

Isaiah 9:1-7

Elizabeth Harrod

Isaiah 9 begins with the word “but,” which prompts us to look back to what is happening in Isaiah 8. Isaiah is prophesying to the people of Judah about the coming Assyrian invasion as judgment for turning away from God. The last verse ends with the image of lost people in “distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish.” So in the middle of this gloom, Isaiah flashes forward to a prophecy of what is to come. We see in verse 1 that he speaks of the future with the certainty of the past tense.

Those who were in darkness will have great JOY - “Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone” (v. 2). That same image of overwhelming darkness is promised to be overcome with a great light. The natural response of God’s people when they are brought out of darkness is increased joy. In verse 3, you see this repeated as they “rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, and they are glad when they divide the spoil.”

Those who were at war will have great PEACE - Verses 4 and 5 paint wartime images of the coming Messiah’s victory over His people’s oppressors “as on the day of Midian.” This refers to the story of the miraculous defeat of Midian by Gideon’s army in Judges 7. This victory is also complete. Every garment rolled in blood being burned for fuel as a fire is what happens when the battle is over and finished. Then Isaiah describes who exactly will bring about this lasting peace.

“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. 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.” Isaiah 9:6-7a

This is God’s promise through the words of Isaiah. A great king will come through the line of David and will bring complete and swift victory over the enemy. In him, there will be unending peace, and his rule and reign of justice will last forever.

A Trustworthy Promise - We have the privilege of knowing and rejoicing that the Lord did keep His promise in the first coming of Christ Jesus. The Son of God was born as a child from the line of David and defeated the ultimate oppressor through his death, burial, and resurrection. He is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Through repentance and salvation through Christ, we were delivered from the domain of darkness and brought to the Kingdom of the Son whom God loves (Colossians 1:13-14). Through the Holy Spirit we are given great joy and peace that “surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:6). Praise God!

Yet we also long for Christ to return and to see his ultimate victory over the sin, death, and darkness that we see in the world. We long for Christ’s Kingdom here on earth and unending peace. In this, we can trust the promise made in the last sentence of this passage - “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” He will bring this promise in Isaiah to complete fulfillment one day, and we will worship Him forever in complete joy and peace.

Isaiah 11

Chris Harrod

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” Isaiah 11:1

Things don't seem to be going according to plan. In fact, it seems like maybe there isn't a plan after all! As we turn to this passage, we see that Israel is at a low point. What once was a great and mighty kingdom under David the son of Jesse is now described merely as a stump. This is not a thriving tree, planted by water and bearing fruit, but it's a tree that has been cut down and seemingly dead. God's promise to David that his kingdom would last forever seems so far away.

At this point in time, most of Israel and their kings have rejected and turned away from God to worship and serve other gods. Because of this, God is sending an army against Israel to carry out His judgment for their wickedness, and this army is now marching towards them. But as we begin to question, God makes a promise. From the stump, the stump that seemed so lifeless, God promises that one day a branch will come shooting up.

In verse 2, Isaiah describes this branch as one who is full of the Spirit. Unlike the evil kings of Israel, this descendant of Jesse will be one who fears the Lord and delights in Him (v. 3). He will be a good king, who judges fairly and rightly (v. 4-5). And when he comes, there will be peace. Peace that seems almost too good to be true! Wolves and lambs will sit together, lions will sit with their prey, and children will play by the holes with snakes without harm (v. 6-9)!

And just when we think it couldn't get any better, we get to the climax of God's promise. Isaiah says there will be peace because “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (v. 9). What a thought! In that day, Israel and all the nations of the earth will come to Him and know Him. They will come to Him because He is glorious. After all, He is not just the branch of Jesse, but Isaiah says that He is also the root (v. 10)! What God promises is not just a deliverer from the armies coming towards Israel, but God is promising a king who will be ruler over everything.

We have seen and know that this promised branch and root of Jesse is our King Jesus. Jesus came among us as a child, lived a sinless life and was filled with the Spirit, died on the cross to pay for our wickedness, rose from the dead in power, and reigns in glory. He is our King, and He is worthy of all our praise! He is the one in whom all peoples can be saved.

As you reflect during this Advent season, take some time to rejoice and praise God for sending his promised son Jesus to save us. Even in hardship, when things aren't going as planned, you can trust that God has made a promise to make all things right. One day He will return, and we will live in perfect peace. One day we will join all the other tribes, tongues, and languages of the earth before the Root and Branch and worship Him. Until that day comes, let's be a people that are trusting in His promises and proclaiming His name to the ends of the earth.