

A GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING

(Isaiah 9:1-7)

It's a season of gifts and giving...

The first Christmas gift was a gift that keeps on giving...

- **The gift of HOPE from a LIGHT**

¹Nevertheless, 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 honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—²The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

A series of dark/light contrasts:

Dark	Light
<i>gloom...distress</i>	<i>no more gloom</i>
<i>in the past, he humbled</i>	<i>in the future, he will honor</i>
<i>people walking in darkness</i>	<i>have seen a great light</i>
<i>on those living in the land of deep darkness</i>	<i>a light has dawned</i>

- **The gift of JOY from a LIFT**

³You 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. ⁴For 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. ⁵Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

The JOY is described with harvest and battle images: *You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy*

they rejoice as people rejoice at the harvest

they rejoice as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder

The LIFT is described with oppression and battle images: *For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you shattered*

shattered the yoke that burdens them

shattered the bar across their shoulders

shattered the rod of their oppressor

every warrior's boot...destined for burning

every garment rolled in blood...fuel for the fire

- **Through a PROMISE and a PERSON**

6For 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. 7Of 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.

For the promise IS a person, described as:

<i>Wonderful Counselor</i>	...to guide us
<i>Mighty God</i>	...to strengthen us
<i>Everlasting Father</i>	...to love us
<i>Prince of Peace</i>	...to calm us
<i>Reigning Ruler...forever</i>	...to ensure the LIGHT keeps shining ...to ensure the burden stays LIFTED ...to rule in our hearts

This is a gift you can COUNT ON:

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this

That first Christmas, people were anticipating a different gift...

Anticipation soared for “a new order of the ages” at the time of Jesus’ birth. The Roman poet Virgil coined that phrase, sounding like an Old Testament prophet as he declared that “a new human race is descending from the heights of heaven,” a change that would come about due to “the birth of a child, with whom the iron age of humanity will end, and the golden age begin.” Virgil wrote these messianic words not about Jesus, however, but about Caesar Augustus, the “present deity,” the “restorer of the world,” who had managed to reunite the empire after the civil war sparked by Julius Caesar’s assassination.

(Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*)

...but instead, we got Jesus:

It’s an amazing story.... A young girl gives birth to a tiny baby in a despised little town in an oppressed little country under the heel of the greatest superpower in history. And that little baby becomes a young man who by the time he is thirty-three has undermined the superpower and injected into human culture an inextinguishable hope in the form of good news. He single-handedly releases...power through the cross and defeats the darkness that was afoot in all humanity.

(Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*)