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**Isaiah 9:1-7**  
**God's Promised Salvation, Savior, and Kingdom**

**Intro**

When I think back on my childhood, I remember the long months of desperately yearning for the holidays; I just couldn't wait for the last day of school, or for Christmas day!. Right now, we're all in the middle of a season of long waiting; we're waiting(often impatiently) for the day when this pandemic will be long behind us. When I think about these times of waiting, I realize I have always had a love/hate relationship with "waiting."

On the one hand, waiting is an arduous task that demands patience. We grow frustrated in the agony of not yet having that which we so long for. We've all experienced the long anguish of waiting, haven't we? Waiting to see how something will turn out, if our hopes will come to pass or if we'll just be let down. Waiting for that special event on the horizon. From this perspective, then, it would be easy to view waiting in a purely negative light.

Yet, on the other hand, I've also experienced a *profound joy* in waiting. While the waiting itself can be tedious, frustrating, and even painful at times, the end that we long for can be a source of great joy. The long months of hopeful anticipation, leading up to summer, Christmas, or your birthday as a kid make the awaited day all the sweeter when it comes. Longing for something while you wait for it can build the joy that comes when the waiting is finally over. But the joy to be found at the end can also transform the waiting itself, if we let it. You see, viewed from another light, waiting for something we long for means we have something to look forward to, something to be excited about, or to use a biblical phrase, *something to hope in*. I have found in my experience that, while waiting for something I am excited about, I can find great joy in looking forward to that awaited day. Looking forward with longing and eager anticipation can bring motivation, joy, and hope to our lives *now*, in the present. Think about it: isn't the week or two *before* Christmas so much more exciting than two weeks *after* Christmas?

Likely, many of us here today have been looking forward to this Christmas holiday season; we are eagerly looking forward to Christmas celebrations and feasts with family and friends; we wait with hopeful anticipation for Christmas day, just two weeks away from now. But there are also some of you today for whom Christmas is a time, not of celebration, but of great sorrow. For it can be a time when we remember those who *aren't* around the dinner table

with us anymore. Today you might find yourself filled, not with hope and joy, but with sorrow and grief. **Maybe you long to have a restored sense of joy and hope; brothers and sisters, this can only be found in the glorious gospel of Christ. We need to hear afresh the beautiful joy behind Christmas - the sure, joyful hope we truly wait for.**

Historically, the seasons of Advent and Christmas have been tied to the idea of waiting, this concept of hopeful anticipation and joyful culmination. It is a time when we identify with the longing of ancient Israel, the Old Testament people of God, as they desperately longed for the Messiah. We then appropriately celebrate that this Messiah - Jesus Christ - has already come! Likewise, we remember that we are still waiting for the messiah to return, trusting, with sure hope and joyful anticipation, that He will come back for us, just as surely as he came the first time. Christmas is this blessed time when we rejoice that God's promises have been fulfilled in the coming of Christ, and they will be fulfilled when he comes again.

This text before us this morning, Isaiah 9:1-7, reminds us why it is a sweet and joyful thing to hope in and wait for the promises of God.

In the book of Isaiah, he proclaims a hard message from God to Israel: judgment and wrath are coming, because of their sin, idolatry, and disobedience, in the form of war, oppression, and enslavement. In chapter 8, he has just proclaimed a day of gloom for God's people Israel, when they will be broken, and Assyria will invade. Indeed, as the story goes on, this happens. Israel has already been divided into two kingdoms, and one day soon, each will fall. The northern kingdom will be invaded and brought into captivity by Assyria; the southern kingdom of Judah, where Jerusalem is, will be defeated and captured by Babylon. As we see in 8:22, Israel is facing a day of "distress," "thick darkness," and "the gloom of anguish." And while the darkness closes in, Israel asks, what about the promises of God? God's wrath is coming through the nations because of their sin, but does that mean that he will break his promises of old?

Then, here in Isaiah 9, the Lord makes clear that, while He is pouring out His wrath, he will surely bring about his promises. Even though his people are surrounded in doom and darkness, the promised King and Messiah will come like the light of dawn bursting forth through the clouds of darkness. *Amidst the darkness of gloom and anguish we see the light of God's gospel hope shine brightly forth.*

*Here Isaiah proclaims the glorious truth that the Lord will not forsake His true people.*

*This text tells us that the Lord will surely send His Messiah, who the Messiah is, and what he has done and will do for all who hope in him.*

### **I. The Salvation God Promised (vv. 1-3)**

The “light” that bursts forth in this passage is the wonderful promise of God’s salvation for His people. Verse 1 reminds us of the gloomy backdrop of darkness against which this light shines so brightly. The “gloom” and “anguish” of suffering, the judgment of God against their sin, is settling on Israel. “Zebulun” and “Naphtali,” northern regions of Israel, were among the first places to be invaded by foreign armies, in this case, the Assyrians. And then, the destruction and oppression swept into the rest of Israel as well. Isaiah has made very clear that this is the wrath of God being poured out in judgment against Israel’s sin, rebellion, and idolatry. **But**, now he is making very clear, **there is hope**. And this light of hope will dawn in “*Galilee of the nations*,” basically the same region as “Zebulun and Naphtali.” In other words, the light will break forth exactly where the darkness began; right where the invasion broke in, there will the dawn of God’s deliverance and salvation break forth as well.

What follows in verses 2-3 is a beautiful proclamation of the great **joy** that God’s people will have as they experience the Lord’s merciful **salvation**. Just as they are now filled with anguish, facing the consequences of their sin, so will they experience *great joy* when they see “**the great light**” that will shine amidst the “**deep darkness**.” And what is this “great light” that brings such joy? *The salvation and deliverance of the Lord for His people*. As Isaiah writes these verses, he shifts from the future tense into the past tense between verses 1 and 2; this doesn’t mean these things had already happened then, but instead, this is a poetic way of saying that this prophecy of *future hope* is so *certain* that Isaiah can speak of it *as if it has already happened*. This is meant to comfort the Lord’s people by assuring them that God’s promise of salvation *will surely come to pass*.

Then, in verses 4-5, we are told *what the Lord is going to do* to bring about this great “light” and “joy to His people: “***For the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken...***” (v.4). In other words, this pictures freedom and deliverance from oppression and slavery. Israel, who was brought into captivity and exile by these foreign invaders - first Assyria, and later Babylon - was living in the “gloom” and

“anguish” of oppression and captivity; and this great “joy” that awaited them is the certainty that one day God would free them from their oppression, and bring them back out of exile. Verse 5 continues, saying that “every garment” and “boot” used in warfare and battle would be burned; this pictures true **peace**, a nation of people that are not having to fight battles to defend themselves, are not at war, and are not being defeated and oppressed by enemies. This is a promise of deliverance and *salvation* from their destruction, captivity, and oppression at the hand of earthly enemies.

**But this promise and great joy goes far beyond just *earthly peace and earthly salvation*.** The root problem behind Israel’s suffering and oppression *is their sin*. They are suffering in this way because of **God’s judgment against their sinful rebellion and idolatry; they broke His law and covenant, and now they are facing the consequences.** And yet, this passage is a promise of God’s grace! God is promising to **overturn** the punishment against their sin! He promises deliverance from their exile, salvation from their earthly enemies, oppression, and defeat. And yet, their greatest need - indeed, *our greatest need* - is to be *saved and delivered from their sin; our true oppression is our enslavement to sin; our true enemies are our own sin nature, the effects of sin in the world, Satan, and death itself.* **And the greatest threat against us is God’s own wrath and judgment against our own sinful rebellion and idolatry.** That is what Israel, and we, need freedom and salvation from.

And that is exactly what God is promising in Isaiah 9:1-7! The “great light” of salvation dawns against the backdrop of “darkness” and sin in our lives, filling us with “great joy” as we receive God’s wonderful gift of salvation! This is the promise God gives to us, His people!

**[Application]** Like Israel, we, too, experience darkness, anguish, sorrow, and suffering in this life. And it is all, in way or another, a result of sin. Sometimes we face the consequences of our sin; sometimes, the effects of the sins of others. All of us live in a broken, fallen world; even *death* is a result of sin. And all of it reminds us *that we desperately need God’s grace and salvation in our lives*. This is not to downplay the legitimate suffering we face; sickness, suffering, oppression, injustices, the hurts and pains you bear - they matter. And yet, they are but *symptoms of a deeper problem - the problem of sin and evil, the problem of our own sin nature and the broken world we live in*. Perhaps, this morning, the pain and anguish of this life is very apparent to you; perhaps you know all too well what it means to live in a broken world and

experience deep sorrow, suffering and anguish. Maybe you're experiencing deep suffering right now, either physically, emotionally, relationally, financially, or even spiritually, knowing anguish in the depths of your soul. Maybe you long for deliverance and freedom from whatever suffering ails you - and yet, the promise of God's salvation from sin seems irrelevant to you, or doesn't seem to bring you any comfort in these particular pains in your life. You might be thinking, "Sure, I know I need to be forgiven for my sin, and I'm thankful that God does that, but what does that have to do with my depression, my loneliness, my grief, and sense of hopelessness, despair, and anguish?" The promise of God's salvation is a comfort to us *because it addresses the actual root problem behind all of our suffering and sorrow. God promises to deal with them, finally, once and for all!*

**[Illustration]** Imagine going to the doctor for chest congestion, wanting to be treated for a respiratory infection. Instead, it turns out that you have lung cancer. The doctor immediately changes the course of treatment, no longer dealing with the symptoms that initially brought you into the doctor in the first place. Now imagine if you stopped and said, "Whoa, Doc, I didn't come in for all of this! I don't want to have all of these appointments, medication, and treatments, I just want to knock out my cough and congestion!" Obviously, that would be a crazy response! The congestion is just a symptom; the root problem is the cancer; and the cancer is fatal. No, we know that the right response is to eagerly want to deal with the root problem causing all of our symptoms!

And so it is with the sorrow and suffering in your life; they are symptoms of a greater, root problem: **sin**; *and the underlying condition of our sin is fatal to our souls.* The anguish and pain you feel in your life is a symptom of this, and a reminder that *things are not as they should be.* We need salvation! First and foremost, *we need to be saved from our own sin, our personal rebellion against God!* And only *then* can we begin to experience deliverance from all the damage sin causes in our lives and the world.

***Praise God that is exactly what He has promised, right here in His Word, to do - in your life and in mine! So that we too can experience great joy in His salvation!***

But we only experience this salvation because **God Himself** brings it about; we need a *savior.*

## II. The Savior God Promised (vv. 6-7)

How does God fulfill his promise and save his people? How does the “great light” that brings such joy “dawn”? *Through the birth of a child: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given” (v. 6a).* This is the promise that this *salvation* will dawn with the *birth of the promised Messiah and coming King.*

All throughout the Old Testament runs a theme of a coming Messiah who will save God's people. We see this first mentioned in Genesis, as the offspring that will crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15) and it continues to be developed until will finally come to the figure of David. King David was a great and mighty King, even priestly and godly, yet he still fell. While it was clear David was not this promised savior, God promised him, in 2 Sam. 7, that from his descendants would come a son, a child, an offspring, that would not only be King, but would be the Son of God and will have an eternal kingdom and throne. This story being told throughout the Old Testament is one of a coming King who would be righteous, would be the Son of God, and would reign as King forever, never being defeated but reigning with eternal peace. Furthermore, this King would be the savior of God's people: this figure became to be known as the Messiah. And this theme is picked up by the prophets, such as Isaiah. When David's sons, the kings of Israel after him, fall into sin and idolatry, ripping the kingdom in two and eventually driving their people into foreign captivity, the inevitable question is: “Did God's promise fail?”

The resounding answer here, “**No! God’s promise is coming - the Savior, the true King, the Messiah. Will be born!**”

The rest of verse 6 tells us *who this savior is: “His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”* Verses 6 and 7 together make clear that this is a royal figure, the true, promised King who would reign over God’s people and bring **peace; establishing peace by saving and delivering them from their enemies.** He will be the “**Prince of Peace**” and reign with the wisdom of God, being the “**Wonderful Counselor.**” But not only is He the human, Davidic King, but we are told here, as would have been shocking to the original audience: **this King will also be divine!** He will be called **Mighty God and Everlasting Father!**

In other words, this is a direct prophecy that the Messiah, the promised King who would bring salvation to God’s people, would be **the God-Man! None other than Jesus Christ the Lord.** When Jesus of “Galilee” was born, he was “the great light” dawning in the darkness to

bring salvation; as Luke 4:16-19 makes clear, this passage is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ. *That* is the great, certain hope we are pointed to; **the birth of Christ is to bring us such great joy!** Why? *Because he was born in order to live and bring about our salvation; he came to be our savior.* Jesus Christ, being perfectly God and perfectly man, is the true Davidic King; He is the savior that is promised all throughout the Old Testament; and as we know, He has already come! He is our reigning King, the “Prince of Peace” and “Wonderful Counselor!” He is our “Mighty God!” He is God, being “one with the Father.” Yes, God the Son (who is Jesus) and God the Father are distinct; the Son came to be born, not the Father. And yet, they are also *one*, so that to see Jesus is to see the Father! The fullness of God is on display in the person and work of Christ! That is why He is called “Everlasting Father” here. The *character* of our King and Savior, Jesus, is the very same character of God the Father.

And how did he display the Fatherly love of God to us? How did he bring about salvation to our great joy? He defeated our ancient enemies - **sin, Satan, and death** - by living a perfect, righteous life, fulfilling the Law in our place, and then *dying as a sacrifice for our sins, taking the wrath and judgment of God upon Himself.* And then, **God raised Him from the grave, declaring victory over our sin, over Satan, and over death itself!** Our King brings about peace by saving us, His people, through His own life, death, and resurrection! And the glorious news is: **anyone can get in on this!** We join the Kingdom of God, we become part of God’s true people, *by trusting and believing in Jesus Christ, the promised savior! We believe God’s promise to save us by grace alone! We believe that Jesus did all that was necessary to deliver us from the oppression of sin and the judgment we deserve!* And when we place our faith in Him, *we know the joy of salvation!*

And the **joy of salvation** is fleshed out as we look at what is accomplished in the salvation Jesus brings. This brings us to point number 3.

### **III. The Kingdom of Peace God’s Savior Brings (v. 7)**

Verse 7 goes on to tell us that this **savior** who is born ushers in a **Kingdom**. He sits on the throne of Israel, the “**throne of David,**” but it also says that the borders of this kingdom know no bounds: “***Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.***” The messianic savior and King, Jesus Christ, reigns over a kingdom that *continues to expand until it fills the whole earth - even beyond that, filling all of Creation!* Not only do its borders never stop

expanding, but *there is no contest of war either; this kingdom is not one of instability, but of perpetual peace*. And it lasts forever! The King **“establishes” and “upholds” the Kingdom - the Kingdom of God - “with justice and with righteousness, from this time forth forevermore.”** Why? Because God Himself is bringing about this Kingdom, this never-ending reign of justice, righteousness, and peace. **“The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”** After all, the King is **“Mighty God”** Himself!

This glorious future vision encompasses a wholistic, cosmic view of redemption and salvation; salvation from every enemy, not only earthly, but also our enemies of *sin, Satan, and death*; Christ’s eternal Kingdom brings *peace* in every sense of the word. Yes, this includes the salvation Israel longs for, regarding their earthly enemies; but that is not all, nor does it happen in the way they expect. Jesus brings about salvation, and the true Kingdom, by *dealing with the problem of sin once and for all*. The salvation presented here is a picture of a Kingdom *where there is no stain of sin! Where sin and its effects are no more!* No more evil; no more sorrow and anguish; no more pain, suffering, and loss; no more sickness; no more death. *INstead, righteousness, justice, peace, and life go on forever, under the pure reign of the God-Man, Jesus Christ!* This is the holistic salvation our hearts long for! And this is exactly what Jesus Christ brings about!

But wait a second - verse 6 just said that this is brought about in the birth of Christ. Jesus Christ has already come, ushering in the salvation pictured here - and we know this is true, as we *have assurance of salvation as we trust in what Christ has already done!* But if that’s the case, then why doesn’t the world look more like verse 7? Why do we still have ongoing sin, suffering, and sorrow? Hasn’t this promise already been fulfilled in the coming of Christ? **Yes... and No.** It has been *partially fulfilled*. We are currently living in the ***already but no yet fulfilled realities of the Kingdom of God***. The technical theological term for this is **“Inaugurated Eschatology.”** Eschatology simply refers to the *End Times*, the time when this world will be over; the word **“inaugurated”** means that, in many ways, ***we already live in the end times promised here, but not yet full!*** Christ, the promised Messiah, has truly come! And as He told us, He ushered in the Kingdom of God. THIS means that, even now, Jesus reigns on the throne and His Kingdom is expanding throughout this world; it expands with every gospel proclamation and conversion; it is witnessed in every Christian and every local church. We experience the peace of Christ’s Kingdom as we experience the joy of forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Him!



And yet, we live in the *overlap of the ages*; the Kingdom of Christ has dawned, but the Kingdom of Satan and this world still rages on - at least, for a time. So then, we do not yet *fully experience* all that Christ will usher in.

But make no mistake: *we surely will!* Just as Christ has already come, just as we already experience salvation from our sin - *so will he surely come again!* Jesus has already dealt the death blow to our mortal enemies: **sin, Satan, and death itself.** Even though we still fight them, Jesus has already won the war. And when He comes again, He will *finish them off once and for all!* This broken, fallen world will pass away, and we will enter into the **fullness of God's Kingdom, and we will live in the fullness of salvation - we will live in CHrist's righteousness, justice, peace, love, and life forever and ever! Our life, joy, and peace, just like the Kingdom of Heaven, will know no bounds and will know no end!** This is the great joy the Lord brings us! THis is the great, certain hope that lies before us! **THE accomplished past** and the **certain future** of what Christ has done and will do **transforms our lives into waiting with joy; we rejoice that Christ has come! And we joyfully anticipate His coming again!**

So whatever anguish, suffering, and sorrow you bear - whatever sins or symptoms of sin you bear and deal with - rest assured and rejoice that the Lord Jesus Christ has already dealt with them all, because he dealt with the root of our sin on the cross! He has surely come, and if you're trusting in Him, then even now we know the joy of salvation in Him! And He is just as surely coming again! So press on and keep your eyes on the coming of Christ! Let us wait with joyful anticipation; as we look *behind* to what Christ has already done, and look *ahead* to what He has promised to do, *let the gospel promises transform our lives of waiting into lives filled with the sure hope, joy, and peace of Christ - for Christ has come! And He is coming again! May He come again soon!*

If the light of the gospel of Christ has not yet pierced the darkness and of your life, then you can know the joy of salvation by turning to Him now in faith. If you have any questions about how to be saved, or about baptism or church membership, please come and talk to me; you can find me after the service or can even come now during the last song.