

Christ Was The Unexpected Gift

This week I was watching a video titled “Christmas Man on the Street.” Now I do not know if you are familiar with what “man on the street” videos are all about. Essentially someone goes out on the street or into a shopping mall and moves from person to person, asking a question. The question is invariably the same question. They want to discover how different people will respond to the same question. The video that I was watching was about the question, “What is the best thing about Christmas?” The answers varied, as you would expect. One person said the best thing about Christmas is seeing your family. Someone else said it was being home with family. Another person said the best thing about Christmas was family and friends. Someone else responded with “Not gifts, but family and friends,” and, “Oh, Jesus too.” Those were some responses. It is interesting that Jesus was an afterthought. Another person said, “I do not know what is the best thing about Christmas.” Another person said going to church with family, a Christmas tree, food, shopping. Another person said, “I do not celebrate Christmas.” Another person said, “I am a Scrooge, I hate Christmas.” I was very surprised at that.



Christ The Unexpected Gift

Another person said that it is the best time of the year. Only one person considered the best thing about Christmas to be Jesus’ birth. Yet in reality, Christmas is much more than just a child being born in Bethlehem in 2 to 1 B.C.

Poets have written wonderful words about Jesus. Songs have been written, and words penned that praise Him. We have sung some of them—songs of praise to Jesus Christ. Why? Because Christmas is more than just about a child. It is about an unusual child, a rare child. Isaiah 9:1-7 tells us that there is no one like Him. So I invite you to turn to Isaiah 9, and discover what the prophet said about this child.

The outline of our message has three parts: verses 1-2 are about the first advent or coming of Christ. I also call it “The Great Light,” as you will see. Verses 3-5 are about the second advent, and I title that “The Great Joy.” Verses 6-7 are the reason the child came, and I also title that “The Unexpected Messiah.”

THE GREAT

LIGHT. As an introduction to our passage, I would like to comment that Isaiah 9 is a continuation of a prophecy that begins in chapter 7. Chapters 7 and 8 are a prophecy about the Assyrian invasion into the northern kingdom of Israel.

That occurred roughly in 722 B.C. At the end of chapter 8, Isaiah foretells that the people would be involved in the occult. What we are going to discover is that it is not a surprise that they were. The prophet goes on to indicate that Israel would be in very great darkness. So when we come to verse 1 of chapter 9, we read about a prophecy that is continuing, and here is what verse 1 says:

But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. Isaiah 9:1 (NASB)

The passage refers to Zebulun and Naphtali. The question that some might have is where is the land of Zebulun, and where is the land of Naphtali? It is important to understand where they are in order to understand what is being said in verses 1 and 2. If you recall, the nation of Israel was a single nation during the reigns of King Saul, King David, and King Solomon. After Solomon sinned, 1 Kings 11 reveals that God told Solomon his kingdom would be divided. It was divided between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam became the king of the north, and Jeroboam the king of the south. The two tribes that were in the southern kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah, were Judah and Benjamin. There were ten tribes in the north, and Zebulun and Naphtali were part of the northern kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel.

Now the question is, where were they located? A map reveals that Galilee was partitioned into the Upper Galilee and the Lower Galilee. The land of Naphtali and the land of Zebulun were in Upper Galilee.

Verse 1 says,

. . . by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles . . . Isaiah 9:1b (NASB)

The Galilee of the Gentiles is Upper Galilee. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali were in that region. It is important to note that Jesus spent much of His ministry in the land of Galilee.

Isaiah 9:2 adds this information,

**The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.
Isaiah 9:2 (NASB)**

Who were the people who were walking in darkness, and what is The Great Light? The answer is given in Matthew 4:12-13,

Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. Matthew 4:12-13 (NASB)

So we are told that Jesus settled in Capernaum, which is by the Sea of Galilee in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. Capernaum was Jesus' ministry headquarters. Capernaum was a city located on the northwest corner shore of the Sea of Galilee. Notice the prophecy said, "which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali."

In verse 14 we are told,

**This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:
"THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF
NAPHTALI,
BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN,
GALILEE OF THE GENTILES —
THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS
SAW A GREAT LIGHT,
AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND
AND SHADOW OF DEATH,
UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED."
Matthew 4:14-16 (NASB)**

Here Matthew quotes the prophet in Isaiah 9:1, "The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, by way of the sea." The prophecy says people were sitting in darkness and then they saw a Great Light. Matthew 4:12-13 helps us under-

stand that Isaiah 9:1-2 described Jesus' first coming, His first advent.

Jesus was the Great Light because during Jesus' ministry He healed, performed signs and wonders, and cast out demons. Some of the most significant demon possessions that Jesus dealt with were in the lands of Naphtali and Zebulon. They were truly dark lands.

This reminds me of John 1:4-5 which says,

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. John 1:4-5 (NASB)

This is a tremendous statement about Jesus Christ. Jesus was the Light. When Matthew quotes Isaiah 9:2 and applies it to the Messiah, he confirms that Isaiah 9:1-2 is about the first coming or the first advent of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE GREAT JOY. Then Isaiah 9:3 introduces us to the second advent of Christ.

You shall multiply the nation,
You shall increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Your presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
Isaiah 9:3 (NASB)

Back in Jesus' days, a harvest was a time of rejoicing. Why? Food was plentiful! It was a great time to rejoice, "as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." If a nation is victorious in battle, what would the winning nation do? They would divide the spoil. It was a time of rejoicing. Verse 3 describes the blessing that Israel will experience under the Messiah.

Millennial Kingdom Established. Verse 4 is about the victorious Messiah,

For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.
Isaiah 9:4 (NASB)

Now there were two different battles at Midian—one that is recorded in the book of Numbers, and another recorded in the book of Joshua. Israel was victorious both times over Midian. Verse 4 foretells that the Messiah would break the yoke that is placed on Israel by other nations of the world. The Messiah would free them from bondage.

Verse 5 adds,

For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.
Isaiah 9:5 (NASB)

This verse describes a future victory, a victory that has not happened yet. When Jesus Christ came the first time, this did not happen. Israel was oppressed by the Roman Empire during Jesus' life. But Jesus did not break that yoke. So verse 5 is about something that has not yet occurred. If verses 1 and 2 are true—and Matthew proves that their prophecy was fulfilled—then verses 3, 4, and 5 will occur. If Scripture is accurate and does not make mistakes, and the prophecy of verses 1 and 2 has already come true, then we can believe the events in verses 3-5 will occur. They are describing the second coming of Christ. We have seen that verses 1-5 are describing the first and second comings or advents of Christ.

THE UNEXPECTED MESSIAH. Verse 6 is about the Messiah. It describes the reason the second coming of Christ will occur. The verse 6 says,

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us . . .
Isaiah 9:6a (NASB)

I want you to notice quickly that the word "us" is not referring to us today. The word "us" refers to the Jews. Isaiah, the prophet, was Jewish and his ministry during his lifetime was to the Jews. He writes "for a child will be born to ..." who? "Us." The prophecy says the child would be Jewish. That is reinforced in the next line when it says, "and a Son will be given to us."

Son Will Be Given. The actual Hebrew word for "son" means "descendant." He is a descendant of the Jews. This is

a Jewish Messiah. Does that mean we are left out? No! We are beneficiaries. Believing Gentiles will be saved and will be able to enjoy the Messiah's kingdom too. Next, we are told,

And the government will rest on His shoulders . . . Isaiah 9:6b (NASB)

Government Will Rest On His Shoulders. The statement "the government will rest on His shoulders" is a reminder that the kings in those days, wore a royal robe. The royal robe was a symbol of his right to rule. The Messiah will control the millennial kingdom.

For a Child Will Be Born. We already know who the child is from Isaiah 7:14. There it was prophesied the child would be virgin born. We know that the virgin-born Son was and is Jesus Christ. We already know that Isaiah 9:1 and 2 are about Jesus; Isaiah 9:3-5 are about Jesus at His second coming. All that we are told here in verse 6 is the reason the Son was born. "For" introduces the "because." In other words, the reason that the events in 1-5 are going to occur is because a "child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us."

That is great news! Yes, but there is even more good news coming. Watch verse 9 again. It gives us four names of the Messiah. Those names describe who He is.

**And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6c (NASB)**

Mighty God. I want to take the names in order of priority. Therefore, I will start with Mighty God. In the Gospels we are told that Jesus did many miracles. He healed the blind, the deaf, and people who could not speak. I used to stutter when I was a child. I remember when I was in elementary school, the teachers worked with me to help me not stutter. I used to stutter a lot. Jesus healed people like me. Jesus performed signs, wonders, and miracles, He calmed the sea, He created wine out of water. He created food and fed four thousand men on one occasion, and five thousand men on another occasion. Jesus did some incredible feats that only

God could do. He forgave sins. He did unbelievable things. Some ancient writers, both Christian and non-Christian, have confirmed the biblical accounts of the miracles Jesus did.

In John 5:17 we find that early in Jesus' ministry, as He was interacting with the religious leaders, He told them this,

But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." John 5:17 (NASB)

When we come to verse 18, we find a stunning statement.

For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. John 5:18 (NASB)

Do you know what Jesus was saying? He said He was like God the Father. In John 8:57 we read,

So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" John 8:57 (NASB)

In verse 56 we are told that Jesus had said that Abraham had seen Him. This verse reveals the Jewish leaders were surprised. Then Jesus replied,

Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am. John 8:58 (NASB)

Jesus uses the same statement that Jehovah used in Exodus 3:14 in His conversation with Moses. There Jehovah God said,

I AM that I AM. Exodus 3:14 (NASB)

The point is that Jesus said He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The word, I AM, is in the present tense. That means that God is always existing, continues to exist, and will always exist. It is as though He said in effect, "I AM-ing." Therefore, Jesus declared that "I AM Jehovah. I

AM God.”

In John 10:33, we are told some religious leaders finally understood that Jesus was deity. The Jews had been rejecting Him, but in verse 33 the Jews reveal that they finally understood Him.

The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.” John 10:33 (NASB)

The religious leaders understood what He was claiming. I find it amazing that there are those today who say Jesus never claimed that He was God. That reveals they are not reading their Bibles! Jesus did claim that He was God. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day understood that He was claiming to be God. They did not like the message. They did not like the message because they disagreed, but that does not mean that Jesus did not declare that He was God. Verse 33 proves it, “That you are just a man, but you make yourself out to be God.” They understood the message. Many people today also do not like the message.

In Malachi 3, the prophet Malachi makes the following statement:

Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple . . . Malachi 3:1a (NASB)

Now notice the first part of the verse. God says, “Behold, I am going to send My messenger . . .” You may ask, “Who is the messenger?” Mark 1:1-3 indicates that the messenger refers to John the Baptist. So Mark, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes that this passage refers to John the Baptist.

Now notice that Malachi 3:1 says of John the Baptist,

... will clear the way before Me. Malachi 3:1b (NASB)

John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah, and he cleared the way. For whom did he clear the way? The gospels tell us that John the Baptist cleared the way for Jesus

Christ. That is, Mark 1:1-3 tells us that the Me in Malachi 3:1 refers to Jesus. Therefore, John the Baptist cleared the way for Jesus.

Next notice that Malachi 1:1 says, “he will clear the way before Me” and notice that Jehovah God is talking. God says, “I am going to send My messenger, and he is going to clear the way before Me.” This means the Me refers to God. That is, in Malachi 3:1 God refers to Himself as “Me,” but in Mark 1:1-3 we discover “Me” is Jesus Christ. What a tremendous statement about the deity of Jesus Christ. Repeatedly, Jesus said that He was God and Malachi 3:1 says, “Yes, He was and is!” Now notice the rest of Malachi 3:1,

...and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple . . . Malachi 3:1 (NASB)

In addition, we know that Jesus came to the temple at both the beginning and at the end of His ministry. He came at two different times. So Malachi 1 tells us that Jesus was and is God. He is the Mighty God. So a child will be born to us, and His name will be called Mighty God. He is Jesus Christ.

Eternal Father. The second title that I want to talk about is the Eternal Father. In John 10:30, Jesus makes a tremendous statement with which some people struggle. Jesus said,

I and the Father are one. John 10:30 (NASB)

The Greek word for “one” is *ev*. This is an amazing statement. Normally you would expect the word “one” would be in the masculine gender. In other words, it would refer to the Father, and to Christ Himself. But we have a surprise in the Greek. Rather than being of the masculine gender, *ev* is in the neuter gender. This implies that they are of the same substance. Jesus is God, and the Father is God. They are of the same essence or same substance. Whatever the substance is, they are of the same substance. Do you know what that means? Jesus is every bit God as God the Father is God. There is God the Father, there is God the Son, and there is God the Holy Spirit. Jesus refers to the mystery of

the Trinity.

Wonderful Counselor. The third name is that the Child is the Wonderful Counselor. This is tremendous news. I do not know if you have ever gone to a counselor. It is common for counselors to sometimes have difficulty working with a counselee. One of the major problems that counselors have is that counselees are not always sure that they are even telling the truth when they try to answer the counselor's questions. Sometimes they do not remember something. Sometimes the counselee will lie and frustrate the counselor. Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that the heart is deceitfully wicked,

**The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?
Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB)**

Can you imagine how difficult it is for a counselor to help someone, when the person being helped cannot accurately understand their own heart? Human counselors do not always know the correct answer. But that is not true for Jesus Christ. Why? Because He knows our hearts. He knows exactly how to help us.

I am reminded of the television series "Father Knows Best." The title of the series is wrong. Father does not know best all the time, but I do know One who knows best. He is Jesus Christ. Jesus always knows what is best. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor.

There is a problem that human counselors encounter. They are not available at all hours of the day. But Jesus is available at all hours of the day? Think about Hebrews 4:16. It says,

**Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of
grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in
time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (NASB)**

Do you know what this tells us? Jesus will help us at the right time. We can go to Him at any time. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor. We do not always think about Jesus as being a counselor, but He is! All too often we go running to

other people. Instead, we call someone else. Jesus wants to be your Wonderful Counselor. He is the best counselor there is. There is no greater counselor than Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only "Wonderful Counselor."

The Prince of Peace. The fourth name of the child is the Prince of Peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace in two ways. The first is echoed in verse 7. Let us read Isaiah 9:7 which says,

**There will be no end to the increase of His government or of
peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.
Isaiah 9:7 (NASB)**

Do you know how Jesus is the Prince of Peace? He is a Prince of Peace in two ways. The first way is that He is the Prince of Peace as a king, because someday He is going to establish peace here on the earth during the millennial kingdom. The kingdom will last for a thousand years. Then it will continue on into eternity. Jesus is the Prince of Peace because He will establish real peace during His earthly reign.

Jesus is also a Prince of Peace in another way. He is the Prince of Peace as our Savior. Ephesians 2:17 says that,

**HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE . . . Ephesians 2:17
(NASB)**

Now think about that. Jesus did not just come preaching that the kingdom of heaven is at hand—He came preaching the gospel of peace. Acts 10:36 says,

. . . peace through Jesus Christ . . . Acts 10:36 (NASB)

In Ephesians 2:14, we are told that Jesus is our peace. Peace comes through Him. Jesus is our spiritual peace. Romans 5:1 tells us how to have that peace.

**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with
God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 5:1 (NASB)**

This tells us that we can have peace with God. This is not talking about peace in Israel, or peace in the Middle East, or peace around the world. It is talking about spiritual peace with God. Notice how we get that peace. It says,

Therefore, having been justified by faith . . .

The peace comes by faith. Faith in Jesus Christ brings peace with God. But what does that mean? It means we believe that Jesus is our God, that He died for our sins and was resurrected the third day. It means we believe that we are a sinner. We must believe that we need our sins to be forgiven; even more, we are willing to repent of our sins. John 1:12 tells us,

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God . . . John 1:12 (NASB)

Then in John 14:27 Jesus tells us,

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you . . . John 14:27 (NASB)

The peace that Jesus gives is spiritual peace. Jesus is our peace.

CONCLUSION. What is the best thing about Christmas? The best thing about Christmas is the unexpected gift. The unexpected gift is that Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor Who is always available, Who is all wise, Who is helpful, and He knows us inside and out.

He is our Mighty God who can do all things. He never leaves us. He is the Eternal Father, and that means that the Godhead is not divided, but is one in purpose. They have a loving, gracious goal, merciful goal, and that is to help us, and to minister to us.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He is the one who gives us spiritual peace, and someday there will be peace here on earth, and we will have peace in heaven with our God.

The Christmas story is about the Child who is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor, our Mighty God, Eternal Father, and the Prince of Peace.