

Introduction: Next Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent and is also the first Sunday of a new Church year. For hundreds of years Advent (coming) has been a time of preparation for and looking forward in anticipation of the second coming of The Savior King when He will make everything right. While God's people do this, they also look back in gratitude for His first coming when He gave Himself to save people from sin AND to commission us to complete His Mission on earth of reconciliation, redemption and renewal of life. *** In many churches this last Sunday of the Church year is Christ THE King Sunday. It is a time of praise and thanksgiving to the 'King of kings' who has begun His Kingdom on earth; and also, for His Church to offer itself to Him in order to do His will on earth. *** My Christian ethics professor taught us that all of the Christian Life is summed up in two words: Grace – gratitude. *** First, there is Christ's gracious gift of being born a human in Bethlehem. Then, there is His gracious life of ministry, beginning at age thirty, when He showed and told people about God through miracles and teaching. Finally, His greatest act of LOVE is when He, The Son of Man, became the perfect sacrifice for the sins of humanity. Moreover, He has given the gift of New Life IN Him through His Resurrection Life AND He has also sent, with His Father, The Holy Spirit into His disciples after He ascended to The Throne of His Father. *** The only fitting response of those who have received His gracious gifts of forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption is a life of continuous thanksgiving lived by expressing gratitude in every word and deed. **God's Messiah inspires grateful thanksgiving** *** Now, let's look at the prophecy given through Isaiah and the words of The Lord Jesus to see the gracious Gift God has given us SO we will live lives of thanksgiving in all we do and say.

I. The distressed Israelite tribes living in darkness have seen a great light and will rejoice because God has broken the burden on their shoulders. (Isaiah 9:1-5)

A. Distressed and afflicted Israelites, walking in darkness, living in the shadow of death, have seen God's glory and have joy before Him. (Verses 1-3)

1. Because no gloom to her distress as the former time (when) He brought the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali contempt. (Verses 1a-b)

Gloom and distress: The tribe of Naphtali (wrestling) lived west and north of the Sea of Galilee, with the tribe of Zebulun (exalted, Genesis 30:7-20) living near their southwest corner. After the ten tribes broke away from Judah and they fell into idolatry God was angry and sent many away captive to Assyria in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:7-23). The remnant at that time experienced darkness and constraint.

Contempt: All the tribes fell under God's contempt, especially those farthest from Jerusalem. But through Isaiah He said the distress resulting from His contempt and discipline would be no more.

2. And later He made glorious the way of the sea beyond the Jordan: Galilee of the nations. (Verse 1c)

Glorious: The northern land east of the Jordan River was part of David's kingdom. And God is saying to the returning remnant that His glory will once again fill that land.

Nations: But, The Lord implies His glory of will also rest on the people of nations that are not Israel.

3. The people walking in the darkness have seen a great light, those dwelling in the land of the shadow of death a light has shined on them. (Verse 2)

Light dispels darkness: People are walking in darkness are dwelling in living death; but The Covenant God of Israel says they have seen a great light that has shined on them. This speaks of a future day when The Light of Life will shine on all people (John 8:12).

4. Thou have multiplied the nation not Thou have caused joy: they rejoice before Thee as with joy in the harvest, as when men tremble with God's joy to divide plunder. (Verse 3)

Increase and not joy: This is written about the remnant returning from captivity. While more of God's people were in the land God spoke of to Abraham, their numbers were not great and the rebuilt Temple did not have the glory of Solomon's Temple (Ezra 3:10-13). So joy was mixed with weeping.

Joy in Presence: But, God declares that pure joy is always found in His Presence ('before Thee') regardless of circumstances.

B. (Joy) because God has broken the burden of the rod oppressing them, because every boot trampling them will be burned. (Verses 4-5)

1. Because the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder – the rod of the one oppressing him, Thou have scattered as on the day of Midian. (Verse 4)

Broken burden: Still looking to the future, Isaiah is shown a day when Israel's Covenant God will break all the burdens put on Israel.

Midian: Finally, He connects this future deliverance with the great past deliverance of His people from Midian by Gideon in the days of the judges. After Yahweh reduced Gideon's 'army' to three hundred men, He used Gideon and his men to rout an army of one hundred thirty five thousand Midianites – despite four hundred fifty to one odds (Judges 6-8)!

2. Because every boot of him treading in shaking and every garment being rolled in blood has been burned as fuel for fire. (Verse 5)

Enemies' boots burned: Metaphorically, Israel is being told that whatever the enemy soldiers planned to use to oppress God's people will be burned (by Him). God will ultimately give grace to His people.

II. A child has been born to us who has been given eternal kingship; The Savior emphatically said He is The Light of Life. (Isaiah 9:6-7; John 8:12)

A. The eternal King has been called Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace to establish justice and righteousness. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

1. Because a child to us has been born, a son has been given to us; and, it has been the government upon his shoulder. (Verses 6a-b)

Son: God's people declare that a son has been given to them. We now know this speaks of Savior Jesus as The Son of Man, God in human flesh – given to reconcile humanity to God.

King: And, this given son is also leader of all government – the King of everyone and everything.

2. And his name has been called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace. (Verses 6c-d)
Four-fold Name: This Son is the amazing one who is continually counseling God's people; and, He has all the might of God Himself; and, He is the eternal father (with whom He is one – John 10:27-30); and He is the prince of shalom – welfare, health, prosperity.

Gratitude inspiring: Let us express grateful thanksgiving to God for His gift of His Messiah (King) Son who gives us amazing guidance and advice for living, who is mighty to protect us in everything in our lives, who loves us with eternal strong father love, and who blesses us with His multi-faceted peace.

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3. To the increase of government and to peace (is) no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom: to establish it, to uphold it in justice and in righteousness from now and until eternity. (Verses 7a-d)

Kingdom of justice and righteousness: God will establish through His Davidic Messiah a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Last week we heard God speak through His prophet Amos that these same two qualities would roll down like a stream ever-flowing (Amos 5:24). Let us gratefully thank God for the joy of being in His Kingdom of justice and righteousness IN Messiah Jesus through His LOVE.

4. The zeal of 'Yahweh of the armies' will do this. (Verse 7e)

God's gracious gift: God is zealous for His people with grace and LOVE. His gracious gifts to His people, through the faith of The Messiah, should inspire in us continual gratitude and thanksgiving.

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B. The Savior spoke again saying, the one following Me may no way walk in darkness, but will have The Light of Life. (John 8:12)

1. Then again, Jesus spoke to them saying emphatically I AM The Light of the world. (Verses 12a-b)

Savior=Light: Jesus' Name means Savior. He is saying with all the authority of God that His eternal essence is Light throughout the cosmos He created (with His Father and The Holy Spirit).

2. The one following Me, in no way may he walk in the darkness, but he will have The Light of Life. (Verses 12c-d)

Follower not in darkness: Jesus uses the strongest expression in human language to say that whoever is following Him may never walk in darkness.

Light and Life: Instead, followers of Jesus will have His Light of Life. There is a Christmas carol with these words: Light and Life to all He brings. Let us give thanks that Messiah (King) Jesus delivers from the darkness of the shadow of death into His Light and Life.

Light and life are in King Jesus

Bottom Line: Through faith in the birth, death and resurrection of The Savior-Messiah-King Jesus on our behalf we can enjoy His amazing counsel, powerful strength, perfect father's love and peace given from His princely position. How can we not thank Him for His gracious gift? The returning remnant of Israel could not rejoice because they were not given all the glory of their past. But, they were promised a future glory. Even now, as we wait for, and work towards, the second coming of Jesus in our troubled times, let us be moved to grateful thanksgiving over what He has already done for us, is doing for us now, and has promised to do for us at His return.

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Conclusion: Distressed Israel, living in darkness, has seen a great light and will rejoice because God has broken their burden. They say a son has been given to them, he has been given eternal kingship, and he is The Wonderful Prince of peace.

Years later, Jesus, The Messiah Savior inspires grateful thanksgiving when He emphatically says to His followers that He is The Light of Life.

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