

## Advent Hope

### Isaiah 9:1-7

#### What is Advent?

In the church the four weeks before Christmas day is called Advent. This is a time of preparation for the celebration of Jesus' birth. **The name "Advent" comes from the Latin "adventus" which means "to come."** During this season Christians remember the Old Testament promise that God would send a Messiah and the New Testament promises that Jesus will come again.

One particular verse from the Book of Job has stuck in my mind: It is short, it is simple but it 'hits the nail on the head'. It was spoken by one of Job's friends (**Job chapter 8 verse 13**), Where he gives a speech about what's wrong in the world. To me, this one little phrase sums up all that's going on in our society today.

#### **Bildad says (TLB): "Those who forget God have no hope."**

We see the proof of that statement in literally every single sector of our society. The further away we get from God the less hope we have. The opposite is also true. The closer you get to God the more hope you're going to have in your life. The most hopeful people on the planet earth are those who live closest to God. And the most hopeless people on the earth are the people who feel far away from God.

Question: What happens when a culture forgets God?

Answer: Quote: Rick Warren (from his sermon 'Hope is My Anchor'):

"Wealth is idolized. Truth is minimized. Life is trivialized. Abortion legalized. Television is vulgarized. Advertising is sensualized. Everything is sexualized and commercialized. Our consciences have been desensitized and anesthetized. Education is secularized. Free markets are monopolized. Races are polarized. Politics are polarized. Sports are scandalized. Morals and ethics are liberalized. And in entertainment crime is sensationalized and immorality is popularized, Drugs are legitimized, sin is glamorized. The courts are paralyzed. The breakup of the family is rationalized. Manners are uncivilized. Christians are demonized. And God is marginalized."

• **TRANSITION: "Those who forget God have no hope."**

It's no wonder a lot of people don't have any hope. It's no wonder!

*An airplane pilot made an announcement to his passengers over the tannoy system, "Ladies and gentlemen, we have some good news and some bad news, The good news is we are making great progress, the bad news is we are lost"*

*We are making great progress in every area of life, e.g. technology and medicine. And yet we are still lost, still battling the same problems of the human heart! That is not only true in our day; It was the same situation we read about in the book of Isaiah.*

Now, to appreciate the names recorded by Isaiah in chapter 9 verse 6 of his prophecy:

The names that we will be singing again and again in many of our Christmas carols. We have to appreciate the context, the setting, the background, That those names were given in, So, let's go back 800 years before Jesus was born into planet earth. And look at the setting.

### **1. The Darkness (vs 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."**

**GOD'S PEOPLE HAD BEEN SPLIT INTO TWO BY A CIVIL WAR:**

- A country divided: In the north was Israel – the northern kingdom; In the south was Judah - the southern kingdom, Both kingdoms were living in dark times. That darkness evidenced itself in at least two ways.

#### **a. Dark circumstances:**

Their circumstances were bleak, Assyria was a military aggressor; Assyria had already started invading Israel in the north; And it was only a matter of time before it would also conquer Judah in the south.

#### **b. Dark spiritually:**

Spiritually the nation was walking in darkness; Selfishness & sinful actions dominated in the majority of people.

## **The Vivid Description of the Darkness:**

- **Superstitions (2:6),**
- **Materialism (2:7; 5:8-9),**
- **Idolatry (2:8,20),**
- **Arrogance (2: 12-17; 5:15),**
- **Social disintegration (3:56,12-14),**
- **Sensuality (3:16-26),**
- **Alcoholism (5:11-13,22).**
- **Occult practices.**
- And if you keep looking, you will probably find a whole load of other things going on as well!

*• In 1835 a man visited a doctor in Florence, Italy. He was filled with anxiety and exhausted from lack of sleep. He couldn't eat, and he avoided his friends. The doctor examined him and found that he was in prime physical condition. So, the doctor suggested that his patient needed to relax, and to have a good time. He then told him about a circus that was in town. And he told him of its star performer, a clown named Grimaldi.*

*Night after night he had the people rolling in the aisles. You must go and see him," the doctor advised. "Grimaldi is the world's funniest clown. He'll make you laugh and cure your sadness. "No," replied the despairing man, ``He can't help me, you see, I am Grimaldi!"*

God's people were truly in the dark and there was no hope!

- No help in themselves. Like Grimaldi; they could not help themselves, For they themselves were the problem! No help in the monarchy or the politicians. The final years of Israel's monarchy were a period of political uncertainty. Kings like Shallum and Menahem were quickly assassinated. The royal and political leaders of the day were also swamped by darkness; They were a classic example of the blind leading the blind.
- No hope in their religious leaders. Religion had become syncretistic (syn-cret-is-tic) ill: New Age: A mixture of every conceivable practice of the Canaanites, Assyrians and Egyptians.

The so-called people of God; Were even sacrificing their children to Molech, the god of the Ammonites; It is fair to say that there appeared to be no hope anywhere! Verse 1 tells us that Zebulun and Naphtali, two of the northernmost tribes of Israel, Had already suffered the

onslaught of Assyria. Their towns and villages had been destroyed. Their people had been taken away and resettled hundreds of miles away from home. Judah feared that it too would suffer the same type of fate, There was darkness and gloom everywhere and there appeared to be no hope.

*A little over a month before he died, The famous atheist Jean-Paul Sartre declared When trying to resist strong feelings of despair, would often say to himself, "I know I shall die in hope." Then in profound sadness, he would add, "But hope needs a foundation."*

Sadly, he did not have one; And nor had the nation of Israel at this point in their history!

Question: What could turn the nation's hopelessness into hope?

Answer:

As we shall see in a minute, the answer is not 'what' but 'who!' 'A king born of royal descent!' The people may have ignored and forgotten the true God, But the true God had not ignored or forgotten them! And into their situation of darkness, God would shine his light and so dispel the darkness.

## **2. The Light (vs 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."**

*Helen Keller was an American author, activist, and lecturer. She was in fact the first deaf & blind person to graduate from college. Helen Keller tells of that dramatic moment;*

*When Anne Sullivan first broke through her dark, silent world; With the illumination of language: "We walked down the path to the well house, Attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water; First slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motion of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness of something forgotten; A thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant; That wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, Gave it light, hope, joy, set it free!" The moment Helen Keller describes;*

*At that moment her world of darkness was shattered with the light of language. Although she was the same person physically, her life was transformed. She now had a way she could see and understand.*

The people of God need no longer be prisoners of darkness: Because light was coming; And with the light new hope and new life!

### **3. The Promise (vs 6-7):**

**“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,”**

*When the new parents went with their baby to get him examined by the doctor; The doctor told them, "You have a cute baby." The father replied, "I bet you say that to all new parents." The doctor responded "No, just to those whose babies really are good-looking." The father then asked: "So what do you say to the others?" The doctor said, "He looks just like you."*

**A child of promise is God's solution to the darkness.**

We know that this prophecy refers to Jesus Christ: Because these verses are quoted by Matthew in his gospel (chapter 4 verses 13-16), The point is this: For both Jew & Gentile a time is coming: When men and women need no longer be cut off from God & in darkness. Because now they can experience the light of God's Son.

- Quote: **Saint Francis of Assisi (Italian monk & saint):**

- **“All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle”**

Note: Concerning this child Isaiah points out two things that we ought to note:

- The Messiah would be both human and yet divine.

**'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given' (verse 6).**

- Those words ‘a child is born’ a reminder that He became a real baby! Flesh & blood, fully human. Part of his creation. Those words ‘a us a son is given’ are a reminder of his pre-existence. You can only give what you already possess.

- *In the book, ‘The Last Battle’, the last of The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis,*

- *We read this:*

*“It seems then,” said Tirian, ... “that the Stable seen from within and the Stable seen from without are two different places.” “Yes,” said Lord Digory. “Its inside is bigger than its outside.” “Yes,” said Queen Lucy. “In our world too, a Stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world.”*

- TRANSITION: 'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given'

That, flesh and blood baby, was the eternal Son of God! Well, every child (even one born of royal descent); Needs a name and this baby is no different:

- **'Wonderful Counsellor'**

- I take the title 'Wonderful Counsellor' as a single title. Some translations separate these two words. Although either way it doesn't change the meaning. The title is simply telling us this baby will be a 'Wonder of a counsellor.'

Note:

- The word 'wonder' In the Old Testament is a God word; Kept describing God alone and the works of God. It specifically deals with the supernatural abilities, The miracles & wonders performed by God:

Miriam and Moses sang a song after the crossing of the Red Sea, Which included the lines **(Exodus chapter 15 verse 11):**

**'Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?'**

**Psalmist (Psalm 136:3-4).**

**'Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever. to him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever'**

In the person of Jesus Christ, we see the wonder of God made visible:

- His teaching was wonderful. His miracles were extraordinary.
- His presence and authority were captivating, Everything about him is phenomenal.

- **The 'Mighty God'**

- As Counsellor he has the wisdom to rule,

- As the Mighty God, he has the power to execute his wise plans.
- 'Wonderful Counsellor' – The wisdom of God.
- 'Mighty God' – Power to apply that wisdom.

The name 'Mighty God' is again a God name - a name ascribed to God himself:

- Isaiah is informing us 800 years before the event; That the creator would become part of his creation!

‘Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity’.

- **'Everlasting Father'**

- Is literally 'Father of eternity'.
- The rule of this child of royal descent will be enduring and everlasting.
- Like that of God the Father, it will know no end.

Note:

- We are not meant to confuse this term with the title 'Father';
- e.g. 'Our father which art in heaven.'
- That we give to the first person of the Trinity.
- Each person of the Godhead is distinct,
- We need to remember that. To the Jewish people the word 'Father' meant 'originator' or 'source',

John chapter 8 verse 44:

- Satan is called the father (originator) of lies
- Jesus is called the Father (originator or source) of eternity,
- If you want anything eternal you must get it from Him.
- All the eternal blessings we enjoy, our ours because of Jesus Christ!

- **'Prince of Peace'.**

- He is the 'peaceful prince'.
- The word 'prince' is elsewhere translated as 'commander';
- **One who has the authority & power to give peace to those who come to him.**

*I might have the desire to stop speeding motorists zooming down my road. But I do not have the power. I can never enforce my desires. If I was a policeman, the story would be different, I can enforce my will on the offender, by the power of my calling. But the 'prince of peace' or the 'commander'; Is one who has the authority & power to execute his will. To give his peace to all those who come to him.*

God's peace is twofold.

- FIRST: We all need peace with God.
- SECOND: We can experience the peace of God.
- Peace with God because we are enemies to God.
- **(Colossians chapter 1 verse 21.)**

**“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.”**

- When by faith we stop rebelling and repent and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ; We can find peace with God. And then experience the peace of God in our lives.

For 800 years the Jewish people waited, and waited and waited:

For generations, The people have anxiously waited for the child of royal descent to be born: Devout Jews searched the scriptures for clues about him. Fathers taught their children to watch out for him. Mothers have peered into the eyes of their new-borns, Wondering whether their child might be the one. And 2000 years ago, at the first Christmas, God said; 'enough waiting', And an angelic being brings news to a teenage girl and her fiancée. That the time has come; The promised Messiah was to soon be born and they were to call him Jesus. Which means saviour/rescuer!



- Moldovan well story.

*Girl on a trip fell down a well. Unable to get out and need a rescuer! Someone to enter her well/world and deal with the problem.*

And as we finish verses 6-7 inform us that this child::

- **He will rule authoritatively** - "Government will be upon his shoulders".
- **He will rule eternally** - "It will be forever and ever"
- **He will rule powerfully** - "Because the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this"

Amen!