousness.

Isaiah is saying here that this deliverer will be a great king, but he will be more than a great king. He will be a divine king. He will be one who possesses all that is needed to deliver his people, save his people, bring salvation, redemption to his people.

[ 24 : 52 ] And that is so important for us to reflect on this Christmas. The Old Testament commentator, John Oswald, writes, this person will not be a king among kings in Israel.

Rather, he will be the final king. He will be the king to end all kings. Thus, the prophet envisions the ideal Davidic monarch. And what we see in the New Testament is that these verses find their ultimate fulfillment in none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

In Matthew chapter 4, we read, Now when he, that is Jesus, heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.

And for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them has a light dawned. Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 9.

[ 26 : 09 ] Jesus is the child who is born to Mary, the son given by God the Father to his people. Jesus is the wonderful counselor who possesses perfect wisdom and knows exactly what to say and exactly what to do on every occasion for every person.

Jesus is the mighty God who can deliver his people, defend his people and defeat the enemies that belong to him and belong to his people. Jesus is the everlasting Father who has loved his people with an invincible care, an invincible concern, an invincible compassion, a love that would lead him to lay down his life for them.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace who has ended the hostilities between God and man through his sin-atonement, sin-reconciling death on the cross.

Jesus is the one whose government is increasing and spreading. It's not contracting. It's not waning. Don't think for one minute that Nicola Sturgeon and all her cronies in Hollywood passing all their gender legislations are in charge.

Jesus' kingdom is increasing. It is expanding and it's increasing and expanding even tonight. Jesus is the one who has established the throne and kingdom of David as his legitimate descendant.

[ 27 : 31 ] He is the true son of David as the angel said to Mary and he's not simply the son of David. He's the one born in the city of David as the angel said to the shepherds.

And Jesus is the one whose reign is characterized by justice and righteousness. No sleaze with Jesus. No spin with Jesus. No scandal with Jesus.

No conspiracy with Jesus. No cover-ups with Jesus. No compromise with Jesus. He is the one who does all things well. He's the one whose reign blesses his people.

There's a very famous sermon by an African-American preacher called S.M. Lockridge where Lockridge said to the congregation the Bible says my king is the king of the Jews.

He is the king of Israel. He is the king of righteousness. He is the king of the ages. He is the king of heaven. He is the king of glory. He is the king of kings and he is the Lord of lords. That is my king.

[ 28 : 34 ] He is God's son. He is the sinner's savior. He is the centerpiece of civilization. He is unparalleled. He is unprecedented. He is the loftiest idea in literature. The highest personality in philosophy.

The fundamental doctrine of true theology. The only one qualified to be the all-sufficient savior. He is indescribable. He is incomprehensible. He is invincible.

He is irresistible. You cannot outlive him and you cannot live without him. The Pharisees couldn't stand him but they couldn't stop him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in him. Herod couldn't kill him. Death couldn't handle him. The grave couldn't hold him. Amen. That's my king. And when you see the sermon at the time being preached you have this really enthusiastic congregation saying Amen. And they're all saying that's my king. And that friends is what we celebrate at Christmas. We celebrate this glorious truth that the child lying in the manger is none other than that long promised long awaited long anticipated heaven appointed king of kings.

[ 29 : 44 ] And so this evening this Christmas I want to close by drawing our attention to this divine deliverer and I want to ask each of us the question however old we are however young we are wherever we're at in life's journey wherever we might be at in our spiritual pilgrimage I want to ask you the question have you bowed the knee to this king?

Have you bowed the knee to this Jesus? And will he be the one who gives you reason to hope in the moments when you're facing the darkness?

Will he be the one who gives you reason to hope not only in the moments when you're facing the darkness but even going through the darkness when it seems that darkness is your only friend?

We're seeing a lot in our own congregation right now where so many people are going through dark seasons so many who are struggling because we're seeing bereavement after bereavement after bereavement people losing loved ones people losing parents I think we've lost we've seen four or five of our congregation losing parents in the last fortnight and I'm sure that there are many here tonight who feel that you're also going through a dark season or maybe about to face a dark season and Isaiah is simply saying lift up your eyes and look to this king lift up your eyes and look to this Jesus he may not be able to say things are going to get better immediately but he says lift up your eyes to the one who will fully and finally deliver his people

Amen let's close by singing the words of Psalm 72 Psalm 72 again the Scottish Psalter version singing verses 1 to 6 Psalm 72 oh sorry verses 1 to 8 this great psalm that celebrates the coming king O Lord thy judgments give the king his son thy righteousness with right he shall thy people judge the poor with uprightness the lofty mountains shall bring forth unto the people peace likewise the little hills the same shall do by righteousness Psalm 72 the Scottish Psalter version on page 312 and singing verses 1 to 8 to the Lord's praise O Lord thy judgments give the king his son thy righteousness with rightly shall thy people judge thy poor with uprightness the lofty mountains shall bring forth unto the people peace thy voice the little hills that slain shall do thy righteous things the people who on sea shall judge the neederic shall thee hear

[ 34 : 33 ] The sound and good Do not stretch his soul Thy great ground on The sea shall grow Or shall shall earth At all The just shall flourish In his face And prosper in his reign He shall work The good and pure Abundant peace maintain

His large and great O'er shall From sea to sea extend It from the river Shall reach for And to earth's At most Our Lord and our God We give you praise And we give you thanks For the words that we have just sung That remind us of a coming righteous king Who will defend his poor and oppressed people Who will deal with and who will defeat their enemies And whose kingdom will extend from sea to sea And we praise and bless you That that is all fulfilled

In Christ Jesus The one who was The very fulfillment of the words That we have considered From Isaiah chapter 9 That he is the wonderful counselor The mighty God The everlasting father And the prince of peace And we pray that this evening Our hearts might have been Encouraged that little bit more From looking to him And considering him That whatever we might be facing Whatever we might be experiencing That we would know That there is this great deliverer Who has come to fully And finally dispel the darkness And deliver his people Where they might know Not only liberation But that pacification Of all their enemies So that they might know And enjoy a final celebration O Lord we pray that this evening We would find our hearts gladdened With thoughts of this king Thoughts of this Jesus And not only that But that we would also take heart From being reminded That you are the God Who is faithful You are the God Who doesn't forget his people The God who refuses To let go of his people We pray O Lord That whatever we might be facing And whatever we might be going through Whether we are going back To homes that might be filled With people Or homes that might be empty That we might know Something of your presence And blessing Being with us That tenacious love That refuses to let go Of those whom you have chosen And redeemed For yourself Bless us then As we go our separate ways And may we know what it is To leave this place Under your benediction And smile As we pray in Jesus' name And for his sake Amen Thank you Amen