

The gospels are filled with references to David, particularly the birth accounts of Jesus. This child born to this lowly woman Mary would be born in the city of David (Micah 5:2/Luke 2), he is a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (1:69), and an angel told Mary that the Lord God would give her child the throne of David (Luke 1:32). When we heard a couple of weeks ago about the accusations that Jesus received from the Pharisees attributing His exorcisms as the work of Beelzebul, it was because the people were wondering if Jesus was "the son of David?" (Matt 12:23).

This is important, as it was with Abraham, because the Scripture foretold that the Seed of Eve who would win this great cosmic battle would be the Son of David. God promised David, through the prophet Nathan, that one of his descendants would be THE King that would heal the world and set things right. Isaiah 9 is one of the most well-known OT promises of this coming son of David who would rule on a throne in an eternal kingdom, and I'm sure that you've heard its refrain in Handel's *Messiah*. However, this passage also tells us a couple of things about this Son of David that are more than impressions of power and miracle, but about hope and salvation particularized. Let's look at a few:

1. The Curse Has Brought Us into the Deep Darkness of Death
 - a. Isaiah wrote in a time of deep national tragedy and agony b/c the Assyrians were coming to destroy
 - i. The people had rejected the LORD, again, and had turned to inquiring from necromancers and mediums and had run to the kings of Assyria for rescue instead of to the LORD
 - ii. "To the Teaching and the Testimony!"
 - iii. The curse of their unbelief had befallen a kingless people and they were plunged into the darkness of warfare and of ignorance of God "who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob" (8:17) and had become "a sanctuary and a stone of offense...and a rock of stumbling...many stumbled upon him"
 - b. This is the mood of chapter 9: hope comes in the darkest night
 - i. Those who walk in darkness, deep darkness
 1. Yoke of burden, rod of an oppressor, boot of a warrior, garment rolled in blood
 - c. This mood of darkness is correlative to the curse and its immediate consequences, the violence and murder of Abel by Cain, the ever-existing presence of death
 - i. The darkness prophetically proclaimed by Isaiah is the darkness, gloom, anguish, and oppression of death
 1. Hebrew poetic structure shows us this by equating the darkness of our existence with the bloody armor of war
 2. The light burns up the bloody garments of war – of death and the fear of death
 - ii. Also, "deep darkness" in v2 is the same phrase used in Psalm 23:4, "the shadow of death"
 1. In the LXX it is translated, "death darkness"
 2. It is a darkness so deep that it is unknown, unseen and unseeable, the darkness of the unknown darkness, i.e. death
 - d. Death casts a darkness over everything in life, and all humanity sees the shadow growing and is powerless to escape it
 - i. We usually respond to this reality with willful ignorance, a kind of choice blindness so that we don't have to face into the reality of such darkness and the fears with which it comes
 1. We distract ourselves with various pleasure-seeking and searches for happiness, or even sadness, to keep us from speaking about and dealing with death
 2. Psychologist Rollo May (quoted in Christianity Magazine) points to our culture's obsession with sex: "The clamour of sex drowns out the ever-waiting presence of death...Death is the symbol of ultimate impotence and finiteness. What would we see if we cut through our obsession with sex? That we must die."
 - a. There has never been a time in history that frantically pursues sex so casually as ours

- b. Even when Rome, etc. was sexually immoral, there were structures and responsibilities, but not here and now
 - c. This is largely true, I contend, because we are pursuing everything we can while we can because there is no consequence and no hope of anything beyond it
 - 3. Ernest Becker won a Pulitzer Prize for his book, *The Denial of Death*, in which he argues that humans live life denying the reality of death in every practical way by *making sex, money, and politics* ULTIMATE
 - a. See what dominate our news cycles
 - b. How many are about sex, money, or politics?
- ii. We also may respond to it by trying to beat it back through our own perceived power
 - 1. Medical resources help us to live longer...but why? What do we do these extra years, but chase our futile tail of ever-failing weakness pointing us to our finitude.
 - 2. We have therapeutic systems and therapeutic drugs to help us deal with the fear of death and our anxiety over its impending arrival
 - 3. Yet, the death rate remains the same, doesn't it? 1:1
- iii. In truth, though we have so many resources at our hands to save and extend the length of our lives, this anecdotally shows that our society is more anxious about death than most
 - 1. Funerals: Dealing with Death
 - a. We avoid dealing with death at all costs – close the damn casket!
 - b. We want a funeral done and over in under an hour – get it over with!
 - c. We even have experts to deal with it so that we don't have to
 - i. This was not the case throughout history
 - d. If we were to consider how many dead bodies that you have come into contact with and compare it to the rest of the world and the rest of the ages, how would it compare?
 - 2. It is also true that our society, probably more so than any other culture in history, denies that there is anything after death
 - a. At best, our universities and therefore, the prevailing winds of our society, admit that we simply cannot know, that the afterlife is “improbable”
 - b. Honest philosophers conclude from this position, that everything in your life, then, is absolutely meaningless
 - i. But nobody wants to live this way, and frankly nobody does live this way.
 - ii. This resistance to living, fighting, loving, in the light of meaninglessness is, then, evidence that our conclusions are not befitting our existence
 - c. It is trying to live in what Camus labelled “absurdity”, that is that we are to wring out all the life we can in this world knowing that none of it matters individually, socially, cosmically that we have labelled as life
 - i. If Shakespeare was right in that “Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more: it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” (*Macbeth*), then why do anything at all?
 - ii. We are all like Sisyphus, pushing a rock up a hill endlessly for no reason and to no fruitful end.
 - iii. Trying to make sense of school shooters in this absurdity will leave you without any sure moral footing or existential explanation
- e. Death is a dark shadow of darkness over us whether we believe that there is no afterlife or whether we believe that there is an afterlife but have never seen it
 - i. This “great unknown” is the deep shadow that we all live under

2. Jesus Christ is the Eternal King Who Chases the Shadow of Death Away

- a. 9:1 - Gloom and anguish will flee from Galilee
 - i. In the latter days God made glorious the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations
 - ii. From Galilee would spring forth light and glory, the channel that runs to the sea and drains the waters of destruction of the Assyrian River
 - iii. From Galilee shall spring forth a child in the line of David to assume His throne and bring hope to the nations from amidst the deep darkness
- b. Luke 2:32 - He is the "light to the Gentiles", which is "glory to Israel"
 - i. John says of Him, "In Him is Light and He is the Light of all men"
- c. Jesus makes death, in the words of Bonhoeffer, "a festival"
 - i. Death loses its power and its fear because Jesus comes from the other side in power and in glory and in victory
 1. Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again – thus, death has no authority over Him! (Rom 6:9)
 2. The "last Adam" became a life-giving Spirit, for the first man was of the earth, but the second Man is "from heaven" (1 Cor 15:45-47)
 - ii. Life is ruined for this world, but empowered by His Spirit through this same victory over death and the giving of His darkness-expelling Spirit to us
 1. "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you...He will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom 8:11)
 2. We live now, then, in the Light of this truth: Jesus rules and reigns as the King not over merely a single nation in a single locale in the Middle East, but He reigns over all the earth, over all nations, and He rules them with absolute authority
 - a. This gives us hope and expectation of goodness and glory *because our King is good and glorious and willing, which we know because of the gospel!*
 3. "Then comes the end, when He delivers the Kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and every power!" (1 Cor 15:24)
 - a. We live in the light of the Victorious King who is overthrowing every power against God and against Man, every unworthy ruler and unworthy power and unrighteous authority in this world
 - b. For He must reign now until He has put every enemy under His feet, the last of which is DEATH itself!
 - c. That day has come and is coming for all!
 - iii. Death serves Christians now for the better – portion of George Herbert's poem, "Time"

Perhaps some such of old did passe,
Who above all things lov'd this life:
To whom thy sithe a hatchet was,
Which now is but a pruning knife.
Christ's coming hath made man thy debter,
Since by thy cutting he grows better.

And in his blessing thou art blest:
For where thou onely wert before
An executioner at best;
Thou art a gard'ner now, and more,
An usher to convey our souls
Beyond the utmost starres and poles.

1. All death can do now is plant the inglorious seed in the ground that God's spiritual work may raise it to the newness and glory of eternal life
2. Death is a temporary servant to Christians, because Christ has mastered it and as its Master it must submit to His work and purpose
 - a. And His purpose for His people is perfection by His power!!
- d. Because Jesus was born in a manger, this world is not all that there is!
 - i. This Son of David won a greater victory than David ever did!
 - ii. If Saul slayed thousands and David ten thousands, well Jesus slayed Death itself, the defeater of every human, billions and billions!!

3. The Eternal King Dispels All Darkness and Doom

a. What kind of King is this King of Light?

i. Born "to us, a Son is given"

1. The King of all Glory was born to us as a gift to us, came to us, died for us, drew near to us
2. We are not rescued from the darkness of death because of what we do, but because of what this child born to us is and does – as a gift given by God
 - a. Unlike other religions, Jesus is not merely a teacher, but a Rescuer, one on whose shoulders rest all the power of time, space, and spirit
 - b. Jesus doesn't show us what to do, that we might see the light, but He does it and gives His Spirit to give us new eyes that see – it's all His doing!
 - i. Even our faith, our humble dependence and trust, is a gift from God (Eph 2:8), not a result of sucking it up or gaining enough knowledge or achieving some reason
 - ii. It is, rather, a coming undone, an undoing rather than a doing, a falling upon rather than a reaching for
3. If Christmas is just a story about how I should live, then it's not beautiful nor is it even inspiring, it is crushing and debilitating
4. But if Christmas *happened*, then if Jesus came to us, came for us, died for us, raised for us, it is glorious and a cause of deep, deep rejoicing, and song, and dance, and parties!
 - a. Christmas is, therefore, a gift from God to you, not a request or demand gifts from God!

ii. Wonderful Counselor

1. This King is not a distant King up in His castle, away from you and resistant to letting you in
2. He is the counselor – the one who comes to you! The one who draws near to you for your help
 - a. Nobody who is righteous needs a counselor, do they? No! Only people who struggle, who are broken, who cannot see rightly, who need help need a counselor
 - b. So, what does this tell us? Jesus came knowing this and He came for this and He was given by God for those who need help!
 - c. He draws near to you in your brokenness and sin, in your struggles and in your failures, and in the stench of your stable muck to bring you up to Himself.

iii. Father of Eternity

1. This King was there before time began – He beget time itself – He fathered forever
2. We will talk more about this next week, but let it be said that this King is powerful, all-knowing, unsurpassable, unassailable, and what He protects is protected

- a. Nothing surprises Him and nothing can contend with Him
 - b. Before Him the Sun is but a 2-watt bulb and the Andromeda galaxy is but a shiny saucer on His table
- iv. Prince of Peace
- 1. This King leads you to perfect peace, reconciling the chaos of the darkness by bringing together the holy God and sinful man by bearing the curse of that original Fall, the Seed of Eve wears the crown of the Serpent's doom by penetrating death itself and bursting forth from the grave in triumph!
 - 2. This King's crown indicates a rule of reconciliation by victory, a triumph and a treasure won by obedience
- b. In His presence night itself flees at the blazing glory of God in the face of Jesus
- i. Revelation 21:23 – “and the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb”
 - ii. Revelation 22:1-5 – “and there will be no more night... for the Lord God will be their light”
- c. Why do we use lights to celebrate Christmas?
- i. It is because we believe in the promise that the Light of God has entered into the world to expel the darkness of sin, oppression, and death
 - ii. Every little light on that tree routs the shadow and causes it to flee
 - iii. You see, these lights are not merely decoration, they are prophetic, they are preaching – “Do you see what I see?!”
 - 1. The King of Light has broken into our world to expel the darkness of sin and death and to shine the hope of life and joyful friendship with God...from the garden in the cool of the day to the city with no night.
 - 2. This King loves you more deeply than you could ever imagine, for he defeated the darkness of death by sinlessly swallowing sin's sum in His body on His tree and now reigns in victory over death having been raised from the dead to an eternal throne

Don't look at those little lights the same way this year. Behold them for what they are, sacred symbols of salvation, torches of typology, though small in scale they tell the story of the King of Light that chases the shadow of death away with blazing coals of His holy altar's fire, the story...

Of the darkness Defeater, the shadow Un-Seater,
 Noble Fire that swallows the cold
 That I might see rightly and through the dark
 nightly,
 Tread humbly and fearlessly bold
 Endless Light pre-existing chose nightfall
 resisting
 In quaffing death's cup for us all
 He laid aside glory for blood-spilling story,
 His Father's forgiveness to call
 For me death's be causer, the rebel heart rouser,
 Who sided with sin and the snake
 What glory becomes Him for no reason but sin

Ventured my verdict to take
 Grace fitted heart's breastplate, His crown
 towering up straight,
 The dragon struck dumb by the tree
 He rose when the victor, a whore-bride he picked
 her,
 And crushed viper's head on day three
 Now reigning all glorious, no ends left before us,
 He draws on His love and delight
 Adam's foolish rogue-blooded, He calls us
 Beloved
 A New Name! “Queen of Heaven” in His sight