

THE DAWNING OF A NEW DAY

READ TEXT

Isaiah 9:1-7

Intro: Chapter 8 closes with darkness.

Chapters 7 and 8 picture to us a God who is pleading for the faith of His people. He answers a prayer which Ahaz never prayed--but which the Lord wanted him to pray. The Lord wanted Judah to trust Him to deliver them from Syria and Israel, but they preferred Assyria in place of the Lord. The Lord had even warned them that Assyria would become an enemy instead of an ally, but even this did not turn the hearts of Ahaz and Judah to the Lord.

Humanly speaking, the situation at the end of chapter 8 could hardly be more hopeless. Darkness is the only word to describe it.

But notice: Chapter 9 begins with a "nevertheless"--God's nevertheless!

Do you know what this means? It is a little Hebrew word, ^{וְכֵן}, which here means, in spite of, however, but. It introduces an unexpected contrast, an unforeseen turn of events. It means that you would never expect what follows from what has preceded it.

So, as we come to chapter 9, the first thing we have is . . .

- I. A RAY OF HOPE (Isa. 9:1). In the Hebrew Bible it is the last ~~verse~~ of chapter 8. So it definitely ties the two chapters together.

This is a look into the past.

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Note the contrast between, "at the first he lightly afflicted," and, "afterward did more grievously afflict her."

God's judgments begin lightly and then gradually get more severe--if we do not hear and obey. Cf. the plagues of Egypt.

DELITZSCH TAKES IT TO MEAN THAT "THE HEIGHT OF THE GLORIFICATION WOULD CORRESPOND TO THE DEPTH OF THE DISGRACE" (I, 243).

The territory mentioned was in northern Israel, the area where the nations had repeatedly attacked the nation of Israel. These had been warnings from the Lord. Gradually the situation had gotten worse, and even in the present things could only get worse than they were in Isaiah's day.

BUT TWO THINGS ARE PROMISED HERE:

- 1) Things would not go on until there was no hope.
- 2) Right from the very area where all of the worst trouble had been, light would come for a nation in darkness.

Now, please turn to Matthew 4:12-16, and we can see what Isaiah was predicting.

THE ONE RAY OF HOPE FOR ISRAEL WAS IN THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH. Ahaz was only going to do the wrong thing. Isaiah was not great enough to do what needed to be done. If God's promises to Israel were ever to be fulfilled, then His own Son would have to come.

What a picture this is of the desperate need of the human heart! This was written about Israel, but no Gentile nation would have been any better off. Even with all of the promises of God, that was not enough unless the Son of God were to come fulfilling them anyway.

Thus, we see that Judah was given a salvation which, if left to themselves, they would have chosen not to have.

But let us go back to Isaiah. As we come into chapter 9, verse 2 we have . . .

II. A GREAT LIGHT (Isa. 9:2).

Note the description of Judah (and Israel) here. They "walked in darkness . . . they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death."

They were living like the godless Gentiles, like they had no God!

And do you know what happens to people who walk in darkness, to people who are, for all purposes, blind?

John tells us in 1 John 2:11 that a person like this
"walketh in darkness, and knoweth not where he goeth,
because darkness hath blinded his eyes."

The only reason an unbeliever can have an peace at all is just because he cannot see where he is going!

But here is a great light!

And the important thing to note is this: They were not looking for the light; the light shined upon them!

But, you say, the light was not shining then. Christ did not come for another 700 years!

That is right! But two things can be said about this:

- 1) It was so certain that He would come that it could be spoken of as something that had already taken place.
- 2) It was so certain that those who were living 700 years

before Christ (and even before that) could benefit from it then as though as it was already a fulfilled prophecy.

Is it any wonder that Isaiah calls it, "a great light"?

Now this leads to a further development in the passage. Let us call it . . .

III. A NEW DAY (Isa. 9:3-7a).

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will result in four things. These will be perfect when He comes to reign, but they can be experienced to a great extent NOW, and could even have been experienced THEN, for all whose hearts are open to the Lord, for all who believe in Him and walk in fellowship with Him.

A. The first fruit is JOY (Isa. 9:3).

The best MSS leave out the word, not, in the second statement of the verse.

"Thou hast multiplied the nation." When did the Lord subtract from the nation? (Arithmetic in the Bible is often very instructive.) The Lord subtracted from the nation when He had to judge them for sin.

BUT IT IS POSSIBLE TO LIVE SO THAT THERE ARE NO SUBTRACTIONS--ONLY MULTIPLICATION!

This means, in turn, JOY!

Do you know that people out of fellowship with the Lord are not happy? They aren't. They cannot be.

Isaiah tries to compare what it is like, but no one can really describe the joy of one who knows the Lord and who really loves Him.

B. The second fruit is VICTORY and DELIVERANCE (Isa. 9:4,5).

Defeat was always humiliating to Israel--and it should have been. Why? Because of the promises to the contrary which the Lord had given to His people. In fact, Isaiah gives one of them in 54:17,

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment ~~thou shalt~~ condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from me, saith the Lord."

How does Isaiah liken this victory? "As in the day of

Midian." Do you remember Gideon (Judges 7)? Gideon faced men who were scattered over the land like grasshoppers. They had so many camels among the Midianites that they could not be numbered. And yet God cut the forces of Gideon from 32,000 to 10,000 to 300!

And what happened? They saw 120,000 men fall before them by "the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon"! They were outnumbered 400 to 1, but God gave them the victory.

All past victories are an encouragement for the people of God to believe that the Lord can deliver His people from any enemy--human, demonic, sin, or anything else.

But--when the Lord gives the victory, it is not a noisy one. "This shall be with burning and fuel of fire." "For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

C. The third fruit is PEACE (Isa. 9:6, 7a).

You all are familiar with this verse. But have you noticed what the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, promises here to do for His people. It will be perfect THEN (when He comes), but it is available NOW.

He is "the Prince of Peace," and "of the increase of His . . . peace there shall be no end."

How do we get His peace? Cf. Isa. 26:3, 4.

It is by knowing Him and trusting Him to be to us what He is. We know Him, in one way, by His names:

- 1) "Wonderful Counsellor." If you want the most wonderful counsel that you can get any place, go to the Lord to get it. "Great peace have they . . ." (Psa. 119:165).
- 2) "The Mighty God." Is there anything too hard for Him? Can any need arise in your life or mine, but what He is more than sufficient to meet that need?
- 3) "The Everlasting Father." Yes, you can even think of the Lord Jesus as a Father, the Father of eternity. He is "the tender, faithful, and wise trainer, guardian, and provider for His people even in eternity" (Delitzsch, I, 253).

"As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Psa. 103:13).

I like to tell my children, "Between your heavenly Father and your earthly father, we can take care of everything!"

- 4) "The Prince of Peace." He is the sovereign One who removes all that would disturb our peace, and brings in everything to establish it. Cf. Phil. 4:6, 7.

D. The fourth fruit is RIGHTEOUSNESS (Isa. 9:7m).

There can be no joy,
no victory, without righteousness!
no peace,

We started this chapter with the darkness of sin and conclude our passage with the light of righteousness.

If you want to know what the cause of all of man's woes is, you find it in sin. If we are to be a happy, victorious, peaceful people, then we have to get away from sin as far as we can--and that is in the righteousness of God!

Now we must conclude.

You say, It all looks good, and it sounds good. But how can it be when Ahaz did not want it, and when we cannot attain unto it for ourselves.

This is why we have what we do at the last.

IV. A SURE PROMISE (Isa. 9:7b).

What is it? "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

One version reads this way:

"From henceforth even for ever will the zeal of the Lord of hosts perform this."

Do you know what zeal is? In the Hebrew it is related to, and sometimes translated, jealousy.

This is perhaps the most amazing part of the passage. God is pictured here as our Lover! He refuses to let us go, and He will do any and everything to satisfy our hearts and to make us what He wants us to be. HE REFUSES TO LET US GO. THERE IS NO ONE ELSE HE WANTS!

Concl: Where are you tonight? With Judah, in darkness?

There is no need to be. God has made all of these wonderful provisions for us in His Son. We have one advantage over Ahaz and even Isaiah. The Lord has come now, and we have had 2,000 years of history to find out how really wonderful He is. By His grace (because it can be no other way) let us turn to Him with all of our hearts, to walk in the light where all of these wonderful blessings can be ours!