

A Child is Born

This week our Scrolls take us into the meaning of Christmas, as revealed through Isaiah the prophet of God. Perhaps no prophet provides us with more riches about the coming Savior than Isaiah. His words are familiar, but what do they mean. Read on....

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. ^{9:3} You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest,... ^{9:4} 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. ^{9:5} Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. ^{9:6} 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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ^{9:7} 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.
Isaiah 9:2-7

Monday – Seeing the Great Light (Isaiah 9:2)

“Break forth, O living light of God, / Upon the world's dark hour! / Show us the way the Master trod; / Reveal his saving power.” Break Forth, O Living Light of God (Hymn)

1. As you read the gospel accounts of Jesus' birth, think about the characteristics of light. What is the function of the star in Matthew 2:2-10? How does this event fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 60:1-6?
2. Read Luke 1:77-79, 2:8-11. How would you explain the symbolic meanings of “darkness” and “light?” Later in his gospel, Luke again contrasts darkness and morning (Luke 23:44-45 & 24:1-6). What message is conveyed from these passages?

Digging Deeper - Read John 8:12 and 12:46. How does John use the term “light” in his gospel? How do these verses illuminate Psalm 27:1?

Tuesday – Joy to the World (Isaiah 9:3)

“Joy to the world! / The Lord is come: / Let earth receive her king; / Let every heart prepare Him room, / And heaven and nature sing,... Joy to the world! The Savior reigns...” Joy to the World

1. Read Isaiah 9:2-7 (focusing on verse 3). What is it about Jesus' birth that brings about great joy?
2. According to John 15:9-11, what joy did Jesus come to share with his followers?

Wednesday – Breaking the Oppressor's Rod (Isaiah 9:4)

“Come, Thou long expected Jesus, / Born to set thy people free; / From our fears and sins release us; / Let us find our rest in Thee.” Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

1. According to Mary and Zechariah (Luke 1:51-55; 1:68-79), what political implications will the Messiah's coming have for Israel? How does Luke broaden the meaning of salvation (Luke 1:77, 2:30-32, 19:10, & 24:45-47)?
2. Read Luke 4:16-21 and 11:20-22. In what specific ways will the Messiah break the oppressor's rod? How does Jesus' life, death, and resurrection accomplish this?

Thursday – His Name (Isaiah 9:6)

“Christ, by highest heaven adored, / Christ the everlasting Lord; / Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, / Hail the incarnate Deity! / Pleased as Man with man to dwell; / Jesus, our Immanuel.” Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

1. Isaiah 9:6 states that the Messiah will be a “wonderful counselor” (i.e., exert divine wisdom) and “mighty God.” How does Jesus exemplify these qualities (1 Cor. 1:18-30; Col. 1:15-20; & Heb. 1:2-4)?
2. Read Matthew 1:21-23. What do the names “Jesus” and “Immanuel” reveal about Christ's character and his mission?

Friday – A Child...The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7)

“O come, Desire of nations, bind / all peoples in one heart and mind; / Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease, / Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.” O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1. What can we learn from the Son of God's willingness to become a helpless infant in a lowly manger (Phil. 2:1-12 & 2 Cor. 8:7-9)?
2. In what ways does Jesus encourage us to be like children (Matthew. 18:3-5)?
3. According to Isaiah 11:1-10, what kind of peace will the Messiah bring?

Making it Personal - Jesus valued and loved children deeply. In what ways can you support a child or children during this Christmas season?

Weekend – Everlasting King, Everlasting Kingdom (Isaiah 9:7)

“The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger, / In all our trials born to be our friend. / He knows our need, He guardeth us from danger, / Behold your King, before Him lowly bend.” O Holy Night

1. Read 2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:35-37; Luke 1:32 and 2:4. What is intended in the reference to Jesus as the “Son of David?”

Text Insight—Luke 2: Around the time of Jesus' birth, Augustus Caesar was at the height of his powers. Inscriptions praising Augustus included: “son of a god,... and savior of the whole world” and “The birthday of the god [Augustus Caesar] has marked the beginning of the good news for the world.” Luke surpasses these claims by declaring that Jesus, not Caesar, is the ultimate *Son of God* (1:35), *Savior*, and bringer of *good news* and *peace* (2:10-14).

2. What good news about God's Kingdom is conveyed in Matthew 16:18 and Revelation 22:1-5?