

Know Jesus

July 14, 2024

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Isaiah 9:1-7

Session Outline

1. The Hope (Isaiah 9:1-2)
2. The Joy (Isaiah 9:3-5)
3. The Glory (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Theological Theme

Isaiah prophesied about the birth of Jesus years in advance to give God's people hope for a different future.

Call to Action

Consider the attributes of Jesus highlighted in the text/message. Prayerfully consider one attribute to share with a lost and searching person in your life.



Leader Guide

Know Jesus

Introduction

Waiting is a part of life. We wait for babies to come. We wait for doctor appointments. We wait for the next season of our favorite show to be released. We wait for our favorite sports to start back. We wait to attend an event or for the opportunity to buy tickets. We wait for our vacation to begin.

Some waiting is filled with positive anticipation while some is fraught with dread. When we know the outcome is going to be something positive, waiting is more enjoyable. When we expect the outcome will likely be hard or negative, the wait can be grueling. The experience of waiting is also affected by the length of time required. Waiting for a clear amount of time is often more bearable than waiting for an extended or even unknown period.

- ❓ What is the longest you have waited for something and what was it?
- ❓ What is the hardest thing you've waited on? The most exciting?
- ❓ How does knowing the length of the wait time affect your perspective?

Session Summary

Studying a traditional Christmas message at a different time gives us insight into the truth about Jesus's birth and how it applies to our lives. We all have things we are waiting on that sometimes cause us to question the Lord. This passage reminds us that God will do exactly what He says He will do. Even though Isaiah spoke about Jesus coming to earth as a man years before it happened, every word was factual and fulfilled just as he said. Though they didn't know when it would come to pass, the people believed what God said and it gave them hope for the future.

Now, we anticipate the second coming of Jesus with hope and joy because we know God will keep His promise. Though we don't know the day or time this will happen, believers can live secure in relationship with Jesus and trust all we know to be true about Him as described by Isaiah. We wait with anticipation as we believe the Lord.

1. The Hope (Isaiah 9:1-2)

Up to this point, Isaiah warned Israel about the consequences they would experience due to their rebellion and idolatry. Previous chapters record grave warnings of the coming Assyrian invasion and consequent defeat the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom would face. Imagine the disbelief, fear, angst, stress, and worry these dire predictions would bring. Knowing of negative events in advance can be harder than being taken by surprise because you have more time to build dreadful anticipation.

- ❓ What does it teach you about God that He didn't leave the people without hope? What does it teach you about God that the hope He spoke of would not bring direct relief for the current generation?

The coming invasion would be terrible and especially devastating for the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. It is notable that the region of Galilee would be overtaken when the Assyrians invaded from the north but was going to receive a special blessing in the coming of the Messiah. The humiliation Israel would suffer as they were invaded by their enemies would be turned to respect and honor at a future point.


- ❓ When have you experienced hope from the Lord in a time of difficulty?

Terrible days and times would come, but God offered hope amid the doom and gloom. Although God is just and allows His people to reap the consequences of our sin and rebellion, He always provides a path to the hope of right relationship with Him.

In this passage Isaiah referenced the light coming to the darkness. On this side of the New Testament, we know Jesus is "the light of the world" (John 8:12), and He was the One Isaiah spoke of. Isaiah could not have known exactly how the Lord would fulfill this promise of light and special blessing to the region of Galilee, but the people could trust God's promise that it would happen. Living on this side of the cross, with full access to the completed Scriptures, we see the perfect fulfillment of all God said through Isaiah and the hope that arrived with Jesus.


Coming Invasion

Dark days were ahead for God's people, especially for the Northern Kingdom. The Assyrians would invade Palestine from the north and humble Israel. Isaiah looked beyond this time of punishment and saw a bright deliverance. Eventually the Lord would save His people from their oppressors, just as He did in the days of Gideon, through whom He annihilated the oppressive Midianites (Judges 6–8).


-  Application: What are you waiting on the Lord for with hope? How are all of God's people waiting with hope at this point in the story of God's redemption?

2. The Joy (Isaiah 9:3-5)

Joy and gladness would accompany the ministry of the promised Messiah. Given that the people were in a time of invasion and battling for their land, it makes sense that they envisioned a political or military leader who would come and bring military victory over their enemies. Even the language in these verses lends itself to that type of imagery.


-  The people had misguided expectations about Jesus. What are some wrong ideas people have about Jesus today?

Though Isaiah's words may not have had the implications the people expected, it was clear a great change would come by the hand of the Lord. Isaiah described a time when the harvest would pay off and the people would again enjoy the bounty of the land. Again, Isaiah used language of enjoying the spoils after a victory to describe the way in which God would secure victory on behalf of His people.

-  How does future hope encourage you to persevere through difficulty now? What future hope empowers all followers of Christ to continue for His sake in the world?

“The day of Midian” (v. 4) was a reference to the account of Gideon defeating Midian in unlikely circumstances against all odds. God was encouraging them that they too would experience the great joy and complete victory that Gideon enjoyed with the defeat of Midian (Judges 7). This was another reminder of God's past work in the lives of the people of Israel that would bolster their confidence of His power and work in their current difficulty.

These different promises of coming joy each have correlation to the spiritual work Jesus does in the lives of believers. Breaking the yoke of burden, or the rod of the oppressor, describes the complete victory we can experience through faith in Christ. Although the Israelites would hear these promises and connect them directly to political and military victories, we have hope today that whatever is happening in this world, we will share in complete victory through Jesus. This victory was not secured through earthly military dominance but by the spilled blood of Christ on the cross.

-  Application: What does the way Jesus secured victory for His people teach you about the way He wants you to live in the world?

3. The Glory (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Although this familiar passage is widely quoted at Christmastime, it has many implications and applications for our lives throughout the year. Isaiah painted a picture of the glory to come when the Messiah finally appeared. Even though these words were written centuries before Jesus came to the earth, they gave a robust description of the One to come.

- Which of these descriptions of the Messiah stand out to you? Does anything strike you differently as you consider these titles outside of the context of the Christmas season?

Isaiah's words pointed to the Messiah who would come as a child. He would be Immanuel, God with us. The Messiah would be fully God and fully man. In time, that perfect man died as the substitution for our sin and brought restoration for the brokenness in this fallen world. Viewing the words of Isaiah in relation to the complete work of Scripture gives further meaning and clarity to what he said. Those who heard it in real time didn't have the benefit of knowing all the details about how this powerful prophecy happened exactly as it was predicted.

The prophetic reference to the government being on His shoulders will ultimately be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns to earth at His second coming. Just as these verses gave believers in that day hope, they give believers today hope to cling to when the world is difficult and hard.

- How does the anticipation of the second coming give you hope for daily life?




We are in a waiting period as the people were in Isaiah's day. Although we may want God to fulfill His promises now or at least know when they are going to come to fruition, we can rest assured that every promise of the Lord will come to pass just as He said. In the meantime, we can abide in our Messiah, the One described in Isaiah 9. Jesus is your Wonderful Counselor. Listen to Him and take direction from Him. He is Almighty God. Nothing is beyond the scope of His power, and you can trust Him to do the impossible. When you feel tired or worn down you can rest in the arms of your Everlasting Father. Instead of giving in to stress or anxiety about your circumstances, allow the Prince of Peace to minister to you and turn your heart toward Him.

- Application: Where do you feel most in need of God's counsel, power, comfort, or peace today?

Conclusion

Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 9 was not only meant to point to the events of Christmas but is truth for every day. Through Isaiah, the Lord spoke words of promise to the people of the coming Messiah. This provided hope for Israel, despite the coming hardship of exile and oppression. Though it would be generations before this came to pass, they believed and trusted God would do what He said. The Israelites raised future generations to know these words and to hold tightly to the hope found in them.

As the world continues in sin and evil seems to prosper, we cling to the promised hope of Jesus's return. Just as Isaiah prophesied about the birth of Jesus, he also spoke about the return of Jesus that we look forward to today. Every word of the Lord will come to pass, and we can cling to the promised hope we will experience when Jesus Christ comes back to establish His kingdom finally. Until that day, we wait with anticipation and the assurance all of this will happen in God's perfect timing.

-  How would your life look different if you lived each day in true anticipation of the return of Christ? How can you seek to make that a focus moving forward?
-  How can our group encourage and remind one another of the hope we have in Christ?
-  Who can you have a gospel conversation with by sharing from today's passage?

Prayer of Response

Thank Jesus for His complete sacrifice for your sins. Ask for wisdom to live in such a way that your life reflects the hope of glory you have and impacts the world with the gospel message.

Memory Verse

For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. —Isaiah 9:6

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Isaiah* by Andrew Davis
- *Isaiah* by Trent Butler
- *Be Comforted* by Warren Wiersbe

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of Isaiah

Purpose

Isaiah's message is relatively simple. First, Isaiah accused God's people of sin: rebelling against the one who made them and redeemed them. Second, Isaiah instructed these sinners to reform their ways and act obediently. Third, Isaiah announced God's judgment on the people because of their sin. Finally, God revealed his future restoration of the people, or at least of the faithful remnant that survived the judgment. As part of the restoration of God's people, Isaiah foresaw both judgment on the nations (chaps. 13–23) and a future turning of the nations to God (2:1–4). The first part of the book (chaps. 1–39) emphasizes sin, the call to repentance, and judgment; the second part (chaps. 40–66) emphasizes the hope of restoration.

Author

The book presents itself as the writing of one man, Isaiah son of Amoz. The superscription to the book dates his prophetic activity as spanning the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah (783–742 BC, Isaiah's call is dated to this king's last year, 6:1); Jotham (742–735 BC); Ahaz (735–716 BC); and Hezekiah (716–686 BC). On Uzziah (Azariah) see 2Kg 15:1–7; 2Ch 26:1–23. On Jotham see Kg 15:32–38; 2Ch 27:1–9. On Ahaz see 2Kg 16:1–20; 2Ch 28:1–27. On Hezekiah see 2Kg 18:1–20:21; 2Ch 29:1–32:33. Not much is known about Isaiah apart from his prophecy.

Setting

Uzziah's reign was a particularly prosperous time in the history of Judah, but storm clouds were on the horizon. Assyria was on the rise again in the person of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC). The Assyrian king threatened to engulf Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel. After the death of Tiglath-pileser, his successors, Shalmaneser and Sargon, defeated the northern kingdom in 722 BC and deported its citizens. This event brought Judah even more under the shadow of that great empire. Isaiah 37:38 suggests that the prophet lived until the death of Sennacherib in 681 BC.

Special Features

Isaiah was an eighth-century BC prophet. His book is the first of the Prophets in the English canon and the first of the Latter Prophets in the Hebrew canon. Isaiah is powerful in its poetic imagination, intriguing in its prophetic vision, and complex in its structure. One can never read or study the book without gaining new insights into the nature of God and our relationship with him. The authors of the New Testament read the book of Isaiah in light of the coming of Christ and realized that this prophet anticipated Messiah's coming with remarkable clarity. For this reason they quoted or alluded to Isaiah more than any other Old Testament book.

Extended Commentary

Isaiah 9:1-7

9:1 Zebulun and Naphtali were two northern tribes hit hard by the Assyrian invasion led by Tiglath-pileser in 733 BC. At that time, the Assyrians reduced the land holdings of the northern empire and integrated three new provinces into their empire. These three provinces were called Magiddu (Galilee), Du'ru (the way of the sea), and Gal'aza (the land east of the Jordan).

9:2 The Assyrian invasion brought great devastation (darkness), but the people still had great reason to hope (light has dawned). The verbs in this section are in what is often called the “prophetic perfect.” Though the events were in the future, they are described as if they had already happened. Isaiah 9:1–2 is quoted in Mt 4:15–16 in reference to Jesus’s ministry.

9:3 The events predicted would bring such joy as is felt at a great harvest or a great plunder.

9:4 The type of deliverance the pronouncement pictures seemed impossible. After all, Assyria was a world power and God’s people were weak and crushed. Thus, the pronouncement alludes to the day of Midian. This refers to the events of Jdg 6–7 when Gideon—with just a handful of troops but with the power of God—defeated the oppressive Midianites and expelled them from the land.

9:5 As Gary Smith explains, “The burning of the boots and the bloody clothes of enemy soldiers ... signify a victory in holy war where spoils were dedicated to God and military equipment was set on fire” (cp. Jos 11:6, 9; Ezk 39:9).

9:6–7 Twice earlier in this section of Isaiah, the birth of children has been described as having prophetic significance (7:14; 8:1–4). For a third time, the reader learns of a future birth. Some commentators believe the text means that this future royal child will be a purely human descendant of David who will be proclaimed king and lead God’s people to a new level of freedom and prosperity. Both Hezekiah and Josiah have been identified as this child. However, the titles given to this child and the description of his kingdom far surpass anything applicable to Hezekiah or Josiah. The only feasible interpretation of this passage is messianic. This child will be given names that signify his character. He will be a sage characterized by extraordinary wisdom (Wonderful Counselor). He will have life that is never ending (Eternal Father). He will bring peace (Prince of Peace). But the most extraordinary thing of all that confirms he is simply not to be identified with a Hezekiah or a Josiah is his title, Mighty God (cp. 8:21). In the NT, Jesus is identified as the Davidic descendant who fulfilled this great promise (Mt 1:1, 22–23).¹

References

1. Tremper Longman III, “Isaiah,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1055–1056.