

Unto Us a Son is Given

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 11th December 2011

Intro-

- Me & brother, still small enough to share a bath, literally creating mountains of froth using the soap, but suddenly it dawned on me- how could we get rid of all this froth? What was mum going to do when she found out? And I was the oldest. I was crying with fear that I had ruined the bathroom forever, but my brother was laughing with joy. Mum came and laughed out loud and immediately sorted the situation with the shower- what a relief!
- Have you ever thought that you had sinned too much and felt outside the reach of God's grace? This morning we will look at a dark time in Israel's history when God had to discipline His people. At that time it looked like they had lost everything, but God promised a future time when He would not only restore them but He would also bless them with the most amazing Son the world has known- Jesus. This morning we will look at Isaiah's predictions often quoted at Christmas time- 'Unto us a Son is given'.

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

Background-

- The background to this- King Ahaz of Judah was a wicked king who worshipped idols and cared nothing for the Lord. Isaiah was the prophet at the time, speaking advice and warnings to Ahaz. The Assyrian Empire was expanding. The two northern kingdoms of Syria and Israel were fearful of the growing Empire of Assyria and asked the southern kingdom of Judah to form a coalition with them to defend the land against the Assyrians.
- Ahaz had refused to join this coalition and as a result Syria and Israel were going to oppress Israel and topple Ahaz off the throne and put their own king in his place. Isaiah reassures Ahaz that this cannot be, as God had promised to David that his descendants would have the throne of Judah until the Messiah came to His eternal rule. The sign given to the whole house of Israel was that a virgin would become pregnant and the child would be named Emmanuel, 'God with us'.
- Ahaz decided not to listen to Isaiah by trusting in the Lord. Instead he chose to trust in the enemy- Assyria, by asking for their help against the coalition. This he got, and more than he bargained for. Assyria not only triumphed over Israel and Syria, deporting them to other nations and putting captured people in their place (known as the Samaritans and hated by the Jews), they also began to take cities in Judah.
- This time in history is a very dark one for Israel- only a remnant would be left, and later on the Babylonians would take Judah into exile for 70 years.
- Also Isaiah describes the darkness covering the land at the time in terms of their occult practises. He says that rather than seeking the Lord the people were seeking to speak to the dead and throwing off any guidance God gave from His word.
- Assyria was the means God used to discipline His people. The Northern tribes were the first to go into captivity. Imagine the stigma of this for the Jewish nation. The Northern tribes continued to have this stigma for many years- even up to the time of Jesus. ('Nazareth? Can anything good come out of there?' 'Look into it and you will see that no prophet comes out of Galilee').

We will look now at 3 promises God gives here through Isaiah, concerning the birth of His Son:

1. Jesus comes to light up the darkness- 9:2 *'The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light'*

- God loves to take the underdog and make them into something special. This is what we see happening here. Even though shortly after this was written the Northern tribes would be the least esteemed because of captivity, these are the very tribes God would bring the light of Jesus to first. They knew what it was to walk in

darkness, but in the future they were going to know what it was to walk in the light.

- 5 main areas are mentioned, and these are all areas that Jesus would transform by His light first (which would be fulfilled over 700 years later).
 1. Zebulun is in lower Galilee, where Nazareth is situated- this is where Jesus grew up.
 2. Naphtali is in upper Galilee where Capernaum is- this is where Jesus transferred His ministry base to.
 3. The 'Way of the Sea' is the road which is on the west shore of the sea of Galilee where Jesus did many miracles.
 4. Beyond the Jordan is Perea, where Jesus travelled to later in His ministry.
 5. Galilee of the Gentiles is the extreme northern part of Galilee which was populated by many Gentiles- this is where Jesus took His disciples (Caesarea Philippi- where Peter had the revelation of Jesus being the Christ). Also Syria touched by Jesus' light- Syro-Phoenician's daughter who was delivered was from the most northern part of the Galilee.
 - Mark's question- what famous people would you like to see saved and why? Who do you think is likely and unlikely to get saved and why? 10 amazing testimonies we watched in homegroup. 'The vilest offender who truly believes.' God has changed our lives and so He can change others. Who are we praying for? Be in faith for people to get saved and pray specifically for them.
 - Are there any areas of your life that seem unredeemable? Why not surrender them to God? Build faith for change by recalling, revisiting what God has done in your life up till now. Have you truly prayed into it? We sometimes don't have because we don't ask God- ask in faith. Keep on asking- persist in prayer and don't give up.
 - This was a dark time in Israel's history- we live in dark times- financial crisis. Although we are not immune from the suffering in the world today we are a light. Jesus said 'You are the light of the world'- we have light to shine- the Church is God's candlestick for this world. This is our finest hour- choose to make a difference and share the gospel. Yesterday some encouraging signs of hunger- person applauded and said 'well played' after a joyful song and another man listening intently- we have got something people need.
 - We are called to walk in the light. Are there any doors to darkness that you have opened up that you need to close? I was involved in Occult before and had to close that door. Repentance is key. Bring all into God's light. His word is our light and it shows us as we really are- then we have a choice, whether to change or not.

An old story tells of a desert nomad who awakened hungry in the middle of the night. He lit a candle and began eating dates from a bowl beside his bed. He took a bite from one and saw a worm in it; so he threw it out of the tent. He bit into the second date, found another worm, and threw it away also. Reasoning that there wouldn't have any dates left to eat if he continued, he blew out the candle and quickly ate the rest of the dates. Many there are who prefer darkness and denial to the light of reality.
2. **Jesus comes to release from bondage- 9:4** *"For You have broken the yoke of His burden"*
- What is a yoke? It is a wooden beam normally used between a pair of oxen or other animals to enable them to pull together on a load when working in pairs, as oxen usually do; some yokes are fitted to individual animals. The yoke is a symbol of subservience to a master- here it is taken as subservience to the nation of Assyria.
 - We are called in scripture not to be yoked together with unbelievers- this means to walk in the same lifestyle as them- has applications for not marrying a non-believer, but also not following an ungodly influence. Jesus invites us to take His yoke upon us, for His yoke is easy and His burden light- i.e. He brings us into true freedom.
 - The promise given here is that when Jesus comes He breaks the yokes of the enemy. We see this in the ministry of Jesus- Peter says of 'How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil' (Acts 10:38). John says 'For this reason was the Son of God manifest- to defeat the works of the evil one' (1John 3:8). Is that how we see Jesus? Is that our experience of Jesus?
 - In verse 6 'El Gibbor' means 'Mighty God' or 'warrior' God, or 'champion' God or 'hero' God. A Gibbor was a warrior- David's mighty men were 'Gibbor's, Goliath was

the Philistines 'Gibbor'. Joshua met Jesus as the Gibbor, leader of the army of the Lord. The Lord is the 'Lord of Hosts'- i.e. The Lord of Heaven's armies. Do we see Jesus as only gentle or also powerful?

- Because God is the ultimate 'Gibbor' we win when He is on our side. The reference to Gideon (see verse 4) promises to these same Northern tribes that, just like in Gideon's day, 1+God = the majority. Gideon won with 300 Israelites vs 135,000 Midianites (450:1). My dad's bigger than your dad. When children have nightmares-God is greater than our enemies and our fears- we need to know this as adults.

Star Trek star William Shatner has reportedly turned down an offer to boldly go into space for real. Shatner, who played Captain Kirk, is too nervous to take up Sir Richard Branson's offer of joining Virgin Galactic's first passenger flight in 2008, reports The Sun. Shatner, 75, said: "I'm interested in man's march into the unknown but to vomit in space is not my idea of a good time. "Neither is a fiery crash with the vomit hovering over me." Shatner has been offered his £114,000 ticket free. But he insists Virgin boss Branson also pays him. He added: "I do want to go up but I need guarantees I'll definitely come back." Celebs like Alien's Sigourney Weaver have booked the two-and-a-half hour flight on the VSS Enterprise - named in tribute to Star Trek.

- Are you carrying a yoke today? Sickness, debt, sin, fear? Jesus wants to release you. Jesus breaks the yoke of legalism- always trying to make it but never succeeding. Jesus breaks the yoke of sin- 'If the Son sets you free you shall be free indeed'.
- Are you being used by God to see yokes broken off others? What steps do you have to make to enable this to happen?

3. Jesus comes to rule -9:7- *'Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end'*

- Jesus was fully human- we see this in verse 6- 'unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given'. This means He relates to us- He is not unaware of our struggles and what it is like to be us. He is sensitive to us and so we can trust Him to lead us.
- He possesses the titles of God and so He has the right to rule. 4 titles revealed here, 2 words each.
- **Wonderful Counsellor** is seen in Is 28:29 'This also comes from the Lord of Hosts who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance'. The Hebrew parallelism gives us the meaning here of the title and also the fact that it belongs to God (see also Judges 13:18 and Is 25:1). This speaks of Omniscience- all knowing. Jesus taught as one with authority unlike the teachers of the Law. Having Jesus on our side is like having the best prime minister the world has ever known guiding us through life, better than Google or Wikipedia.
- **Mighty God**- (see 10:21) again a title given describing His deity. This speaks of Omnipotence- 'all powerful'. He holds all things together- He has the power and might to rule.
- **Everlasting Father**- the Hebrew for Father is in the construct state- this means it is literally 'Father of' and then followed by the word 'eternity'. This again speaks of Jesus' deity- He is father of creation, He is eternal (the first and last, Alpha and Omega). Only God is truly eternal. The fact is, He has always reigned and always will, so we would do well to submit to Him.
- **Prince of peace**. This title means 'head of peace'- i.e. He is in charge of peace. Again this is a title of deity for God alone can truly bring peace into people's lives or convict them of sin. Jesus said so often 'peace be with you' or 'my peace I give to you'. Shalom=peace=hello=health=wholeness=prosperity. Kings made a peace treaty or covenant with each other so as to pledge they would not attack. We have peace with God through the gospel. The gospel is the gospel of peace (see Eph 6). Christians generally stick out because they have a peace the world does not know.
- What have your role models in life been like? Why not come under the best? Jesus is the perfect king. Ahaz was a hopeless king and he led the nation into

horrendous sin. With Jesus as our King He will lead us to wonderful things. Keep following the Lordship of Christ. Keep loving His Kingship in your life- He is a loving King.

- Jesus will not force us to surrender to Him- He has given us free will. Let's choose to deal with any attitudes of rebellion in our hearts to God or His people. Sometimes that will involve looking back and forgiving people we looked up to who have let us down.
- Works of power, spiritual gifts, are a sign of His Kingdom coming in power. Also the fruits of the Spirit are signs of His rule and reign in our lives. Let's be eager to develop both areas.
- The captain of the ship looked into the dark night and saw faint lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signal man to send a message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south.". Promptly a return message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north." The captain was angered; his command had been ignored. So he sent a second message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am the captain!" Soon another message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north - I am seaman third class Jones." Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: "Alter your course 10 degrees south - I am a battleship." Then the reply came: "Alter your course 10 degrees north - I am a lighthouse."

Summary

- Jesus comes to light up the darkness
- Jesus comes to release from bondage
- Jesus comes to rule

Song: Isn't He beautiful?