

Isaiah 9

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[0:00] Please turn back to Isaiah 9, looking at verses 1-7, continuing in our Advent series.! I remember the first time I ever held each of my girls when they were born.

! And I remember the midwife handed the baby to me every time. And every time I was just so nervous to hold them because the midwife was handing me something just so small and fragile. Into my hands. I was just, realized I was just holding this tiny, weak, vulnerable little baby. How terrified I might drop her. I never did, don't worry.

But in many ways, we are right to feel that way about a newborn, aren't we? That is what a baby is. We think of babies and we think of weak, vulnerable, needy.

Well, as we continue our Advent series here in Isaiah, and we think more about the birth of Christ, this passage in Isaiah, it gets us to think deeper about what we think of when we think of the baby Jesus.

[1:12] That's what Isaiah is speaking of here. Look at verse 6. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. So last week, we saw in Isaiah 7, God promises a child from a virgin to end the fears of this world.

Well, here in Isaiah 9, we are seeing more about who this child is. This is a prophecy looking ahead, a prophecy about the Lord Jesus telling us who he really is.

And so you can kind of think of this passage as like an x-ray on the manger. So as Mary laid that child, that son, into that manger, Isaiah 9 is kind of like an x-ray on that manger, getting us to look deeper into who that baby really is.

And this x-ray reveals something mysterious. We see he really is a child, just like my girls, weak, vulnerable, needy.

He was cold. He was a cold, crying, hungry baby. Human in every way. But at the same time, mysteriously, Isaiah shows us he is also something much, much more.

[2:33] This child is a king, and this child is a divine king. And this child, this divine king, has come to do something.

He's come to end the darkness of this world. So as we continue in our Advent series, I want us to use this time to think more about the mystery of the manger.

So Advent, it's all about the build-up to Christmas, isn't it? It's all about remembering the wait before Christ's birth. Well, I want us to think, what are we building up to?

Who exactly are we waiting for? Who exactly is that boy in the manger? And the big thing to see is something mysterious is going on in that manger, but also something wonderful.

That child is the king and the divine king to end the darkness of this world. And so as we look at the manger, this is the first thing I want us to see.

[3:40] There is a king in that manger. There is a king in that manger. Look what this passage says about Jesus, verse 6. For to us a child is born.

To us a son is given. So there is no doubt to who, to what is in that manger. It is a child.

A son. A boy. You can look into that manger in Bethlehem and say these words of Isaiah. For to us a child is born.

And what is every child like? What were my girls like? The child in that manger, the baby Jesus, he is weak. Vulnerable.

Needy. Like any baby, he jolts when he hears a loud noise. If they had needles back in those days, in modern medicine, you could do the heel prick test on him and he would cry.

[4:43] He wriggles and screams because he's hungry. He's wrapped up in swaddling cloths because he's cold. There's an unhelpful line in Away in a Manger that goes, The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.

But that can't be true because who is in that manger? It's a child. And children cry. If we can truly say a child is born, then that means a real child, not a super-powered baby.

Not a baby that found this world easy, no. The son of God really took on true, frail humanity. Not sinful, not fallen, but frail humanity.

Humanity that can suffer. And that is what Isaiah's x-ray shows us. We can look into that manger and see truly a child is born.

That is a son of a virgin. But at the same time, Isaiah says something remarkable about this child. Look at verse 6 again.

[6:01] And the government shall be upon his shoulder. This is a picture of carrying something on his shoulders. So kids, or adults as well, has your dad ever put you on his shoulders?

Think about that. Maybe on a walk, you go on a big hike and you get tired. What does dad do? He puts you on his shoulders, doesn't he? And what is dad doing when he does that?

He's holding you up, isn't he? He's carrying you. You're resting on him. And if he lets go, you fall, don't you? And so when you're on his shoulders, you're completely dependent on him, aren't you?

The responsibility of looking after you and the power to keep you safe, it all rests on dad. And when you're on his shoulder, he's the one in charge, isn't he?

Well, as we look into that manger, what does that baby, what does Jesus have on his shoulder?

The government shall be upon his shoulder. Now, what is this government?

[7:08] Well, look at verse 7. It's the throne of David. That means King David. It's talking about the throne over God's people, his redeemed people.

It's talking about the throne over God's church. And as we look into that manger, there is something resting on that tiny little shoulder.

The government of God's people. And think about government. Government's all about rule, isn't it? So the British government rules and controls and orders this land.

Well, Christ rules and controls and orders his people. The church. And what kind of person does that?

What kind of person has a throne and rules? It's a king. If you x-ray, if you scan that manger, you will find that there is royal blood pumping through that baby's veins.

[8:16] And so, at that point, it may be a tiny little shoulder wrapped in swaddling cloths. But that shoulder is carrying something huge.

He is perfectly carrying the entire weight and responsibility of billions of billions of redeemed souls. The weight of salvation itself is resting on that child's shoulder.

That child is the one keeping his people, his church, you and me and everyone in Christ. That child is keeping all of us from falling.

But it's also even more than that. This government, it goes beyond the church. Because look at verse 7.

Of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end. This government, it's the throne of David. It's over his kingdom.

[9:21] And this kingdom has no end. This is a universal government that lasts for eternity. It's God's complete rule over all creation, heaven and earth.

Carrying this government, it means that this child has the right to command atoms where to go. This government, it's the ability to order angels to come and go between heaven and earth.

It's the authority to calm storms. The authority to heal disease. God's people are at the centre of this kingdom.

The church is at the heart of it. But this government, it goes beyond the church and it covers all creation. The reach of this kingdom has no end.

And so when Jesus grows up, 30 years after the manger, and preaches his first sermon, what does he preach?

[10:26] The kingdom of heaven is at hand. The king has arrived. And that should be no surprise that that's his first sermon because he was carrying something on his shoulder as he preached.

It was something he was born to carry. The government shall be upon his shoulder. Abraham Kuyper, a theologian, he famously said this about Christ.

There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, mine.

Although that little baby couldn't speak yet, as he lies in that manger, he has every right to say, this whole world is mine. There is a king in that manger.

And so there is something mysterious going on. There is a child, weak, vulnerable, needy, that needed his mother, needed warmth, but at the same time, in that manger, is a king who must be bowed to and listened to and feared and respected.

[11:47] And while he needs his mother, at the same time, in every way, we need him. Because look what this king has come to do as he carries the government on his shoulder.

Verse 2. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

This king has come to bring light. And what does light do? Light dispels darkness. So think, you walk into a dark room, it's pitch black, darkness everywhere, and then you turn on the big light, you hit the switch.

What happens to the darkness in that room? It disappears, doesn't it? The darkness doesn't hang around whilst the light is also shining. No, no.

Light dispels darkness, replaces it. Well, this child has been born carrying this kingdom in order to dispel darkness.

[12:53] And what is this darkness? Well, you already know. You can feel it right now. The darkness here in Isaiah, it's the curse of this world.

It's exactly how we talk about darkness. We speak about a dark time in life, don't we? A time of suffering. Maybe a period of life that's just gone off the rails.

We say, that was a dark time in life. That's the darkness going on here. We speak of anxiety and depression as darkness. darkness. We speak of dark thoughts and it feels like all the colour and light has gone from life.

That's the darkness. We speak of something having a dark side to it, don't we? When something is evil or corrupt or there's an injustice, that's the darkness.

And of course, the Bible speaks of the valley of the shadow of death. Death itself is a darkness in this world. It is a shadow that weighs very heavy on us.

[14:09] And what has this king come to do? Shine light into all that darkness. To dispel it, destroy it. To use the government that is on his shoulder to bring an end to the darkness that weighs so heavy on us.

Christmas time is all about recognising that a light has come to actually end the curse of darkness. A king has come with the authority to end sin and suffering itself.

That child in that manger does need his mother but we must not miss. We really need him. In your darkness, whatever that may be, you may be looking for light right now.

Looking for help, looking for rescue from this dark and cursed life and maybe you just have no idea where to go. Well, you cannot miss this.

A child has been born who is the light to shine into your darkness. In that manger is a king and the government of creation is on his shoulder, a king to end this darkness.

[15:29] And the reason he can shine this light, the reason he can have this power is because of who he is. We could so easily ask, why can one little child, how can one son shine so much light?

How can such responsibility be on such tiny shoulders? Well, we need to look even closer into the manger.

Look closely at that x-ray and Isaiah shows us even more of who this child is. There is not only a king but there is a divine king in that manger.

That's my second point. There is a divine king in that manger. Look at the end of verse 6. Isaiah gives four names for this baby. Did you see verse 6? Wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting

father, prince of peace.

Now names, names are always important in the Bible. Names aren't just random. Names tell us about who a person really is. It's an insight into their character.

[16:43] Well, this is giving us an insight into who Jesus really is, who that baby is in that manger. And so just look at the first name. Wonderful counsellor.

Now, counsellor here, it doesn't mean therapist. Okay? That's often how we use the word counsellor, isn't it? No. Counsellor means someone with wisdom.

So, we take counsel from someone when we need wisdom from them, don't we? So, if you want your car fixed, you need wisdom, counsel from someone who knows how to fix them.

You take counsel from John Silver. He's not here tonight. But, when he's better, take counsel from John Silver. Or, if you're struggling in your family, you may take counsel from an older couple because they know how to help.

They have the wisdom. A counsellor is someone with wisdom to deal with this fallen world. And, wonderful, it doesn't just mean really nice.

[17:48] So, we might say, oh, I had a wonderful time at lunch. Meaning, I had a really nice time at lunch. No, no. It doesn't mean that. Wonderful, it means what it says. It means full of wonders.

And, who does wonders in the Bible? Well, God does wonders. Think of the Exodus. All those plagues and miracles were God's signs and wonders.

And so, who is Jesus? He is the one who has the miraculous, wondrous wisdom of God. He is the one full of divine wisdom.

in that manger is the one who not only has the right to rule this world, but he also knows how to do it.

He has the wisdom, the counsel, to fix the darkness in this world. He is the wonderful counsellor.

And, look at his other name.

[18:52] Mighty God. this king has the power and might of God himself. That little boy can carry the government on his shoulder because he was carrying the galaxies before he was even born.

And he's called Everlasting Father. Now, this isn't getting the persons of the Trinity confused, okay?

So you might read this and wonder, hold on, I thought Jesus was the Son of God, not the Father.

Hold on, how can he be called this? And if you're in my Sunday school, I hope your Trinity senses are tingling right now. I hope you've been listening. Well, this isn't calling the Son the Father.

This isn't mixing up the first and second person of the Trinity. No. He is called Father because fathers care for and love their family.

And as mighty God, Jesus has been caring for and loving his people, his church. As a father loves his family with an everlasting divine love.

[20:06] Everlasting Father means this baby is the everlasting God who loves his people. And finally, he's the Prince of Peace.

with the government on his shoulders, he's a prince. And a prince who brings not war, not strife, not burdens, but peace.

So this child, what do these names say about him? He's a child full of divine wisdom, full of divine power, full of divine love and divine peace.

all this is to say that this child is, without any doubt, this child is God himself. Not merely a prophet, not merely just a holy person, but the eternal, mighty God taking on a human nature.

And being born a child held in the arms of his mother. so that when she places him in that manger, that that child we see in that manger, we must bow to him as king, and bow to him as God.

[21:19] There is a divine king in that manger. And this, this is how one child can bring so much light into such darkness in our lives.

this darkness we're in, this is a complicated, relentless enemy around us. Suffering. We try to avoid it every day, but it always finds us.

The sadness of our lives, we try to drown out with any substance, any distraction we can find. We keep voting in new parties, write new policies, thinking that this will finally deal with the dark side of this world.

But it's always lurking. And we go to the council of doctors, and they can slow death, they can sometimes delay it, but eventually it always knocks on our door.

This darkness is too big, too complicated for any creature, any human king to solve. So what do we need? divine wisdom to know how to bring light and get rid of this darkness.

[22:38] We need a wonderful counsellor. We need a mighty God strong enough to end death itself.

We need an everlasting father, a God who loves his people enough to do something about this. we need a prince to rule this chaos of darkness and bring peace, peace to the anguish of our lives, peace between sinners and God.

And that, that is exactly who this child is. Because this child, when he was older, he hung on a cross and he offered his frail and vulnerable flesh, shed his royal blood, all to bring peace to his people. And when he was on that cross, darkness hung over the land because the darkness of the world was falling on him, bearing the sins of his people. and it fell on him so that he could bring light to everywhere else.

And because he is mighty God, death and darkness could not win. The divine king was raised to new life. And it's through this sacrifice, this is how the divine king is bringing in his kingdom.

[24:05] As you trust this son, trust in his death, this is how the darkness is destroyed. That is how the light comes into your life. With the government on his shoulder, he can command your darkness to disappear.

So let me ask you today, are you trusting in this king? Do you realise he is a king to bow to? Do you realise he is your God to bow to? Well he invites you today, come to this son, trust in him and he is able to bring light into your darkness.

The guilt of your sin will be no more dispelled. The hopelessness that we have in this world, it gets transformed because you will belong to a kingdom without end.

And you will have a certainty that after death you will never be cast into darkness. You will only enter into the light of everlasting life.

So please do not miss who the child is in that manger. Don't miss this divine king. But we can't ignore the fact that there is still so much darkness in our lives.

[25:29] even for those of us who are trusting in this divine king, we can so easily wonder if he is so wonderful, so mighty, so loving, if there's meant to be peace in my life, why do I still feel the depth of this darkness?

Well, the first thing we can't forget is just because we still feel the darkness, that doesn't mean there is no light at all. Christ has shone into the darkness of your sin, you do belong to this kingdom, you are under his everlasting love and care right now.

And so you can know that there is a sure end to your darkness. When Christ returns, the light will come back to earth and get rid of this darkness entirely.

And if we still feel this darkness, and we all do, this is what we need to do now, we need to wait, patiently wait.

This Advent, as we remember the wait for Christ's first coming, we must use this time to remember to wait for his second coming.

[26:47] This isn't the end that we're at. The darkness is going to disappear, and Jesus hasn't forgotten you. The divine king will come back for you, the light will return and end this darkness, and so for now, we need to wait.

But we can wait with certain hope, because we know that day is coming. We know it will be a day of joy, because the light has already come.

The divine king has already been in that manger, he's already hung on that cross, that light has already shone in the darkness. So let's keep waiting.

Wait for your wonderful counsellor, your mighty God, your everlasting father, your prince of peace.

The darkness is almost over.

The light will return. Let's pray.