

DIGGING DEEPER – December 3, 2023

Messy Christmas

Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 6:1

Messy Christmas. We have all experienced it – almost every year!

INTRODUCTION: A Messy Christmas instead of a Merry Christmas

Isaiah's prophecy comes at a time when chaos and rulership change is having an impact on the population. Change always seems to be threatening and leadership changes in a nation bring uncertainty. So the prophecy of Isaiah is destined to add to the confusion. The mess has become messier!

DAY ONE: An unexpected leader is presented (Isaiah 9:6)

As you begin, read Isaiah 9:1-7. Who is this prophet? When did he prophecy? To begin answering these questions read Isaiah 1:1. We see he is prophesying over the span of four kings. "Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."

The ESV intro to Isaiah provides some interesting answers. "Isaiah lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of Assyria. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (see 6:10), who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster. He warned that the sin of the people of Judah would bring God's judgment, yet he also declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return them from exile. The book speaks of a "servant," a "man of sorrows," who would be "pierced for our transgressions," accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (52:13–53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which God will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing eternal peace. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 b.c. (possibly till the 680s)."

Of the many prophecies in the scriptures Isaiah 9:6 gives the promise, which is one of the premier, specific promises of a leader (and even more specifically, a Savior) that is unlike any leader known before – a leader called the "Mighty God". This leader will come as a child. Not a conquering war-like figure rather a "Prince of Peace!"

As you read this prophecy take the time to list the characteristics of this promised *son*. What do you see? What do each of these characteristics mean to you? Ask God to direct your heart and mind and allow these characteristics to encourage your heart about your Savior!

DAY TWO: The occasion of the prophecy. (Isaiah 9:6)

Who was Uzziah? An important link to this king of Judah is found in 2 Chronicles 26:1-23. Read this important passage. Uzziah starts his reign (see verse 4) doing what was right in the sight of the Lord. His leadership must have encouraged the people of Judah. God's blessing was on the people because their leader did what was right.

What does this say to you about leadership? How can we recognize good leadership? What do you think is the role of people when their godly leader is disobedient to God? [Hint: verse 18 gives an amazing answer to this question.] What are some things that we should do in support of our godly leaders? Why don't you take time right now to ask God to enable you to be an encourager to our spiritual leaders? Why not make it a practice to pray for the leaders of our church that they might remain godly leaders?

DAY THREE: The demise of a godly leader (2 Chronicles 26:16-20)

How does a godly leader fail? Uzziah succumbed to one of the easiest pitfalls of mankind – pride (see verse 16). We see the beginning of the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah 9:6. Remember the title of this Digging Deeper – “Messy Christmas.” The horrible cause of the mess that brought about Isaiah’s prophecy, (“In the year King Uzziah died I saw the Lord...”) [Isaiah 6:1]

Let’s take a few moments today and look at some of what God says about pride. Here are some verses to check out: Proverbs 18:12, Ezekiel 16:46-50, Proverbs 6:16-20, Mark 7:20-23, 1 Peter 5:5. (Note: you will find both the word pride or proud and the word humility as both words give you important insight.)

How dangerous is pride? How could you cultivate humility? Take time to pray for wisdom in this important area of life.

DAY FOUR: Messiness has a promised remedy. (Isaiah 9:6)

Read Isaiah 9:6 and 7. We have already discovered Isaiah’s prophecies occurred while Uzziah was the King of Judah. The last years of his reign were consumed by his disease – leprosy. His leprosy came about initiated by his pride which led to anger (read 2 Chronicles 26:18-21).

Leprosy brought about separation from God, exclusion from his family, removal from Kingly role. Judah is in a mess. A strong king has now become irrelevant and his son, an unproven leader, is taking his place. It is to this mess Isaiah has said “to us a son is given.” Not Uzziah’s son but a new promised leader, none other than Jesus Christ!

On Day One you made the list of characteristics for this promised Savior. If you were going to make a list of priorities of these characteristics which would be most important to you? Spend some time pondering why you placed this first. Isaiah may not have listed these in order of priority for him but if we believe in divine inspiration of the Scriptures the Spirit of God had a priority. His name is called Wonderful Counselor first. Isaiah would mention this characteristic later in his writing (see Isaiah 28:29). Read the entire context verses 23 – 29. Isaiah takes the time to describe the wise counsel of God.

How do you discover God’s counsel in your life? What tools do you use to discover that counsel? Can you remember a time when God’s counsel was critical to you? Have you ever shared the counsel God provided to you with someone else? Did sharing that moment in your life provide encouragement to you?

DAY FIVE: From the mess, find peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Isaiah has shown us the mess of Judah through his prophecy – a ruler who went from godliness to haughtiness, from strength to being an outcast, from health to being a leper. Isaiah culminates his list of characteristics with this promised child being the Prince of Peace.

Christmas can be messy. Not just from all the debris of Christmas, but sometimes from relationships that get injured or disappointments from unmet expectations. Isaiah must have realized the import of peace. Read verse 7. What a promise – peace without end. Isn’t that something we all crave? Our nation needs peace, our church needs peace, our communities need peace and most of all our homes need peace. A question we should ask ourselves is what disrupts the peace around us? What should we be doing to be sure we don’t diminish the peace?

It is interesting that in Jesus' first sermon he talks about peacemakers. What does Jesus say about these peacemakers (see Matthew 5:9)? Does that sound familiar to Isaiah's promised child? The Son of God brings peace without end. Jesus's peacemakers are called *sons of God*! What area of your life needs the peace of God? Do you dare to ask God to bring peace? What would be the benefit to you and others around you to finding peace?

This year during your Christmas, why not trust God for peace in place of the messiness of a home or community that is facing a mess – a mess of chaos or hatred or a mess of disappointment and discouragement or even a mess of loneliness or fear.

Today ask the Prince of Peace to rule in your heart. He truly wants to. See Colossians 3:15 Make this Christmas a time of peace through the Prince of Peace.