

Isaiah Chapter 7 the Wonderful Name

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon highlights the significance of Jesus Christ as the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, and how He brings light and hope to a dark world.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6

Topics: "Light in Darkness", "The Nature of Christ"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the contrast between darkness and dawn in Isaiah Chapter 7, illustrating how the coming of Christ, referred to as the Wonderful Counselor, brings light to a world shrouded in gloom. He highlights the significance of Jesus' birth, portraying Him as the King who will govern with justice and peace, transforming despair into hope. Simpson calls attention to the supernatural nature of Christ's works and the importance of recognizing Him as the source of wisdom and strength in our lives. He encourages believers to embrace the light of Christ, which dispels darkness and offers eternal peace. Ultimately, the sermon invites listeners to surrender their lives to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who promises rest and guidance.

Transcript

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Is. 9: 6, 7).

We have in this chapter a picture of darkness and dawn, and out of the dawn the rising of the Sun of righteousness.

I. The darkness.

The fifth and eighth chapters both close with a vision of gloom. The ninth chapter takes it up with special reference to "the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, Galilee of the Gentiles, and refers especially to the afflictions of this region in contrast with the great light that afterwards rose upon it. The translation in the first verse of the ninth chapter is quite unsatisfactory. The Revised Version is much better. "But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath He made it glorious by the way of the sea beyond

Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death upon them hath the light shined." (Is. 9: 1, 2.)

The Gospel of Matthew refers especially to this prediction (Matt. 4: 13-16), in explanation of the fact that the Lord Jesus began His ministry in this region which had formerly been the most blighted section of all the land. The reason why this region was so severely afflicted was because of its nearness to the Syrian and Assyrian conquerors who swept over the land in their periodical invasions, and always struck this section first, and then, when returning, carried with them its captured population in their cruel and victorious train.

After the fall of Samaria and the subjugation of the northern kingdom, this whole country was settled with immigrants from Assyria, and these colonists gradually became mixed with the former inhabitants, so that the moral and spiritual condition of the land sank lower than its external state.

But the darkness of Galilee was but a sample of the deep gloom that rests upon every section of the world where the light of Christ's Gospel has not come. That pall of darkness rests today on every heathen nation. How dark are their conceptions of our God and Father! How false are their ideals of righteousness and holiness! How hopeless and comfortless is their sorrow and how black the despair that rests upon the vision of the future! The old Saxon sage expressed it well. One night as they sat in the banqueting hall, and a little bird came fluttering in from the darkness, and flew for a little through the lighted chamber passing out at the other end into the darkness again, the old sage turned to the company, that was even then discussing whether to receive the Christian missionaries into their land or not, and said, "Our life is like this picture that we have just seen. We come out of the darkness into existence, and flutter a little in the light of life, and then we pass out of the light into the same darkness again. We know not whence we come or whither we go; surely we need some one to bring us the light." So dark, so desolate is this sad world without the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Just as the night lamp seems to make the midnight darker beyond its radiance, so the gladness of our Christmas days and our gospel privileges only seem to bring into more vivid relief the fearful gloom of a Christless world. How sad to think that still two-thirds of its vast population are sunk in just such darkness while we are rejoicing in the light of Bethlehem, Calvary, and the blessed hope of His coming again.

II. The dawn.

"The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light. They that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined." "You have multiplied the nation, You have increased their joy; they joy before You according to the joy in harvest as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." (Is. 9: 2, 3.)

The coming of Jesus Christ has indeed brought a great light into this dark world. When He taught us to say "Our Father who art in heaven," the whole heaven became illumined with the vision of a God of Love, and all the mummeries of idolatry, like the shadows of the night, shrank away before the rising dawn. The world's best wisdom has no such conception of God. In all the writings of the sages, in all the libraries of the world, there is nothing to compare with the parable of the prodigal son and the good shepherd, or with these three promises from the lips of Jesus, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "He that hears My Word and believes on Him that sent Me has everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there you may be also."

The best light that Jesus gives, however, is what He calls "the light of life," the light that shows us how to walk and gives us strength so to walk. "I am the light of the world." "He that believes Me shall not abide in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

And, oh, the glorious light that He has shed beyond the grave, for "Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

Ancient superstition hung up little lamps in the tombs of the dead, but their faint glimmer only deepened the gloom of Christless despair. The resurrection of Christ has dispelled the darkness of the grave and made the future of every child of God as bright as heaven. In that blessed light we have learned to dry our tears of mourning and to go forth ourselves into the seeming gloom with a shout of victory.

"Oh, grave, where is your victory? Oh, death, where is your sting? Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The paragraph that follows is a fine picture of the new order of things which the Savior is to introduce. Reading again from the Revised Version we quote, "For the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor You have broken as in the day of Midian; for all the armor of the armed man in the tumult and the garments rolled in blood shall forever be for burning, for fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder," etc. (Is. 9: 4-7). The idea is that the coming of this King is to change the old order of the world. The weapons of war shall be burned to ashes, the din of strife shall pass away in the sweet music of the gospel, and the Prince of Peace shall begin His everlasting reign. Instead of the battle with confused noise and garments rolled in blood is to be the birth of the heavenly Babe and the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. A new order of forces is to be established upon the earth, and a King of meekness shall supersede the tyrants of bloody oppression and brutal war.

The very center of the light, He is to dawn upon this dark world as the Sun of Righteousness Himself, the blessed Christ who forms the center of the prophet's vision and whose birth ushers in a new day in the annals of time.

III. The Sun of Righteousness.

1. The Child. The birth of a child was a very significant thing for every Jewish mother and every Hebrew household. From that early hour when Eve forgot her maternal anguish in the joy of her first-born's smile, and cried out, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," the highest hope of every Hebrew woman was to be the mother of the Messiah. This deep national instinct could well understand the exulting cry of the prophet, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." It was true to nature as well as redemption, and it carried in its bosom a deeper and larger truth than even their Messianic hopes could comprehend, for that Holy Child has lifted every other child into new dignity and importance, and forever has made the child-spirit the true type of the heavenly character.

The childhood of Jesus Christ was one of the most charming and attractive features in all His humiliation. Adam, the first of men, stepped upon the threshold a full-grown man, but Adam fell, and dragged the race down with him to ruin and sorrow. Jesus Christ came along the feeble steps of infancy and traversed every stage of the pilgrimage of man from the cradle to the grave; and Jesus has not failed. So dear to Him and to the thought of God is this feature of His character that even amid the exaltation of His heavenly throne, He is still worshiped as "thy Holy Child Jesus." There is something in Him which is as simple as

childhood, and He Himself has said, "Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him that sent Me." In some mysterious sense a little child is the truest image both of the Father and the Son.

2. The King. For this Child is born to be a king. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." This means not only the government of the universe but the government of our lives. He is the true Sovereign, and the only One that can ever rule this world so as to realize for it its true ideal of blessing. Man has tried the government of monarchies and they have all failed. He is again trying the government of democracies, and they will also fail. The last vision in the Apocalypse is a lot of commonwealths without crowns, and they are all arrayed against the Lord. No, republicanism is not going to do it any more than despotism. The true King is God's Holy Child Jesus, of whom the older prophet had already sung, "He shall judge the people with righteousness and the poor with judgment. In His days shall the righteous flourish and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him." Dear reader, is He your King? Have you committed the government of your life to His hands and crowned Him "Lord of all"?

3. The Wonderful. "His name shall be called Wonderful." The Hebrew word literally means "a miracle." The idea underlying the verse is the supernatural. His birth was supernatural, but all His works and ways are to be supernatural, too. He has projected into human history a higher plane, and under His administration we are to expect not the ordinary laws of cause and effect, but the transcendent working of an Almighty hand, superior to all methods and means and prepared to interpose the supernatural wherever it is needed for the accomplishment of the great purposes of His redemption. What an inspiring thought this is! We so easily fall into the old ruts and get accustomed to the trend of things that we forget that the very idea of Christianity is something above the common, beyond the natural order of things, and involving the wonderful working of our God.

Dear friend, is this Wonderful One in your life? Have you anything supernatural in your religion? Is your salvation a new creation and a miracle of grace? Is your spiritual life superhuman and divine? Has He touched your body with His miraculous power? Have you looked to Him to answer your prayers, to overcome your difficulties and to use your ministries by His wonderful providence and His almighty Spirit, so that your life will be a supernatural witness to that supernatural Book which the devil is trying today to reduce to a mere collection of human documents and ancient literature? The very point of the conflict that is going on today touches this question. Satan, with the help of modern scholarship, is trying to eliminate the supernatural from the Bible, from the story of Jesus of Nazareth and from the church of God. Our young people are being educated in the schools today to apply the doctrine of evolution to everything and to discard the miraculous story of creation and all that is accessory to it. Oh, that we might rise to the issue, and by a supernatural faith and a supernatural life might prove to the world that this Book is indeed supernatural and divine, and that His name is truly Wonderful!

4. The Counselor. The greatest of Israel's kings, was greatest in his wisdom, but "a greater than Solomon" is here. The royal Babe of Bethlehem is the wisdom of God. Nothing is more wonderful in the life of our Lord than the quiet, instinctive wisdom with which He met every situation and every difficulty. No victory was more impressive than that last day in the temple court, when the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and others came to Him in succession, determined to confuse Him with their fractious questioning, and with calm, imperturbable wisdom He silenced them one by one, until they were glad to slink away from His majestic presence, and "no man after that presumed to ask Him any more questions."

The blessed Counselor is not only wise for Himself but He is able to give us wisdom. How often a single step in life is the turning point of blessing for all the future. To know just what to do is so important. All night long the disciples toiled at their nets and got nothing, but when the morning came all they needed was just one word of guidance, "Cast your net on the right side, and you shall find;" and lo! the fish came crowding to their nets.

Jesus Christ is our Counselor, and if we surrender our fancied wisdom and trust His guidance we shall not be allowed to err but shall be guided in judgment and kept from stumbling.

5. The Mighty God. This King is no mere human potentate, but the omnipotent One, and all His power is at the service of His people, but His power must be claimed by faith and prayer. Do we know Him in His almightiness, and have we allowed Him to clothe us with His mighty power and make our lives efficient through His strength?

6. The Father of Eternity. This is the correct translation of the phrase. It does not mean that He takes the place of the Father among the persons of the Deity, because He is not the Father, but He is the Father of eternity; that is to say, all His plans and purposes are everlasting, and when we take Him in our lives all our ways take hold on eternity. Earthly kings must pass away. The very benignity of the reign of a Josiah only made his death the more distressing. But this King is everlasting, and when we receive Him, He makes our lives eternal, too. How sad to think of friendships formed only to be severed; plans conceived and executed only to be buried in the tomb, and results that are as ephemeral as our mortal lives! How sublime the Psalmist's prayer, "Lead me in the way everlasting!" This is what the Father of eternity will do for us:

Take from us the things that wither and decay,

Give to us the things that cannot pass away,

And lead us in the way everlasting.

7. The Prince of Peace. This is His sweetest gift, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." This is His bequest to us, and the prophet tells "of the increase of His government, and of His peace there shall be no end."

Shall we take Him for the increase of His peace, and in order that we may have it, shall we also give Him the increase of the government? So shall we find as we surrender to Him all our life that He will make real to us His gracious promise, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me who am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls."

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