

Isaiah 9:2-7, Luke 2:1-20

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[0 : 0 0] The Word of God says in Isaiah chapter 9, I'm going to read this to you, Isaiah chapter 9 verses 2 through 7, and then as Miss Christy comes, we'll light the candle before us, but Isaiah chapter 9 starting in verse 2, says, The people who walk in darkness will see a great light, and those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.

You shall multiply the nations, you shall increase their gladness, they will be glad in your presence, as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

For you shall break the yoke of their burden, and the staff of their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle of Tumor, and the cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning fuel for the fire.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will rest on his shoulders. In his name we'll be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be no end to the increase of his government, or of peace. And on the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and righteousness, from then on and forevermore, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

[1 : 1 0] Miss Christy, why don't you come? We are going to sing hymn number 176.

You are welcome to stand if you'd like to. It is, Come Thou Long Expected Jesus. Come Thou Long Expected Jesus. Hello again, guys.

It is, as I said a minute ago, just a joy. This is my favorite service of the year. I know I've said that before, but it is. It's my all-time favorite service of the year. We're doing some things a little bit different this evening, which I think will be a little bit more intentionality.

One of them, you heard, or you may not have heard it in here, but if you were in the parking lot, you heard it. We rang the bells before the beginning of the service. Historically, Christmas Eve service, the bells were rung at the beginning of the Christmas Eve service because any service after sundown was considered the first service of Christmas Day.

So if you look at the Jewish Reckoning calendar when the sun went down, so you're taking part in your first Christmas service. So it was the introduction of that. And for any of you that live down here, I know some of you live down here and are waiting on it.

[2 : 3 2] My intention, now I'm only about two miles away, but my intention is to be here at midnight and ring in Christmas proper at midnight. So I have some that have called me on that. They're going to wait up to see if I do it, but that's the plan.

I will say the last two nights, my wife and I have gotten in bed at 2 a.m. the last two days, so midnight seems early to us, so it's okay. But you're in the middle of that season as well.

Take your Bibles, go with me to the Gospel according to Luke, Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2. The last several weeks, we've been looking at what child is this. And we've been looking at the wonder of the child of Christmas.

We have seen the position which he always has held and will always hold, an eternal position, a position of power and a position of prominence. We've seen that. We saw the period of time in which he entered, that is.

He entered at the right time for the fulfillment of all the prophetic word of Scripture. We've seen the reality of that. We've seen the wonderful things that he brings, the offering of coming to us.

[3 : 38] We've seen the people he chose to come through this past Sunday. We saw the reality that his lineage, at least according to man, is filled with imperfect people.

And we are thankful that God not only chose the time and the place, but even the people which he went through because God uses imperfect people for his perfect plans. Tonight, we'll see in Luke chapter 2 that very, very familiar set of Scriptures to us, the promise that he brings.

Luke chapter 2, if you're physically able, I'm going to ask if you would stand with me as we read the Word of God. If you're physically able and desire to do so, let's stand together as we read the Word of God with one another.

Luke chapter 2, verses 1 through 20. Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was with child.

[4 : 49] And while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth.

Peace among men with whom he is pleased. And when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as he lay in the manger. And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

[6 : 02] But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Let us pray. Father, help us to see your word with clarity. Lord, help us to have the ambition to apply it for your glory. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated.

I will not be very long tonight. I've shared with many that this will be brief because I believe there are other portions that we need to get to. But I want you to just see three critical elements of this passage, each of them connected to a promise, something that applies to us.

We see, first of all, in this passage, the announcement of heaven. We don't have to take time to go through how God orchestrated the events of history and how he brought the right people to the right place at the right time.

We go beyond that and see that when the days were there completed for her to give birth and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger. We understand that. But then we see this miraculous event which took place.

[7 : 05] That if it had not been for the announcement of heaven, no one other than the two that were present would have known anything about it. The one thing that strikes me throughout the entire Christmas event is that for over 400 years, heaven has been silent.

For over 400 years from Malachi until we get to Luke chapter 1 where Zacharias is in the temple, for 400 plus years, God has not said a word. And yet all of a sudden, all of heaven cannot be quiet.

Because Gabriel stands before Zacharias at the altar of incense. Gabriel, six months later, goes to Mary when she's in Nazareth. And now there's a birth some nine months later in a multitude of the heavenly hosts.

Which, by the way, if you do a word study, a multitude, it literally means an incountable or innumerable amount of angels before the shepherds. Who are loudly declaring something has taken place.

It is almost as if, we don't have to really stretch it, God is trying to get the attention of all of mankind. Man is not looking for this or seeking this and would not find it on his own.

[8 : 09] This is assuring to us because we understand that salvation is not by might nor by will but by my spirit says the Lord. Right? This salvation is available to us just as the shepherds who were out in the field and the angels stood before them and told them about this child.

Salvation comes to us in much the same way. The Father draws us to himself, declares to us, makes a loud proclamation in our hearts and on our minds and begins to reveal this reality.

It is the announcement of heaven that ensures that man can respond to what has just taken place. God longs for men to come to him. So much so, it is striking that it says they are the angels of the Lord.

And you read the passage a little bit further. That is the Lord that is laying in a manger. So I've said it this way before. Before he stepped into our place, he sent his messengers ahead of him to announce that he was already there.

They are his angels who are announcing the reality of his presence. And it is a wonder because the shepherds were just going about their daily business. Not looking for it.

[9 : 17] Not seeking it. But yet heaven got their attention. It is the promise that we understand that until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, and we don't know when that is, and we don't try to speculate when that may be, God is still drawing men and women and boys and girls to himself.

And he is drawing them much the same way. They may not be standing before a multitude of heavenly hosts, but yet it is the same power and spirit and presence of the Lord that is pricking the hearts and the minds and drawing individuals to respond to what God is doing.

This Christmas season reminds us that when God longed to redeem men, he wanted mankind to know about it. And if it had not been for his announcements, nobody would have come.

Simeon went to the temple. Why? Because the spirit had told him he would see the Messiah. Anna was daily in the temple and rejoiced when she saw him. Why? Because the Lord had told her that she would see the Messiah.

Over and over again, what we see is the announcement that comes straight from the throne room of heaven into the realm of man so that we may have the opportunity to respond. Secondly, we see that this announcement was not just something that was told us that was unattainable.

[10 : 30] We see the availability of a savior. There's the announcement of heaven coupled with the availability of a savior. Pay attention to this. We've said it before. Everywhere in scripture where we see a name of God being used, we ought to step back and look at what's going on there.

It tells us that when the angels stood before him or before the shepherds, they said this. Today in the city of David, there has been born for you a savior who is Christ the Lord.

Do you know that the name savior is only used two times in the gospels? It is used here and it is used when Jesus met the woman at the well in Samaria and the men from the city came out and said that he was the savior.

They refer to him as their savior. They gave him that name. It was never from the lips of a Jewish individual, but the first ones to declare this name of Christ as savior was the angels.

This is how they want to announce who he is. He is Jesus Christ. Joshua, Yeshua, the Lord with us. Christ being Messiah, the redeemer, but he is also the savior.

[11 : 41] It is a proper name that is attached from the lips of the angels so that men would understand what is available to them. Not just a Messiah to set them free or a deliverer to set them free from political reign, but a savior to redeem them for all of eternity.

And this savior that has come is laid in a manger or a feeding trough or however you want to envision it. We don't know for certain it could have been in a cave with a stone ledge there.

It could have been in a wooden manger. We're not a hundred percent sure. But what we do know is that where the savior has come, it is available and accessible to the shepherds that hear the announcement.

They couldn't go into the palaces. Shepherds couldn't go into the temple. They were considered unclean. And because of their unclean position, out tending the flocks, they were not allowed to go into the courts of the temple.

So the savior had to come to a place where they could go. They were welcome to go to the manger scene. They were welcome to go there. But you know who else was welcome? Everyone else.

[12 : 49] The availability of the savior ensures that all have access to him. So God is making the announcement that the savior is available to whoever will come. And it is an astounding reality.

The most humble of places. King at his birth. Yet laid in the most accessible of positions.

I was sharing with someone just a moment ago in the back. If you do a word study, really quick here, there's no room for them in the end. The word in, I don't really do this on Christmas Eve night.

I don't get this deep, but I have to right now because it's so fitting. If you do just a quick word study, that word in there means guest room. There was no room for them in the guest room. I know we kind of demolish some of our great images when we say scripture too much.

But there's no room for them in the guest room. And that's a very peculiar word. But that word is used again later on in the gospels. And it would be where the disciples asked Jesus where they wanted him to prepare for them to keep the Passover.

[13 : 52] He said, you'll go into the city. You'll find a man carrying a jar of water on his head. And follow him and ask him. And you will find an upper room that is prepared. Now the word upper room there means guest room.

So we say it like this. At his birth, there was no room in the guest room. But when it came time for the Passover lamb to be presented, he was in the guest room. Because he showed up at that very intimate place when he was paying the price for all men.

But he had already made himself available to all men. Look at the availability of the Savior. Third and finally, look at the appropriate response of the believer.

It's really telling because the angels appear to the shepherds in the field. But there's no command attached to what they tell them. Right?

Scripture doesn't give us a command attached to the announcement. The announcement is, there has been born for you today a Savior who is Christ the Lord. He is in the city of David and you will find him this way.

[14 : 51] They do not command them to go find him. They do not say, now leave here and go look for them. But what we see is after the announcement, when the angels had departed, they said, let us then go straight away.

See, the revelation was so great that it mandated the action. That when God revealed something so clear, he didn't have to tell them or command them.

Because it was right before them, they had to respond. When we read the word of God, true salvific faith is not a faith that has to be persuaded into surrender.

It is a faith that has to surrender because it sees it. It sees the reality of Scripture and it is overwhelmed by the goodness and greatness of a God that loves them so much. They joyfully and willingly want to respond to the revelation given to them.

Because heaven is announcing this hope of a promised Savior. But yet they go. So the first appropriate response is to actually do something in light of the revelation.

[15 : 58] We've said this before. That if we approach Scripture simply for the sake of gaining information, then we are not being obedient to it. We do not read Scripture or study Scripture or preach Scripture so that we can collect information.

We do it so that we can live out an application. There are all kinds of useless facts out there. I have a number of them. We call it useless information. I have a number of them in my mind.

I say them constantly to my wife. She says, how do you know that? I just read it somewhere. But it means nothing in the world to me. The fact that the wingspan of a Boeing 747 superjet is longer than the first flight of the Wright brothers.

That's amazing, isn't it? But it means nothing for the sake of eternity. I don't have to do anything in light of that. But when there is a Savior who is born for me in a place that I can access him, all of a sudden I must go and find that Savior.

I respond to the revelation. But not only do they go, it says, and then they tell everyone all that was told them about this child. That is, we proclaim the reality of what we have found.

[17 : 00] Here in just a few moments, we'll start the lighting of the candles. We'll do it after we take the Lord's Supper together. And we'll start it here and we'll make a way. Each one will light the candle of the person beside them.

And it is a picture which signifies passing the light of Christ on to other people so that you are telling them what you know about the Savior. Because his light shines in the darkness.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[25 : 47] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.