



**Let There be Light - Isaiah 9:1-7**  
**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

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NO MORE GLOOM, NO MORE GLOOM, NO MORE GLOOM. Watching Have I got News For You, Friday before last, nice comedy take on world affairs. Then the News. 300 slaughtered in a mosque in some obscure part of Egypt. Parts of London closed down, bomb scare. Then to bed. Phone goes, 2.30 am. Family member has heart failure, come quickly. Came quickly, even through Banwell a few days after a sinful driver's training course. Family member dead.

NO MORE GLOOM? So advanced this civilisation, so cultured. Scientifically mind-boggling for scientists let alone thick little artists like me. Absolutely wonderful what man can do nowadays. Yet still the cry goes up, GIVE US HOPE, GIVE US PEACE. LET THERE BE LIGHT.

Isaiah had prophetic licence, he was a prophet after all. Time no object, the future as if it's already happened, the present future, two chronological futures intertwined. Even in such a short passage as this.

Galilee area, despised, looked down upon, trashed by the Assyrian hordes not too long after this was written, trashed even more than the rest of the so-called Promised land. But this tiny blot on the world's landscape is going to be honoured, for death read life, for impenetrable darkness read a light that makes impenetrable penetrable.

It's harvest time. For you townies, try to picture the the Cheddar strawberry fields in May, before the quarry killed them. Sheer joy. So long as it was my mum or dad picking them and not me. Or picture the spoils of a week-long war in 1959, kids, one area of the village against another, them exultantly putting our trucks in the river in the Gorge, my dad having enough of it and cuffing one of them round the ear, this leading to a peace treaty. No experience of harvest or war? Multiply that Friday feeling by 52, a year's supply. Euphoria. (Or you four over there!) There will be joy indescribable.

No more defeat nationally, no more defeat personally, all the enemies of light no more, in whatever guise they came.

Two thousand years after the Light came to Palestine the First World War broke out, the war to end all wars, never again. Of course never again, not for a whole twenty one years. Then, as we know, the Jewish experience was on a horror scale beyond comprehension. The rod of the oppressor very much alive and kicking.

So this is where when we examine this passage we need to sort out Isaiah's chronology. The oppressor, Satan, sworn enemy of God, still oppresses, still seems to have such a free reign, personally, nationally, globally. And this two millennia after the light to end all lights came into the world. V5 says not only no more defeat, but, Hallelujah, no more war. Peace on earth. It ain't happened yet. However many Christmas carols we sing.

So the rule of the Messiah, so graphically portrayed and prophesied in this passage, the light extinguishing all traces of darkness, is a stage by stage affair. Isaiah had no idea of the time scale, the prophet speaks out what God shows him and says to him, we with God's help interpret it.

For unto us child is born. The Messiah has a very much human birth in Bethlehem. Humility. Unless you become like a little child, says Jesus later to the megalomaniac James and John, you can have no part in his kingdom. The Messiah is not just human, but humble human. To us a son is given. Son in the Old Testament (eg in Samuel and Daniel) is often title for the king. And in Gal.4.4 Paul echoes this in regards to Jesus, 'In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son.' I who speak to you am he, says Jesus to the Samaritan woman at the well. In other words the Light did not come into existence in Bethlehem, it was 'From heaven you came, helpless babe, entered our world, your glory shared'. The King of the ages, the Royal Son, God of Gods, Light of Lights, abhors not the virgin's womb, unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.

And the government shall be on his shoulders. Do you hear this, all you capitalists and communists, you religious and you atheists and you don't know in between. Jesus will rule and reign. Now in the hearts of those who accept his rule, individually, and beautifully as those yielded people come together to proclaim him and live out his life, but future, and as with Isaiah we cannot say when, in a new heaven and a new earth where Jesus will rule uncontested.

And if that sounds like dictatorship, read on. His character.

And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor. Overused word 'Wonderful, so although I consented to go and see Paddington no-one would come to the Wonder film out now, and It's a Wonderful Life remains undisturbed on Netflix. Wonderful means 'extraordinary, surpassing, marvellous.' Sarah laughed when God said she was going to have a baby. 'Is anything too EXTRAORDINARY for the Lord,' said God. 'Such knowledge is too WONDERFUL for me', said David when he realised God knew his every thought. In other words this ruler will have extraordinary, supernatural abilities. 'I am the resurrection and the life,' he said, 'whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies.' He then as a demo raised an already stinking Lazarus. This ruler is extraordinary. Surpassing. Wonderful.

Counsellor. This means 'one who plans.' It means he has the wisdom necessary to rule. Throughout the gospels we see a Jesus who just knows. Not only able to counsel his followers because he knows all about us (eg Come and see a man who told me every thing I ever did - John 4), a counselling for us through the Holy Spirit often with the help of our fellow believers; but someone with extraordinary wisdom, someone who can be trusted to rule (No man ever spoke like this man - John 7). To rule those who invite him in now and to rule everyone and everything in an age to come.

Mighty God. Not just extraordinarily wonderful and wise, but all-powerful and actually God Himself. No need to go too deeply into the Trinity here, because they are one as well as three (as e.g. Jesus called the promised Holy Spirit 'another counsellor') 'All authority has been given to me,' said Jesus on post-resurrection mountain, 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations'. His power and authority go with us as we obey him as his people now. And in the future every knee will bow to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Mighty God.

Everlasting Father. Not just going on and on and on - that might possibly be female!! But in the Hebrew it means one who produces, directs and is Lord over the ages. I love this one. When the scientists start talking of 40 million years ago when something evolved into something else I get scared. If it's true, is my God big enough? Or in space, when they discover another something or other so many million light years away, is my God big enough? He is. Jesus co-started it all. Jesus maintains it all. Jesus is ruler of all, and what we don't see of that now we will see undiluted and unfettered at a future time.

Father? Confused now Isaiah are we? Jesus was the Son just now. I personally was never a son and father at the same time, there was a three year time gap. But I know many who are. In John 10.30 Jesus says, 'I and the Father are one.' The Messiah is to be known as the One who is the sovereign Lord over the ever changing years - he produces and directs eternity.

Prince of Peace. The Messiah will be one who brings peace, which in Hebrew terms is more than the absence of war. Peace is a condition in which all things follow their destiny undisturbed. The lion lies down with the lamb. The children play harmlessly with what were venomous snakes. There will be a whole new age, says Isaiah, a whole new heaven and earth, a whole new creation.

All of which helps us understand Jesus in the gospels talking about peace. 'Come unto me all you who are tired of carrying your heavy loads, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11.28). I like that one. 'Peace I give to you - not as the world gives (John 14.27). I like that one too, I think. But, 'I came not to bring peace, but a sword (Matt.10.34) and 'In this life you will have trouble and persecution' (John 16.33) are not quite so comforting. The cry of our hearts, echoing that of most of our fellow human beings, is for peace in this world, an end to war, globally, nationally, locally, and in our family relationships. As Christians our Lord is the Prince of Peace and He said He wants us to be peacemakers and to pray to that end. BUT we are not promised universal peace at this stage in the Messianic scheme of things. That will come - future.

And the last verse says about that future, where Jesus reigns unfettered in an eternal Kingdom of peace, justice and righteousness. Light as the world has never known it, glimpsed and even exploding at Bethlehem, in Galilee, at Golgotha, in the resurrection garden, but then in all its glory. NO MORE GLOOM. NO MORE GLOOM. NO MORE GLOOM.