



## PART 2 – HIS NAME SHALL BE

In Part 1 of Looking Forward to Christmas, we discussed many of the prophecies predicting the coming of the Messiah. More specifically, we examined the passage in Isaiah 7 that foretold Jesus' birth from a virgin. The next passage about the prophesied Child in Isaiah 9 was briefly discussed, but here in Part 2 we will truly focus in on it. Isaiah 7 introduced us to the Child, but Isaiah 9 provides more details. The people of Judah in their time were desperate for a solution to their distress. The Child is offered as that solution, but he will rescue not simply Israel, but the entire world.

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### **BELONG**

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship.

- As Christmas day approaches, does anyone have any special plans to celebrate the holiday? Travel or family?
  - Having read Isaiah 7 last week, what strikes you most about the prophecies concerning Jesus' birth and arrival?
  - As we will read further about in Isaiah 9, have you ever considered that Jesus not only came to be our sacrifice in our place, but to establish an everlasting government on Earth? Do the two objectives seem inconsistent to you?
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## BELIEVE

Move into the relevant Bible passages and read along together. This is where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better.

As we approach Christmas, we would do well to take some time to consider the significance of Christmas. Many people think Christmas is under threat and this church would agree with that notion. The greatest enemy is probably not one you've considered. In fact, it's not just one; there are multiple enemies we face that threaten the Christmas story and its meaning.

- **We live in a society that *opposes* Christmas**  
Some would say there is a war on Christmas itself. Its fought not with tanks or bullets, but with the very words 'Happy Holidays.' A simple phrase such as this, although harmless in and of itself, is one small example of how our society has sought to remove 'Christmas' from our culture.
- **We live in a society that *commercializes* Christmas**  
Christmas to many has little to do with the birth of Christ. To many in this country, Christmas is just about Santa Clause and the receiving of gifts. It's become a way for our consumerist society to make money and spend money. Most people can tell you about our own cultural myths and stories about the Christmas season (Frosty, Rudolph, Jack Frost), but not the one that matters most of all.
- **The greatest threat to Christmas: its *trivialization* and *minimization***  
Our society fails to understand the significance of Christmas; to understand what actually happened that first Christmas night and why we are celebrating. Even for Christians, it can sometimes boil down to a sweet little story about a sweet little baby Jesus born to a sweet little girl in a sweet little town with sweet little sheep. The story of Jesus is a feel-good story that sets the stage for a feel-good time of year, but it is so much more than that.

Christmas is no small matter. Christmas is the solution to the greatest problem humanity has ever faced. *Lostness*.

Lostness is the separation that exists between God and man because of human rebellion, and it results in a temporal, pointless, and unsatisfying life that ends in physical and spiritual death.

Isaiah 9 provides us with the solution: "For unto us a Child is born. To us a son is given." Truly, the hopes and fears of all the years are met in Bethlehem on Christmas night.

### **Isaiah 9:1-7 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has

made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. <sup>4</sup> For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.

### **Christmas is the Promise of *Hope***

Amid an incredibly broken world, God promises hope through His Son Jesus. For the kingdom of Judah who received this prophecy from Isaiah, the region was faced with the impending invasion of Syria and Israel who had joined together to crush them into submission. Isaiah compares their struggle to the 'former time' whereby the 'land of Zebulon and Naphtali' were brought 'into contempt.' In Israel's past, the land of the tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali had seen great distress. The book of 2 Chronicles says:

#### **2 Chronicles 16:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali.

Putting aside the context of this passage, let's just say the land of Naphtali was well known for being a place of great trouble where the people were without hope in past times. God promises that in the days of the Messiah, it will not be so. In an ironic twist of fate, Matthew writes of Jesus:

#### **Matthew 4:13-14 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulon and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup> that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet...

Fulfill what? Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1. Jesus began His ministry in the very place that historically was a land of great distress for the people of Israel. From the place where there was once no hope, Jesus would bring hope to the world.

## Christmas is the Promise of *Salvation*

Notice the contrast and the shift in mood from Isaiah 8:22 to Isaiah 9:2-5.

Darkness → Light	Oppression → Victory
Distress → Joy	Gloom → Hope
Depression → Rejoicing	Strife → Peace

Christmas is the message that God has come to save us! He has come to completely flip reality as we know it on its head. Though we may be dead in sin, defeated with no hope of a future, Christmas is the promise that God has made a way. Our burden will be lifted, our enemies defeated, and darkness turned to light. God saved the people of Israel in the past time after time. He will do the same now.

Isaiah 9:6-7 introduces us to the solution of our problem; the Child Himself. He goes by many names, which we will discuss. The first thing we should notice is that this person is a king, evidenced by the statement ‘and the government will be upon his shoulder.’ Israel and Judah were in bad situations time after time because of bad kings. In fact, the Jewish people were never supposed to have a king at all. In 1 Samuel, the author writes of the people:

### 1 Samuel 8:4-5

<sup>4</sup>Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, <sup>5</sup>and said to him, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”

Israel wanted to be like everyone else: rather than look to God as their true king, they desired a human ruler. This decision, although granted to them by God, cost them dearly. We have the choice to worship man or to worship God. Luckily, the king that Israel really needed, as well as the rest of the world, was on His way.

## What is the *Name* of this King?

- **His Name is *Wonderful Counselor***  
Our hearts tend to lead us into sin and self-absorption, looking for our next source of satisfaction and meaning. A counselor is one who guides our paths, makes the crooked straight. Isaiah describes the Child as a sage of extraordinary wisdom.
- **His Name is *Mighty God***  
Isaiah makes a claim here about this Child that must have been unbelievable to his listeners at the time: the king to come would be the mighty God Himself. The Jews believed this figure to be a purely human descendent who would rule Israel; both Hezekiah and Josiah, famous kings from Israel’s history, were thought to have perhaps fit the description. However, only Jesus meets the criteria. He is the very incarnation of God and cannot be overcome.

- **His Name is Everlasting Father**

Not traditionally a name for a king, Father indicates the nature of the relationship he intends to have with his subjects. He comes with the affection of a father, not the rod of a ruler. Everlasting indicates the stability of this relationship. God Himself is everlasting and so too He will never falter.

- **His Name is Prince of Peace**

Peace doesn't quite capture the full meaning of this word. The Hebrew word translated as Peace, which is *Shalom*, signifies more than just peace, but wholeness. Jesus is coming to make us whole; make everything that is wrong in our lives right. He will make us right with God.

### **The *Certainty* of the Savior's Promise**

The most beautiful part of the prophecy in Isaiah 9 is the certainty that accompanies it. Not only will this Child be king one day, but when He does no one can oppose Him. It says of the Savior's kingdom, 'of peace there will be no end' and He will 'establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.'

His influence goes on and on and expands for all eternity. His rule will stop at no border and the glory of God will fill every molecule of space in all the cosmos. What started that first Christmas night was the initiation of a reign that will last forever. When we have sung the praises of God for one billion years, we will be no closer to the end of God's reign than we were at the start. Jesus' reign is just beginning and will never end!

Isaiah gives us confidence that 'The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.' It means that what has been written will certainly come to pass because God will always accomplish what He says. What happened at Bethlehem over 2000 years ago was no small thing.

## **BECOME**

Wrap up the discussion by asking some closing questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we've learned and applying it.

- What do you think is the greatest threat to the true Christmas message in our country? What have you seen that makes you feel Christmas is under attack?
- What do you make of Jesus beginning His ministry in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali? Is it strange for Jesus to start somewhere with such a bad reputation?
- What name of Jesus given in the prophecy strikes you the most?
- Do you share Isaiah's confidence in the Lord to accomplish what He has said?