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Sermon Notes

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The Eternal Kingdom of the Prince of Peace

Isaiah 9:1-7

For millennia of human history, man has sought a righteous form of government.

- The Pharaohs of Egypt dominated the Upper and Lower Kingdoms of Egypt along the Nile with an iron hand and with slave labor building their lasting monuments
- The Assyrian Empire introduced new depths of human brutality into government... piles of skulls and the invention of crucifixion as a particularly vicious and cruel form of execution
- The Greek Empire under Alexander the Great sought to spread the fruits of Greek culture—advanced philosophy, architecture, government, and the concepts of democracy—known but ignored by the Greek Kings that follow Alexander
- The Roman Empire backed up its Pax Romana (Roman peace) with the iron domination of its invincible Roman Legions... they brought stable government, a form of Roman justice, widespread commerce and order... along with terror and corruption to its almost thousand year domination of the Mediterranean
- The barbarian hordes swept across Europe from the steppes of Asia and put out the lights of culture and of government for centuries... they crushed by sheer military power but left no culture or order in their wake of devastation; here we speak of the time from the Huns to the Vikings
- The “divine right of kings” dominated Christendom in Western Europe during the Middle ages with its feudal system... the government was as good or bad as the king’s moral character...
- In England, the legendary King Arthur and the golden era of Camelot represented the aspirations of all who lived under the concepts of feudalism and the divine right of Kings... to have a perfect government of a righteous king, noble knights, beautiful maidens... the perfect vision of feudalism

In 1960, a musical entitled “Camelot” captured the hopes of that idyllic society:

It's true! It's true! The crown has made it clear.
 The climate must be perfect all the year.
 A law was made a distant moon ago here:
 July and August cannot be too hot.
 And there's a legal limit to the snow here
 In Camelot.
 The winter is forbidden till December
 And exits March the second on the dot.
 By order, summer lingers through September
 In Camelot.
 I know it sounds a bit bizarre,
 But in Camelot... That's how conditions are.
 The rain may never fall till after sundown.
 By eight, the morning fog must disappear.
 In short, there's simply not a more congenial spot
 For happily-ever-aftering than here
 In Camelot.

- The American Revolution sought to break away from monarchy and establish a government “of the people, by the people, for the people” in Abraham Lincoln’s famous words
- But the government established here has proven to be far from perfect
- The 20th century saw an experiment in governmentally-forced sharing for the supposed benefit of the poor. It was called Communism, and it has proven an gross economic, social, and moral failure all over the world
- Representative democracy with all of its weaknesses and corruptions still remains the best the human race has developed... but Winston Churchill said famously in a speech on the floor of the House of Commons in 1947:

"Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

- AND SO, WE WAIT... plodding along as a human race for the only perfect government there can ever be... the government described in Isaiah 9:6-7... the Kingdom of Jesus Christ

Isaiah 9:6-7 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. ⁷ Of the increase 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.

I. A Light in Darkness

A. The Cause of the Darkness and Gloom

Isaiah 8:19-23 [consulting mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter instead of consulting their God] “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”

1. Faulty spiritual guides

Illus: New Age “ascended masters”, use “channeling”... séances, Ouija boards, contacting dead relatives or ancient, long-dead rulers from the Aztec empire

In 2005, CBS show “Ghost Whisperer” premiered starring Jennifer Love Hewitt, about a young woman who can see and communicate with the dead; NBC has a similar show called “Medium” in which a woman is able to use psychic powers to aid law-enforcement efforts

Isaiah asks a simple question and gives a clear command:

“Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?” “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”

2. Ignorance of the word of God

- a. denying the word of God... they fail to go to the law and the testimony
- b. they stumble around in darkness

3. Result: Utter rebellion against God, eternal judgment

Isaiah 8:22-23 “Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward will curse their king and their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.”

Yet, in the midst of this bleak, hopeless picture comes a ray of light so brilliant, it threatens to blind eyes accustomed to pitch blackness:

vs.1 “Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress.”

B. A Land in Darkness and Gloom Now Sees a Light

1. The humbling of Zebulun and Naphtali

“In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali...”

- a. Military oppression

Farthest northern parts of the promised land: Assyrians came there first... dominated them

2 Kings 15:29 *“In the time of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took ... Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria.”*

b. Gentile domination

Assyrians were vicious, cruel, task-masters... deported Israel served as slaves

c. Idolatry & mingling of Jews & Gentiles

“Galilee of the Gentiles”: other conquered peoples brought idols there

d. Darkness from ignorance of God & His word

“The people walking in darkness...”

Psalm 119:105 *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

Physical slavery and oppression nothing compared to the slavery of sin

John 8:34 *“Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.’”*

Galilee of the Gentiles was humbled by their military domination, by their ignorance of God, by their slavery to sin

2. the honoring of Galilee of the Gentiles

“...but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan.”

a. what great honor can come to a land so downtrodden?

b. what can these words mean?

Word means “to glorify”... there will be a glory which will come to this region, a glory so bright that it enlightens the whole land

C. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

1. Prophecy forgotten in Israel

[Nicodemus rebuked for sticking up for Jesus] **John 7:52** *“Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”*

2. Disdain for Galilee

[Nathaniel] **John 1:46** *“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”*

3. Symbolic of all Israel: rejected, little, insignificant and useless... under the yoke of Gentile oppression; worse, under the yoke of sin

D. Deeper symbol: life without Christ

1. Darkness, distress and gloom powerful metaphors for ignorance of God's word and rebellion against God's authority

1 John 2:11 "Whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in darkness; he does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded him."

2. Only Jesus can bring light into our darkness

John 8:12 "When Jesus spoke again to the people he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'"

E. Result of Light: Great Joy (vs. 3)

vs. 3 "You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder."

1. Sin's darkness and oppression brings terrible sadness & depression
2. YET in the midst comes blinding light... THEN comes joy

Westminster Catechism: **"What is the chief end of man?"** "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." JOY comes from this light! The joy of a tremendous victory won over a vicious, cruel, oppressive foe

YET it is the joy of knowing God, of glorifying Him [Piper's "hedonism"]

II. The Source of Joy: "The Day of Midian's Defeat" (vs. 3-5)

vs. 4-5 "For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire."

Illus. Joy of VE day & VJ Day

- A. A Military Victory [Need to know OT history for this one!!]
- B. The story of Gideon and the Midianites

1. the cycle of sin, judgment, and deliverance in Judges

Judges 21:25 "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."

2. Midian's turn:

Judges 6:1-2 “Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites... invaded their country [like locusts and destroyed all they had planted. Ultimately they cried out to the Lord for help and he heard their cry]

3. God's deliverer: Gideon

- a. from smallest clan in weakest family in his tribe
- b. God exalted his own power by choosing him
- c. he wavered in unbelief and put God to the test twice... fleeces

4. God's method: self-exaltation

- a. army pared down smaller and smaller... down to just 300 men

Judges 7:2 “In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her...”

- b. army brought no weapons... only trumpets and torches inside empty jars
- c. Midian army so large no one could count the men and camels
- d. at the signal, Gideon's army smashed their jars and blew their trumpets

Judges 7:20-22 They shouted “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords.”

- e. **All glory to GOD alone for this victory!!!**

5. Isaiah's analogy: total victory over our oppressor..SIN & DEATH

- a. enemy is an oppressor like Midian... overwhelming power
- b. sin is like slavery... a yoke that burdens us, a rod smashing our back
- c. Christ wins the victory over sin and death...

vs. 4-5 “For as in the day of Midian's defeat

John 8:34 *Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”*

Romans 6:23 *“The wages of sin is death...”*

Hebrews 2:14-15 *“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*

d. like Midian, the enemy destroys itself!! Satan killed Jesus, destroys himself

Habakkuk 3:13-14 *You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. Selah ¹⁴ With his own spear you pierced his head*

e. Christ gives us the spoils of his victory... joy as when dividing the plunder

III. The Surprising Conqueror (vs. 6)

A. Who will be this conqueror? A child!!

1. Surprising connection... military victory in vss. 2-5, a child introduced in vs. 6

Isaiah 7:14 *“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and she will call him Immanuel” (which means ‘God with us’)*

b. Message: domination and oppression conquered by vulnerability, gentleness, self-sacrifice and love

God has more than enough power to dominate the dominator, to oppress the oppressor... yet every time we gaze into the visions of Isaiah we see the face of a child gazing back!

2. But the surprise increases as we learn more about this child

NATURAL YET SUPERNATURAL

B. Natural Yet Supernatural... Isaiah’s Four Titles:

1. Miracle Counselor:

a. “wonderful” = miraculous, able to do wonders, wonder-working

b. “counselor” = one who gives advice, or one who gives sound teaching

Isaiah 30:21 *“Whether you turn to the right or the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying ‘This is the way, walk in it.’”*

Jesus fulfilled these perfectly!! Mighty Miracles & Profound Precepts

John 10:27 “My sheep listen to my voice”

2. Mighty God:

- a. Clearly ascribed deity by Isaiah!!! “el” is ALWAYS God
- b. Absolutely remarkable for a human child, born in the natural way to be called “el gibbor” ...MIGHTY GOD

Isaiah 44:6 “This is what the Lord says—Israel’s King and redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and the last; apart from me there is no God. “

Isaiah 44:8 “You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock, I know not one.”

Isaiah 45:5 “I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me, there is no God.”

Isaiah 45:21-22 “And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no other.”

And yet, Isaiah himself declared that this human baby was God... the MIGHTY GOD! The incarnation seen plainly in the vision of the ancient prophet Isaiah, declared to us seven centuries before it happened!

John 1:1, 14 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us ...

3. Eternal Father:

- a. “Father” implies intimate caring relationship to His people
- b. Very much like a “Good Shepherd”

Isaiah 40:11 “He tends His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young.”

- c. YET divine... “from eternity” He has existed

Micah 5:2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from the days of eternity.”

John 18:37 “You are right in saying that I am a King. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world...”

4. Prince of Peace:

a. Natural: a Prince... standard word for governing official

Isaiah 1:23 “Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves...”

Isaiah 19:11 “The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools...”

b. when our governing officials are thieves & fools, we are in trouble

c. This miraculous child, this son will be a PRINCE; but unlike any other

d. a PRINCE who can at last bring PEACE

Isaiah 2:4 “He will judge between nations and settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

This kind of peace is clearly supernatural... a peace only God can give; any peace at all seems so elusive, almost a joke... “What do I want for Christmas? Peace and happiness for the world, and a cell phone.”

Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.”

John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

- State of peace with God

Romans 5:1 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We were enemies of God because of sin, now we submit to Christ’s rule and our warfare is ended

- Experience of peace in daily trials

“Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Philippians 4:7 “The peace of God which transcends all understanding shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Summary: The four titles of Jesus are a perfect blending of human and divine titles... and they show how perfectly fit Jesus is to rule

IV. The Kingdom of Christ (vs. 7-9)

A. The Identity of the King: Jesus Christ

1. Government on his shoulders

vs. 6 ***“The government will be on his shoulders...”***

Wonderful Counselor & Mighty God = perfect blend of wisdom and power

- a. King with power but no wisdom = TYRANT
- b. King with wisdom but no power = WEAK, INEFFECTUAL

2. Human history one failed government after another

kings, emperors, dictators, democracies, parliaments, republics, communists... all have failed in one way or another

3. Jesus is the King of Kings... he alone can rule righteously

B. The Wealth of His Kingdom: Increase and Peace

1. Characterized by Increase: Growth of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:33 “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Isaiah 2:2 “In the last days, the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains. It will be raised above the hills and all nations will stream to it.”

Revelation 7:9 “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, and tribe, and people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.”

2. Characterized by PEACE:

- a. Peace with God

Isaiah 26:3 “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever...!”

- b. Peace between peoples

Isaiah 2:4 “They will beat their swords in plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up swords against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

- c. Peace with creation

Isaiah 11:6-9 “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie with the goat... The infant will play near the hole of the cobra and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

The wealth of Christ's Kingdom is constant increase and permanent peace... YES, permanent!!

vs. 7 "Of the increase of his kingdom and of peace THERE WILL BE NO END."

What is the nature of that "increase"??

The word can also be translated "abundance"... but all the translators go with "increase"... a sense that the greatness of the Kingdom will just keep on expanding forever

It will keep expanding, keep increasing, keep getting greater

BUT can something expand forever?

Meditating on this has brought me tremendous insight into our future heavenly life

I used to think of heaven as a static place...

We would instantly be changed and made like Christ

We would instantly know Him as perfectly as He knows us

And there we would be forever, never changing, never growing... just there worshipping

And there would be no new people added, since there will be no marriage nor giving in marriage

Everything would be instantly perfect, and how can one improve on perfection... it would be like a picture... unmoving, unchanging perfection

I thought the scriptures even taught this static view:

ESV 1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Seeing Christ face to face would be like an instant download of knowledge... knowing Christ as fully as He's known me

But here's my new insight...

Even though we will be perfectly holy, totally conformed to the image of Christ, mentally flawless, physically flawless, emotionally flawless... yet for all of that we will still be FINITE CREATURES... with finite minds

Angels are morally flawless and they long to look into the unfolding redemptive plan of God

1 Peter 1:12 Even angels long to look into these things.

And they ask questions of each other:

Daniel 12:6 One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?"

So when we are living in the New Heaven and New Earth, we will be morally, mentally and physically perfect, but we will still be able to learn

And the topic we will be studying will be INFINITE... knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ:

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

So we will spend eternity... an infinite time... studying an infinite topic: the glory of God in Christ:

So also we will spend eternity studying what Christ did in each of our lives to save us

John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

There will be a multitude greater than anyone can count from every tribe and language... they will have come from every era of church history as well...

Imagine learning all that Jesus did in the life of a Nestorian Christian missionary to China in 635 A.D. during the T'ang dynasty, finding out how God used him to bring Chinese people to faith in Christ at that time; now imagine having that conversation with Christ there supplying hidden spiritual information about what He was doing in the lives of the Chinese to make the gospel effective

Imagine talking to a Japanese Christian martyred during the reign of the Shogun Hideyoshi in 1597... talking to him about his faith, about what he experienced; now imagine having Christ in that conversation as well, describing what sovereign power He exerted to make that martyr's death most glorious for the advance of the gospel

We have twenty centuries of church history to relearn, with a countless multitude of people from all over the world, and the topic will always be the same: the glory of God in the salvation of human sinners

Isaiah 41:22 Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome.

By learning the greatness of God in Himself and the great acts of God in the past, we will be constantly saturated with the glory of God

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The New Heaven and New Earth will see therefore a constant INCREASE in the Kingdom in that the people of the Kingdom will be constantly learning more and more about God and Christ

C. The Nature of His Kingdom: Prophetic, Secure, Holy, Eternal

vs. 7 “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.”

1. David’s throne... PROPHETIC KINGDOM
2. “established and upheld”... SECURE KINGDOM
3. “justice and righteousness”... HOLY KINGDOM

Hebrews 1:8-10 “Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.”

4. “from that time on and forever”... ETERNAL KINGDOM

D. The Power of His Kingdom... the ZEAL OF THE LORD ALMIGHTY

1. What is the “zeal” of God?
 - a. a burning fire, a passion, like the anger of a jealous husband
 - b. a drive to accomplish great things... incredible energy to build
2. What is God “zealous” for?
 - a. the glory of His name
 - b. the glory of His Son
 - c. the honor of His word: His promise to David
 - d. the holiness and welfare of His people
3. Christ’s reign in no way threatens God... quite the opposite

Philippians 2:9-11 “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

God's burning zeal is to exalt His Son... He will take the name of His Son to the ends of the earth, and all His enemies will either come into His kingdom as His servants or they will be destroyed

Hebrews 1:13 "To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'"

V. Application:

A. Understand:

1. The victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death is total and complete
2. He did it alone... no one helped Him
3. As in the day of Midian's defeat, he caused the enemy of God, Satan's kingdom, to destroy itself
4. He gives us the plunder... eternal life, peace, righteousness, good counsel forever

B. Worship & Obey the King

1. He will rule all the earth and everyone in it
2. Come to Him today and praise Him with a joyful heart for your salvation
3. Humbly bow and acknowledge that He has every right to rule over you
4. Let Him be your King... obey Him
5. Let Him also be your Wonderful Counselor... take His counsel

C. Study God and Christ NOW... let his kingdom increase in your heart now

A.W. Tozer:

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

STUDY CHRIST... KNOW CHRIST

Philippians 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.