

His rule will never end

Isaiah 9:1-7

Here are some words very familiar to each of us. We read them every Christmas but rarely do we actually hear a sermon on them. We know that this is a Messianic prophecy fulfilled in the in Christ. Parts of this passage are repeated in the NT which shows us that 700 years before the birth of Jesus, we see this prophecy made and fulfilled at that time. But of course, we also know there is more to come from this prophecy.

Let's start of by dealing with the details of this prophecy and then go on to see it's significance. This is a picture of the coming of a great king, the Messiah. Even though the Messiah is of David, the blessing doesn't come from Jerusalem, the holy city, but from the fallen the outer reaches of the fallen kingdom of Israel – Galilee; Gentile territory. Specifically, the land around the Sea of Galilee is mentioned.

The pictures that translate into the NT follow in V2. *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light* - Jesus said I am the light of the world.

He has enlarged the nation – we see the kingdom not just being Israel, but beyond – again Gentile territory.

Who is He? The familiar bit Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. I'm not going to go into these today, but we see that the Messiah's deity is established here. You will all know that in these four titles, the Trinity is embraced.

And of course, the authority of Christ is also mentioned here: *7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

Before I go on to explore the significance, the end of verse 7 is most significant. This is not a prophecy achieved by men but ordained and executed by God – *the zeal of the Lord will accomplish this*. It's a product of His desire, His determination.

As I said only a couple of weeks ago, prophecy is about hills and valleys. In the Messiah we see a landscape part explored, a journey not yet complete, the victory won but the peace not yet established.

Prior to the Messiah's first coming, preparation work was necessary – climbing up to the first ridge. There was the fall of Jerusalem. There was the loss of the earthly kingdom. There was the return from exile. There was the restoration of the Temple and the building of a spiritual nation – one that returned to God. There was the expectation of Messiah. Not that it went that well. There were the devout, but there were also ones less than devout. There were invaders who sacked the Temple. There was pressure from paganism. There were those that perverted the faith. There were those so devout in the faith that they had forgotten what it as all about! So by the time the Messiah arrived, there were few expecting the prophecy being fulfilled in the way it was. We know the verse from John – *He came to His own but His own did not receive Him*.

But there is another visit from Messiah and when He returns. It's the second ridge with the valley in between because it's further on. He will destroy His enemies and He will finish this prophecy: *4 For as in the day of Median's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that*

burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. 5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

And what He will ultimately bring is completely this. *7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

That's the end

What about the bit in between? I was watching a programme this week by Dan Snow on exploring how the Romans were so successful in conquering and establishing their empire. He put it down to two things. They had powerful armies that were able to crush enemies and they did it ruthlessly.

But once they won the war, what they were able to do effectively in most places was to then win the peace. Wars took weeks or perhaps a few years. The peace took decades. What kept the empire together was the Pax Romana. The Romans won hearts and minds by making their empire prosperous. They encouraged trade, laid roads but most of all established security and justice. Conquered people were able to buy into the empire by becoming citizens of it. Sometimes the peace took generations to really establish. There were uprisings to put down, problems at home in Rome and the rest of it. Sometimes they had to take the army back to re-establish control again – but it was never like the initial battle to get the territory.

Unlike the Roman empire, the rule of Christ will have no end. Rome eventually fell. The Pax Romana was a human institution and it fell due to corruption and stronger invaders. It won't be like that with Jesus. *Of the increase of His kingdom there will be no end.*

But at the moment we are in that valley before the peace is fully established in a literal sense. Like the previous valley, there are mixed fortunes for God's people. There's a ridge to climb up. We are God's people, Christ's disciples. We are in the process of winning the peace, extending the Kingdom in hearts and minds. Sometimes we see revival, sometimes we see falling away. Sometimes we see persecution. But the peace will be won and the King is coming to finally establish the peace, permanently and eternally. In the meantime we extend the kingdom, giving people that opportunity to make peace with God before it's too late. We are part of the Victor's task of winning the peace.

Therefore at this Advent time we prepare for His coming. We do so by remembering His original coming; to be reminded of what it is all about, so we are ready for His final coming and the glory that follows.

Specifically:

- we break oppression – spiritual -otherwise
- we bring justice and righteousness

Why? Because we need to reflect what Jesus is like. And it should be spiritual as well as actual.

Pray for revival – prayer for our part in it, pray for peace, pray for justice.

Isaiah 9:1 (NIV) Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan--

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. 5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.