Isaiah 9:1-7 2005B

 [[1]](#endnote-1)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 honor Galilee of the Gen­tiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—[[2]](#endnote-2)The people walking in darkness have seen a great Light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a Light has dawned. [[3]](#endnote-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. [[4]](#endnote-4)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. [[5]](#endnote-5)Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. [[6]](#endnote-6)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]](#endnote-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.

 It is wonderful to see so many soldiers coming home for Christmas. Among them is my son-in-law’s brother, Nick. Families are excited everywhere to welcome the soldiers home alive. Finally the war in Iraq is over, ten years after the attack on America.

 That is what the prophet Isaiah is writing about in his Christmas account of Jesus’ birth. The birth of our Savior means that the war is over and we have peace. The Savior born for us is the One who has brought the war to a finish and established permanent peace.

 Isaiah writes about a war that had hit “**the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali**” especially hard. They are the northernmost tribes of Israel. When the Assyrians came to visit, they would hit Zebulun and Naphtali first. And they hit them with all they had. At that time, Assyria was the world empire. The Assyrian soldiers were noted for being espe­cially brutal and ruthless. It was during Isaiah’s ministry that the Assyrians came and put an end to the northern kingdom of Israel. The Israelite soldiers were defeated and slain. The remaining people were taken captive and deported, never to be heard from again. After mopping up in the north, the Assyrian army came down to Jerusalem and besieged it. In answer to Isaiah’s prayer, the Lord sent an angel to kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night, which put an end to the Assyrian advance.

 But the war had left many marks on the land. Isaiah notes, “**Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.**” There were battlefields that had not yet been cleaned up. There were all kinds of remnants of war, and the people could never forget what had hap­pened. They would remem­ber the Assyrian attack for a long time. In fact, because of the record in the Bible, we still remember it.

 It is in the face of this attack, of this deliverance from their enemies, that Isaiah writes about our Savior. Because the Savior has come, the war is over and we are victorious. Our Champion has fought for us and complete­ly defeated the enemy. Our Champion was born as a Baby in Bethlehem, but He has defeated all our enemies just outside of nearby Jerusalem.

 Today there are still remnants of the warfare left over. There are still plenty of battlefields in our lives that have not yet been cleaned up. On the living room floor after all the presents have been opened, the wrapping paper and ribbons and packaging is everywhere, and needs to be gathered up and disposed of. So there are still plenty of battlefields where the leftovers of war remain. The wounds from the enemy’s attack still need to heal. Some still need to be convinced that the battle really is over.

 There are still plenty of places like northern Israel where most peo­ple have been defeated, where many have been carried off into captivity, where there is much mourning over those who have been slain. Even at Isaiah’s time, there were very few believers. Even after the amazing defeat of the Assyrian army at the gates of Jerusalem accomplished by prayer, there were very few believers. It was Isaiah who rhetorically asked, “**Who has believed our message?**” Is53v1. It seemed that no one had believed. The Assyrian army had been the tool used by the Lord to bring judgment on the northern tribes of Israel which as a whole had rejected Him.

 But even in the south, even after the defeat of the Assyrian army, there were many who remained defeated. They didn’t realize that the battle was over because they had given up long before. They had stopped fighting. They had surrendered. They let the battle roll over them. They joined those who think that the real meaning of Christmas is shopping. They joined those who become oh so reverent in their worship of Santa Claus. They joined those who spend more than they can afford and get so little out of it. They joined those who need to clean up the broken toys and start scraping together a minimum payment for the credit card bills.

 Isaiah’s message for us today is that the battle is over, peace is established, permanent peace, because our Savior has come. He is the Prince of Peace, the One who owns the peace and will never give it up. Isaiah writes, “**Of the increase of His govern­­ment and peace there will be no end.**” He rules permanently. No matter how many try to impersonate Santa Claus, our King remains on His throne. “**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.**” There is no end to His reign and to His rule and to His peace.

 “**The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.**” That’s ano­ther way of saying that God so loved the world. If you ever question God’s love, look at Christmas. Look at what our God did for us. He left behind His home and entered our world. He was born into the barn out back, where it was cold and dark and lonely. He was worshiped by smelly shepherds, but ignored by the rest. He who created the universe grew up in poverty. He who made all things owned none of them. He did that, He went through that, because of His love for us. His love is a zealous love, a love that will not give up.

 Let the return of the soldiers from Iraq remind you that our warfare is also over. We have a King, a Champion, a Baby, who has defeated all our enemies for us. We can therefore live as victors, not as the defeated, because our Savior is always with us. Amen.

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
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