

Isaiah Chapter 9 v 1 - 7

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[0 : 00] to many of you. There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests. When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

Well, let's stand and sing our first Christmas morning carol. Christians awake, salute the happy morn, number 201. Don't know whether the shepherds were asleep or awake, but the angels certainly woke them up. So let's wake and sing 201. fala stream 20, ask they time toots. September 15, 20, 30, and 20, and 20, today is there that you're living with the samh Mister, the Savior of the world! Stand and sing the Humph I see Christ nancy, the world estimates up the high range of congress, and the totally popular church, as a nation alone Rodley.

It sits on the side we see Christ a great stage of taking the stamp of Save, FOX! of theWow hon account, writes, I don't learn more tears but now, it detachable by in front of a Restaurant, name God, habruptes. I want to stop Sie! The Lord's throne, Christ to adore the mystery of God. Vicious for angels, church in Rome, above. With ever joyful tidings, blessed again, of loving friends from the virgin sun.

[2 : 23] Then to the lodge of shepherds it was told, who had been cherished for all souls behold.

I bring the tidings of the Savior's world to you and all the nations of the earth.

This day has God built His promised word. This day is for a Savior, Christ the Lord.

He's the man's strength in the celestial world. In hymns of joy and the beautiful sun.

The praises of redeeming love they stand. And there's no more with alleluia's breath.

[3 : 39] God's highest glory was there and concealed. And there's no more with all you can do.

The heavens are all vale, as we pray. A mighty reward.

We will pay you, as we treat the horse, Now this formation to his bitter cross, Thread in his steps, persisted by his grace, Till man's words can be straight against his face.

There may be all the angelic most among, To sing redeemed her first triumphal song, He that was born upon this joyful day, Far out the soul his glory shall display, Safe by his love incessantly shall see, Eternal grace to earth almighty, Giving.

I'm going to read now from Isaiah, That's part of the Old Testament. If you have a Bible to hand, it's page 694. Page 694.

[5 : 44] And one of the amazing things that we celebrate as Christians on Christmas morning is the reality that Christmas Day is the fulfillment of promises That God had given over hundreds and hundreds of years.

It wasn't just a suddenly last minute thing that Jesus Christ, The Son of God should be born, Something that God had been preparing for all through history. And God had been promising all through history.

And so again and again in the life of Jesus we find That things concerning himself were spoken about hundreds of years beforehand. Prophecies is the word.

Something spoken about beforehand. And Isaiah was one of the longest serving prophets, Spoke as God directed him, 600 years before the coming of Christ into the world.

And you'll see that as we read just part of chapter 9, How clearly it's pointing to telling us about the one who is to come, This Christ who is to come.

[6 : 44] So I'm going to read from verse 1, That's page 694 and through to verse 7. Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress.

In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, But in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, By the way of the sea beyond the Jordan.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy.

They rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, As warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, You've shattered the yoke that burdens them, The bar across their shoulders, The rod of their oppressor.

Every warrior's boot used in battle, Every garment rolled in blood, Will be destined for burning, Will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, To us a son is given, And the government will be on his shoulders, And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[8 : 08] Of the greatness of his government and peace, There will be no end. He will reign on David's throne, And over his kingdom, Establishing and upholding it, With justice and righteousness, From that time on and forever, The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Now I wonder, What sort of time you were woken this morning? Clearly I think that dad who had to build that Lego was woken, Probably while it was still dark.

And many of us were woken this morning, When it was still dark outside. It was Christmas morning, But the sun had not yet risen. And of course, As you know, Christmas Day comes just four days, After the shortest day of the year, In the northern calendar.

That day when we get less than eight hours, Of daylight. Because on the plus side, It means we can turn on our Christmas lights, That much earlier. On our trees, Or wherever they may be.

But darkness is something that, None of us really enjoys. Darkness is something that, All of us find, Well, Just a little bit gloomy.

[9 : 26] It hides the things that we want to see, And enjoy. It stops us doing those things, That we look forward to. Those experiences that we find pleasurable. And of course, Darkness can play upon our fears.

Fears about the unknown. Fears about, What is in the dark. So it shouldn't really surprise us, That when the Bible talked about, The coming of this Saviour, This Christ, The Son of God into the world, It uses language, Which speaks of light, Breaking into darkness.

Light dispelling darkness. Just as we have here. The people walking in darkness, Have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, A light has dawned.

And we know that this is talking about, Christ's coming. Because we see there, Just a few verses later, For to us a child is born, To us a son is given, And we're told about him.

He is the wonderful counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. This is not just the birth of any ordinary child, Or even a great king, Or political leader, Or dictator, Or anything else.

[10 : 37] This is clearly pointing to, The birth of God, The Son, Coming into our world. And bringing with him, This incredible, Great light. And it's spoken of as a time of rejoicing.

It's spoken of as a time of great celebration, Here. You've increased their joy. The people rejoice before you, As people rejoice at the harvest. In fact, It's like the rejoicing at the end of a war, When an enemy has been defeated.

It's likened to the rejoicing of VE Day, When the darkness of Nazism, Was overcome at last in Europe. When people around the world, Were dancing in the streets, Rejoicing, Having parties, Because they knew that the oppressive regime of evil, Was broken.

And the darkness that's being spoken of here, And the darkness of which the Bible speaks, Is not just that physical darkness, That optical darkness. It is something much more than that.

Something more than the normal darkness we experience, During the winter time. But what is this darkness that Jesus Christ has dispelled? What is this darkness that Jesus has brought a light, To illuminate and to chase away?

[11 : 54] Well the darkness we see from what we read of it, Is that it is a perpetual darkness. It's a constant darkness. The people walking in darkness, Have seen a great light.

It's not the people who walked, It's not past tense, Or the people who will walk, Future tense, It's present and perfect. It's ongoing. These people are in darkness now.

The world in which we live is a dark world. If you're further north, Right up in the Arctic Circle of course, There can be times of the year, When there are weeks, Even months of darkness.

Constant, Perpetual darkness. But this spiritual darkness, Of which the Bible speaks, This darkness which we think of as evil, This darkness which we think of as being something, Which overshadows and oppresses, Is a darkness which many people live in today, Constantly, All the time.

Before the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, Before the coming of Jesus Christ into a person's life, There is perpetual darkness. There's darkness which means that we cannot see where we're going.

[13 : 07] We do not know the way ahead. We cannot see the path before us. Jesus himself said this, When he said, Whoever walks in the dark, Does not know where they are going.

To be in this darkness, Is to be completely lost. I'm sure you've had that experience from time to time. You've just been in the pitch dark, There's no street lights, And you just don't know where you're going.

You just can't see what is ahead of you. You're travelling, Or you're driving, Or you're going, But you just don't know, Where's the end goal? Where's the purpose of the journey?

Where is it heading to? And for many of us, For many people, This darkness brings all sorts of real questions, About my journey, My life, My purpose.

Why am I walking this life? Where is it taking me to? What is the very reason for my existence here? Why?

[14 : 12] When there is no goal in sight, When there is no end to reach in sight, What is my life about? There's a darkness. Now we can dispel it, By filling our lives with pleasure, And we can fill our lives with career, And we can fill our lives with all sorts of things, But in the end, Ultimately, What's the purpose?

What's the reason? Simply to live, And then to die? There's a darkness, People are walking in. And Jesus Christ, Is spoken of as, The light of the world.

I am the light of the world, He says, Whoever follows me, Will never walk in darkness, But have the light of life. But this darkness about where we're going, Is connected, To another type of darkness. A darkness which clouds our thinking about God. A darkness in our understanding of God, We just don't know what he's like. Notice that we're told, That these people are living in deep darkness. Darkness. A darkness that goes beyond the eyes, Even beyond the mind, But goes to the very heart, The very soul, The very spirit. There's a darkness that clouds us, From the reality of who God is.

[15 : 25] Either so that we deny him, And say, Well, Because I can't see God, Therefore God doesn't exist. Or that we have just very shadowy, Vague ideas of what God might be like.

And we make God to be, What we think he should be. Here's what the Bible says. Romans in chapter 1. For although people knew God, They neither glorified him as God, Nor gave thanks to him, But their thinking became empty and futile, And their foolish hearts were darkened.

That's why we understand there are so many views and ideas about God. Because in the dark, If you were given a piece of Play-Doh, And told to make something in the dark, It would all be different.

It would all have different shapes, Different figures, Different arms, Different legs, And so on.

Without the light, We have no idea what God is like. In fact, Without the light, We judge God by the darkness.

We judge him as being powerless. We judge him as being cruel. We judge him as being worthless. Unimportant. Even that he's just a figment of imagination.

[16 : 39] We're in the dark. Many people have no idea about the God who loves them. Without Christ coming into the world, As the light of the world, Who gives light to us, Then we shall always misjudge God.

We shall always either deny him, Or misunderstand him, Or reject him. But because we do not know where we're going, And because we do not know the God, Who is the God who created us, Because we're in the dark about him, Then we're in the dark about the greatest enemy of all in our

lives.

We're in the dark about death. When David, the psalmist, Wrote that very famous psalm, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, He speaks about walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

And death is like that. It casts a shadow, A gloomy black shadow over all our lives, Because we know that we cannot escape it. The tragedy of just the other month, Of a young girl in her teenage years, Who died prematurely, Asking that her body be cryogenically frozen, With the hope that in the future, Science may be able to bring her back to life.

Shows that again, Within us, From youngest to oldest, There is this blackness and darkness about this death. There's a fear that grips us about it. So we don't talk about it, We don't think about it, We don't speak about it, We avoid it at all costs.

[18:05] It is the most ominous eclipse of the sun, And of the light in our lives. It's a grey gloom, That makes our thoughts black. Can you associate with any of these types of things?

Can you associate with any of these periods of blackness, Of darkness, For yourself, In your thinking about God, And when you're thinking about life, And its purpose, And your *raison d'être*, And your thinking about death, And where I'm heading, And what is it all about?

Where am I going? Is there hope in this black world? You see, what we read here, It's exactly for people like this, That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Came with light.

The people walking in darkness have seen light, Those living in the land of deep darkness, A light has dawned. It's for us who are in the dark, That Christ came. It's for us who need answers to our questions, That Christ came into this world.

It's for us who have no real idea. We grasp, And we try, And we think, And we hope, At all sorts of theories.

[19:12] And yet all of them are just, Dust in our hands. They never hold up. They never make full sense, Of who we are, Of this world, And of where life is going.

But here is Christ, For to us a child is born. Why is there rejoicing, Amongst these people in darkness? Why is there delight? Why are they celebrating? Because a child has been born. Well, a gift of a child is a wonderful thing.

To those of us who have the privilege of being parents, To hold a child, To have a child, Is a wonderful, Incredible thing. It's a great joy, With a mixture of great sorrow as well. But a child, By themselves, Can do nothing.

No one man, No one woman, Can make that much difference, To this world. A child has been given to us. A son is given. What's he like?

He will be called, Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace. This one who is broken into the world, Is not any ordinary human being. It is God himself come to us.

[20:16] In our darkness. It's not simply that God says, Right, okay, I'm going to shine a light for you, So you can see where you're going, So you can find your own way. That's what a lot of people think religion is.

It's about being told how you can find your way to God, How you can be a better person, How you can make life in this world better than it is. No, it's not that. In the person of Jesus Christ, God didn't shine a light, He sent a light.

He himself came as that light, Personally. And in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, We have an incredible transformation, That takes place to those who receive him, As he truly is.

Peter writes to the Christians, He speaks to them, He says, About the God who called you out of darkness, Into his wonderful light. It's not simply just light that shines, And shows us things.

It's a light that illuminates. It's a light that gives life. Like the plant that needs the, That incredible thing that you learn when you're at school, About turning light into starch, And it's called something.

[21:29] Photosynthesis. It was there, It was there, That's in my tongue. Photosynthesis. So the light that Christ brings, Gives us life. Gives us life. This is what John spoke about.

The true light that gives light to everyone, Was coming into the world. What does that mean? For those who receive the light, Those who enter into the light, That is Christ Jesus, Then there's a transformation that takes place.

We say they see a great light. We begin to see why we are here, In this world. We see the purpose and the reason. Jesus said, Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, But have the light of life.

There's purpose in your life. Dear friends, You are not, Simply a collection of chemicals, That have accidentally come together, Over millions of years to form you.

You are unique and individual, And have been created by the God, Who is a designer, And has made all things well. And that makes you special, And that makes you important, That makes you worthy, Of experiencing the love of God.

[22 : 42] You're not an accident, No matter how your birth came about. You're not just a mishap. You're not just a mistake. You were known before the world was made.

You were planned by God, Before you were born. And he purposed, That you should live in this world, And know him. And enjoy him.

And experience him. And all that's hidden to us in the dark. And all of that's blinded to us in the dark. Until the light comes in Christ. And we see this truth.

And then we see who God is. You see, Once we see who Christ is, And we see who we are, Then we see ourselves in relationship with God. We see him as the God. He truly is. Christ Jesus came as God into this world.

When you look at his life, And you read the things that he did, When he healed the sick, And raised the dead. When he cast out demons. When he himself was crucified, Dead and buried for three days, And rose again.

[23 : 38] These are the evidences, And the proof that here is, The very son of God himself, Living amongst us. What do we find about this God, When we read him in the pages of the gospels?

He has compassion over those who are lost. He weeps beside the graveside, Of his dear friend, Lazarus. He's the one who goes towards those who are the outcasts of society, The tax collectors and sinners, As they were called.

He's the one who befriends them. He's the one who tells them that they are special and loved of God, And there is forgiveness for their sins. And he's the one who annoys the religious, And upsets the self-righteous, And the people who think that they are too good for God.

Now, no one has ever seen God, But the only son who is God himself, Has made him known. Why do you think Christians rejoice as much as they do, In Christmas?

That a great man, A teacher was born? No. That a good man, A miracle worker was born? No. That a founder of religion was born? No. They rejoice and we rejoice, Because God is with us.

[24 : 50] He's no longer a vague idea, Or some imaginary person. Not even the bogeyman, Who tells us that we have to be good. He's not an impersonal power, Who simply holds the world together, Or the force.

He is our maker, He is our friend, He is our heavenly father, He is our provider, He's the one who gives life, He's our Lord, He's our master, He's our comforter, He's our everything.

He's the only one that makes sense, Of my life. And when we see Christ, As the light, And we see, And walk in that light, In relationship with God, Then we see, Hope in the face, Even of death.

Here's what Paul writes later on, To Timothy, His friend. Through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, Who has destroyed death, And has brought life, And immortality to light, Through the gospel, The good news of Jesus.

That dark shadow of death, Is lifted for the Christian. Instead of it being the end, Instead of it being oblivion, Instead of it being nothingness, It is everything. It is life everlasting, Life eternal.

[26 : 03] Paul writes to the Christians, In 1 Corinthians, He says, Death has lost its sting. It's still there, It's still a reality, But the poison is drawn from it. You see, The reality that the Bible teaches us, Is this, That we must die.

We know that from experience. We know that is true. But the Bible makes it very clear, And Jesus made it very clear, That there is an everlasting life, And an everlasting death, There is everlasting hell, And everlasting heaven.

They are realities, More real even than the realities, Of what we see and touch here. And you and I dear friends, When we die, Must and will, End up in one of those, Eternal realities.

But Christ came, That we might have eternal life, In heaven. That he might take upon himself, At the cross, That the hell that we, Have earned for ourselves, By our sinfulness, By our wickedness, By our rebellion, By the darkness of our hearts, That we might be set free, From the captivity, And the chains, And the fear of death, Be brought into the light, And the life, Which is heaven, Which is joy, Which is not sitting on a cloud, And playing a harp, Or eating some yogurt, It is life.

But the wonderful thing, Dear friends, Is this, That Christ came, That we might have the taste, Of that now, That we might begin, Eternal life now, It's not just, Probably put it, Pie in the sky, When you're dead, But it's, Meat on the plate, While you wait, Or something like that, It's life now, It's what we enjoy now, It's a relationship now, Now, The birth of Jesus, Is the beginning, Of the end of death, So let me ask you, This Christmas morning, This morning, Why are you still, Walking in the dark, Who in their right mind, Would continue to stay, In the pitch dark, With the shadow of death, Hanging over them, With blackness, And ignorance, About who they are, And why they're here, And where they're going, Who wouldn't want to be, In the light, Who wouldn't want to be, In the light of Christ, And leaving the dark, And entering the light, Is a very simple thing, It means turning our back,

[28 : 19] On the dark, And turning ourselves, To the light, The Bible calls that, Repentance, It means simply saying, The way that I've been going, Is wrong, And it's destructive, And it's away from God, And I'm so, Glad that I've realised, That before it's too late, And I want to turn back, To you Lord, And to you the God, Who may be, And you the God, Who sent your son, Into the world for me, And I want to receive, Your light in my life, And I want to walk, In all my days, It's a choice, It's an active choice, Yes there's faith involved, You have to believe, The good news, Believe what Jesus Christ, Says about himself, Believe what you see, In the lives of other Christians, Believe, What 2000 years of history, Have shown us, That those who turn to Christ, Are transformed people, What about you this Christmas, The greatest thing, You can do this Christmas, Is for yourself,

And that's to turn, And enter into, The light of Christ, Let's pray together now, Lord, We confess, That our minds, Are, Not clear, We don't know everything, Sometimes we're arrogant, And we're proud, And sometimes we like to think, That we, Have got a good handle, Upon most things in life, Reality is we don't, Reality is that most of the time, We're wandering around, Like, Daft sheep, As your word describes us, And sometimes, Things go well in our lives, And we make a right choice, And we go the right way, And other times, Lord, We, We go down a really dark alley, And, And, And we just realize, That we've mucked it up, Messed it up, For ourselves,

And for others, We thank you again, That in your mercy, And love, And kindness, You don't leave us, Down the dark alleys, You don't leave us, In the ruts, You don't leave us, In the blackness, Of our own foolishness, Ignorance, Pride, Rebellion, But Lord, We thank you, That you came, To us, In this dark world of sin, You came for us, That we might come out, Into the light of your, Embrace, Your love, Your forgiveness, Your transformation, Your change, Life itself, And we thank you, That all is because of Jesus, Who himself, As God, Came to us, Because we could never come to you, We ask again, Oh Lord, That where we still, Don't fully understand, Or fully grasp, That light, That you give us understanding, You give us the humility, To be able to say, God, Please show me, If this is right, Then I want to know you, I want to know this truth, I want to know this light, Please, Show it to me, Show me where the blackness is, In my own life, That I might turn from it, Show me, Christ, As he truly is, Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Prince of peace, Everlasting father, How we just see, What I've never seen before, In that baby, In the nativity set, The one who came, To live, To live, And to die, And to rise again, And help me, As I go out, Into this, End of year, And into this new year, To walk in the light of Christ, Thank you that you, Will, Give me light, Gladly, Freely, Because, It comes in Christ, If I will but, Turn to him, And so Lord, We ask that you would, Help each of us, At this Christmas time, To walk in your light, To live the fullness of life, That you have for us, Which is, Loving you, Yes, Obeying you, Following you,

Amen, If you, Feel that that prayer, Is something which, Rings in your own mind, And heart, If you want to talk to me, Or somebody else, Who's come with you, About what it means, To be a Christian, Or what it means, To know Christ, Or if you've got questions, Please don't ever, Fear that you can't ask questions, Christ is the answer to them, And we'd be only too happy, To help you, Point you in the right direction, Point you to maybe a church, Near where you live, Or whatever, So please, Please don't let this time, And opportunity pass by, We're going to sing our final hymn, Our final carol, Of course, O come all ye faithful, Joyful, And triumphant, Come, And worship, The Lord Jesus, It's number 209, In our books, And we'll sing all four verses, Because of course, It's Christmas morning, 209, Good verse, Tucker cities, Inmic Quincy, And there's someone, And it's money, To be with all ye aléim, And let's wait, All right,

[33 : 26] To do that, We'll sing always by the glory, It's about this gear, And be a singing, Another offering, For above all ye friends, O come All I wanna become, . . .

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[35:19]

... Come, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Gravely, briefly, on this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be glory.

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing, O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all forevermore. Amen.