

Look to the light

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[0 : 00] ...for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven and became as much superior! ...as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son? Today I become your father, or again I will be his father, and he will be my son.

...and it's interesting, it's a time Christmas where we think about angels quite a lot. We have angels on some of our Christmas trees, but they're not the ones we're worshipping. Hebrews makes it very clear. The son is so much superior. He is God himself, and the angels do not hold that position. And it continues there in verse 6, and again when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, let all God's angels worship him. And speaking of the angels, he says he makes his angels spirits and his servants flames of fire. But about the sun, he says, your throne, O God, will last forever. A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, your God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

[1 : 21] He also says, in the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens of the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain. They will wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe, like a garment. They will be changed, but you remain the same, and your years will never end.

To which of your angels did God ever say, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool? But for his son, he has said those words. And so we're going to sing, as the angels would come and worship Christ, the newborn king. We'll stand and sing this hymn together, and then we've got some words of scripture to say another song. So remain standing after this song if you can.

Christ, let's say together. In the beginning was the words, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome us. The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Let's sing about that word made flesh. Let's sing about that word made flesh. We're going to turn to pray to our God together. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the truths that we've been singing about, that are just so astonishing that the word became flesh.

[3 : 30] The Lord Jesus left the heights of heaven to come to this world, exchange the joy of heaven for the anguish of a cross.

Father, we thank you for that. We thank you for this incredible expression of love. For this world, that you would give your only begotten Son.

And Father God, thank you for counting so many of us here as part of those who believe and find in him everlasting life. And Heavenly Father, how we long that many, many more people, before the Lord Jesus returns, would come and find that everlasting life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we do ask that the truths that have been proclaimed over this Christmas time, here and in many other churches, in this city, in this country, and around the world, would be ones which would impact people's hearts and lives, not just at Christmas, but throughout the year and the rest of their lives, Father.

That they would know the great hope and certainty that can be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. And please help us as your church to be continuing to be faithfully proclaiming this gospel message.

[5 : 02] Heavenly Father, we do ask for those who are struggling at this time. Father, we think of those in our church who are caring for loved ones.

Father, we pray that you would help them in the demands and challenges that places on them and their families. Father, we pray that you would help them in the demands. And Father, we ask for those who are unwell, Father, that you would please bring healing.

Father, we praise you for your provision for work for Ashwin, Father, next year, for a few months. Father, we pray that you would help him in that work. And as he prepares to undertake it. We pray that it would provide long-term work for him as well.

Father, we pray for those who are also in need of work, who don't yet have it. And we pray, Father, that you would provide. Father, we thank you for the many students amongst us who are not with us at the moment, gone back home for the holidays.

[6 : 17] Father, we pray that you would help them. Particularly help them where they have exams coming up over the next few weeks. Help them to be diligent in their studies.

And would you bring them back safely amongst us, we pray. Father, there's others away from us visiting, family and friends. And we do pray for them that you would grant them a really good time. And please grant them safe travel back amongst us, we pray. And please recather your church safely, we ask. And Father God, we pray that you would help us as we prepare to celebrate the new year.

We pray that you would help us as we go into the new year. That you would help us to be people that are continuing to honor you. Continuing to be growing in holiness, Father.

And would you help us as a church? Would you be supplying for our needs, we pray? Would you particularly help us as we think through buildings here, this building that we're in, about making possible changes that will help us to use the building even better for your glory?

[7 : 41] Please give wisdom, we pray, in that area. And please help us in terms of church accommodation as well, the church workers.

Father, we pray that you would give us so much help and wisdom on this complicated matter. And we pray for these things that are costly things.

We pray that if it's your will for us to go ahead with either or both of them, that you would provide the means for that to happen. And Lord, make it clear the timing as well that when it should happen to you.

And help us to focus on keeping this matter before you in prayer. Trusting that you are a big God who can provide big things.

Trusting that you are a big God who can provide big things for us to do. Trusting that your will and your purposes for your church are what is best. So help us all be praying. And we ask these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Savior.

[8 : 48] Amen. Amen. Amen. And just a few announcements to share with you. First of all, a reminder that this evening we're meeting again. And this evening will be a communion service.

So please, if you're able to join us for that time, please do come along this evening at half past six as we get to remember the Lord Jesus Christ's death in a very special way, taking the bread and the wine.

There's a New Year's gathering. Not a prayer meeting on Wednesday. We had a New Year's gathering at Jerome and Megan's. I think best to just come and see you guys if you want an address and more details if that's helpful.

It's like bring and share food. Bring and share food. Excellent. Obviously, if you can't bring anything, that's fine. Thank you. Thank you. We're looking forward to that.

And that's from five o'clock till potentially late. If there's any wild people wanting to stay up till midnight. First Sunday of the month next week even.

[9 : 58] So that means CY will be on in the afternoon, five till 6.15, just to note that. And then another thing I've been sharing over the last few weeks about the Sussex Gospel Partnerships annual conference.

It's moved from November to January so that we've got something to look forward to in January. End of the month, Saturday, 31st of January, All Saints Cobra.

Sort of a 40-ish minute drive or a bus ride away. And it's on the theme of mission evangelism. With an evangelist from Wales called Graham Daniels, who's a really enthusiastic, energetic guy.

He will enthuse us about this important subject of the God who saves, welcoming the lost. It's £15 for an adult, £5 for children.

Do book in if you're able to. We're going to sing again. I think we're going to sing two songs. Is that right? I can't remember what the second song is.

[11:02] So that's great. A Little Town of Bethlehem is the first one. Let's go one at a time. Let's see how we go. Thank you. All the glory for all he has achieved through his birth, death, burial and resurrection.

So let's sing that there is a higher throne. Father, thank you so much that the Lord Jesus came down in order to bring us to you and to bring us to new life in you and one day to our future home in glory where we will say all glory, all wisdom, all power, all strength, all honour, all thanks belongs to you.

Our great saving God. Father, we pray now as we look again at your words, we pray that you would work in us and speak to us and shape us and mould us in order to prepare us for that time where we get to spend eternity with you.

Please speak to us, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Amen. You be seated. We're going to read together from the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah.

We've been, over these last few weeks, looking at just a few portions from Isaiah, which particularly fit some of the Christmas themes.

[12:33] So we were in Isaiah chapter 1 a few weeks ago, thinking, can we have a white Christmas? And we saw that, yes, though our sins are like scarlet, and red as crimson, they can be as white as snow.

And then last week we were in Isaiah 2 thinking, can we have peace on earth? And we believe that, yes, because of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can have peace, not in the sense of an end to war here and brokenness in our world, but peace with God.

And one day the future, glorious peace that he will bring in for his people in the new creation. And now this morning we're going to think from this very famous passage, which is often read at carol services.

Indeed, we read it last week at carols by candlelight from Isaiah, the end of Isaiah chapter 8 into chapter 9 about the dawning of light and the arrival of a child.

So let's hear God's word together. Isaiah 8 verse 19. When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their gods?

[13:54] Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land. When they are famished, they will become enraged and looking upwards will curse their God and their King.

Then they will look towards the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom and they will be thrust into utter darkness. Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who are 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.

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

[15:03] 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 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.

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. 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.

[16:09] the zeal of the Lord will accomplish this. So let's keep our Bibles open and we're going to look at that passage together.

Well, we're still very much in the Christmas season, although possibly it feels like it's all done with. But don't forget 12 days of Christmas, isn't it?

And so we still find Christmas trees are up. Christmas lights are still shining in the darkness. But in the next week, after we've had a New Year's bash at the Pearsons, we'll be thinking about taking our Christmas trees, our Christmas lights down, and we'll be ushered into the cold, dark, dreaded month of January, which seems to last double the length of time compared to any other month of the year.

But the picture of darkness that we anticipate in January, we sort of read about that in this reading. It was important that we read those few words in Isaiah chapter 8 to get some context for Isaiah chapter 9.

Helps us to feel the darkness that was being experienced among God's people. Verse 22 says this, Then they will look towards the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

[18:02] And that could be a verse that we take for the month of January. But the darkness is not the literal darkness we see during January, during our winter time.

but it's a spiritual darkness. It's life away from God and his blessing.

Verse 19 shows us that the people in Israel are not looking to God at all. Look where they're consulting. When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, you whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their gods, why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

Instead of turning to God, they're consulting these mediums and spiritists and even the dead. What good is turning to the dead when you can turn to the living God?

And there is much injustice and poverty in the nation as they're living life away from their God.

[19:18] Look at verse 21. Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land. When they become famished, they will become enraged and looking upwards will curse their king and their gods.

much injustice, much poverty, people distressed, people hungry, people famished.

And the only time they look to God is when they curse him. And so, the description at the end of verse 20 seems appropriate.

There is no light. There is no light of dawn amongst them. A very spiritually dark situation. And if you read the wider context, you may even remember from chapter 7, there was darkness amongst the leadership.

King Ahaz was ruling and he made an alliance with their enemies, the Assyrians. You see that a bit in chapter 7 and a bit more when you read a passage in Kings as well.

[20:34] Again, more sort of looking to the earth, looking to the things around them rather than to their gods. The Assyrians were a big superpower of the day. Of course, they want to make a deal with them.

But surely, they're not bigger than the Lord Almighty. The Lord God of Israel, who was Isaiah saw in chapter 6, sits on his throne.

It's a dark situation. And it fills a bit of a picture about how the world around us is like. How the world around us deals with darkness.

There is much darkness in our world. There are people who do not look to the Lord. There are people who are going distressed and hungry and famished. And instead of looking to the light of the Lord at Christmas time, we stick up little fairy lights and send cards that say peace on earth and joy on them.

But they're not. Many people are not looking to God. And the only time many people do look to God is just by cursing him. But this passage helps us to see that there is an end point to the darkness.

[22:01] The deep, dark gloom that feels never ending will come to an end, this passage says. And we see that as we first look to the light.

Look to the light. Look to the light. It's rising in Galilee. Verse 1 of chapter 9. Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who are in distress.

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

Because a light is going to rise in Galilee. It's the northern part of Israel where actually when the Assyrians later come to take the northern kingdom into exile, it is there that they begin according to a verse in the book of 2 Kings.

This is an area of Israel which has experienced the darkness of enemies rising in the lands. the earth of Israel. But according to this passage, that's in the past.

[23 : 19] There is a ray of hope, a ray of light coming. There is a new day which is dawning. And we see that these verses are quoted in Matthew's gospel.

It's worth just looking at Matthew chapter 4 so we can see where that light comes from. Matthew chapter 4. Apologies, this PowerPoint is moving by itself so I'm just going to forget it.

Matthew chapter 4 verse 12. When Jesus heard that John had been put into prison, he withdrew to Galilee, leaving Nazareth.

He went and lived in Capernaum which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Recognize those verses from our passage? Those places from our passage?

To fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah, land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations, the people living in darkness have seen a great light.

[24 : 39] On those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned. This is Jesus. Beginning of his public ministry and Matthew says, look, he is the light.

He is the promised ray of hope to this northern part of Israel, to Galilee. He spent time there. Jesus, the light dawning in the darkness.

So look to the light. It's rising in Galilee and it's rising like a new day. Look at verse two.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. Chapter eight, verse 20 said, no light of dawn was there and now this verse says a light has dawned.

Describe like the light of a new day, a new day dawning. A new day will dawn in Israel. And it's no accident surely that it compares this with the rising of a sun.

[25 : 54] The sun, the source of all light and life that we find on the earth. Without the sun, this world would cease to exist.

There would be no life, would there? And so is true spiritually. If the light of the Lord didn't rise on God's people, there would be no life, no spiritual life.

And yet wonderfully in Jesus we find in him it was the life and that life was the light of all mankind.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Jesus, Jesus, the great son of God, the light of life has stepped down into our dark world. Stepped down where his people were not looking to him and only cursing him and yet he came.

When it's dark at night, we struggle don't we to see the dangers around us. Many people feel fearful about going out into the dark.

[27 : 02] And yet in the daytime when the sun is shining, we feel comfortable outside because we can see what's around us. The dangers become less scary, less of a threat.

And Jesus coming into our worlds as the light of the Lord does not mean there's an end to all human darkness and dangers, but he does help us to see things clearly.

To see our dark situations, to see the darkness even in our own hearts. The light exposes what's there, doesn't it?

And dawns, as the light dawns, it exposes our own deeds of darkness and exposes our need to come into the light of the Lord who is rising in the world.

lights. The light rises in Galilee, the light rises like a new day, and the light rises to bring joy in the battle.

[28 : 08] Verse 3, 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.

the dawning of this light will attract so many to it that this land will see expansion. And as the joy increases in the land for this light has dawned, so will the nation increase.

And no longer is the scene full of sadness and darkness and gloom, but instead it's like the joy at the harvest time when the food is gathered in.

Or at the end of a battle where there is joy, we fought the battle and now we've won and we're in a time of peace. And I suspect if Isaiah was writing today, he would give us some different pictures, like potentially the joy of your team winning a trophy.

Or at home, we regularly watch the Formula One and it's extraordinary. At the end of a race, when the winners cross the finish line, they end up being taken to the podium and they go through the trophy ceremony and then comes out the champagne and they're spraying it all over the place and they have joy on their faces.

[29 : 35] Maybe that's the sort of picture Isaiah would share with us today. That's what it's like. It's a celebration, a joy. Joy has come. Light has come where there was once darkness.

And in verse 4, Isaiah mentions a very specific time in Israel's life. 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.

Midian's defeat, that was recorded in the book of Judges with Gideon, who was leading the people. At the time, he had an army of 3,000, who was going to have to face the Midianite army of hundreds of thousands.

And yet the Lord reduced the army down even further, from 3,000 down to 300. And surely they have no chance against the mighty Midianite army, who, as Judges 7 would tell, you have so many camels, you cannot count them.

They are more than the number of grains of sand on the seashore. 300 versus this vast army, no chance.

[30 : 55] And yet God ensured that his people would win the victory. He threw the Midianites into confusion, showing to the Israelites, it's not by your power and might that you're going to win the victory, it's by looking to me and my power and might.

I will make sure you win the victory. It's a rebuke to the people in Isaiah's time, who, like their king, are depending on themselves, looking to the earth for their answers, looking to the earth for success.

That's not how their ancestors have found it before, Isaiah is saying. That's not how you win with God, you need to recognize your own weakness. and lean on God's strength and then there can be joy in the battle.

And where there is battle, there is surely evil, the dark powers of evil going on. But remember this light that's dawning, that's rising in Galilee, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he himself knew one dark day of battle, on one Friday lunchtime, when the light of the world took up a wooden cross, and the world around him went dark, and God himself was dying for the sins of his people.

[32 : 36] evil. And that light, Gideon's army looked very weak and foolish. How can a dying man win a victory?

But there on that day, there on that Friday lunchtime, was God showing his awesome might and strength to win a great battle over darkness, over evil.

1 Corinthians chapter 1, do you turn there if you have a Bible, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, picks up on how weak and foolish the cross looks, and yet how powerful it is to remind ourselves of these verses.

1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 21, for since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolish of what was preached to save those who believe.

Jews demand signs, Greeks look for wisdom, or we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power and wisdom of God.

[34 : 12] God's, for the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. I'm sure Gideon, before he faced that Midianite army, was thinking, this looks foolish, but this was the wisdom of God going on so that they would win the battle.

And I'm sure many people looked at Jesus dying on the cross and thought this looks weak and foolish, but no, this is Christ's power on display.

This is the wisdom of God on display as he's dealing with the darkness, with the evil in our worlds, as the light of the world is bringing victory over darkness, over sin for his people.

And we see also in these verses that the light was rising to bring an end of warfare back in Isaiah 9. Every warrior's boot used in battle, every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

This light dawning is bringing an end to the darkness, is bringing an end to the battle. And so we need to keep looking to the light.

[35 : 47] Some of us, ourselves, are facing very dark situations in our lives at the moment. Perhaps Christmas for us hasn't been a time of great rejoicing.

It's been incredibly tough, actually. amazing. But no, from these verses, the light of life has come. And he has come to deal with the ultimate darkness in our world.

And by looking to him and the light that he brings, we get a real joy, like in the day of victory in a battle.

An incredible peace in dark situations. For we know how God has won the victory for us over darkness, over sin, over death.

And one day we will stand before the throne as we sang. completely at perfect rest with our God, dwelling in his perfect light.

[36 : 57] One day there will be no darkness at all. We keep looking to that light. And as we enter dark, cold January, a light has dawned.

The light of the Lord Jesus Christ has dawned in our dark world. We keep looking to him. look to the light. Secondly, look to a child.

Look to a child. See, the great light to bring an end to the darkness, the great rejoicing in victory is going to take place according to this passage through a child.

Verse 6. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. Which is astonishing that for these people to read that.

There's going to be an end to battle, there's going to be a great day of victory, but it's for a child. A better king is coming than King Ahaz.

[38 : 00] The government will be on his shoulders. But it's a child. Surely a typo. Surely a child cannot be the answer to all the hopes and dreams in the world.

Surely something's gone wrong here. At home, as you know, we've been rejoicing in the birth of our child Micah.

He's wonderful, but we have no expectations. He's come to bring great light and hope to the world. His smile certainly brings joy to our faces, but he gets very tearful at times and screams at times.

And if you place the government on our nation, nothing would get done, which you may think no change there, but seriously, the answer isn't found in a child, is it?

And yet we know this is how our God came. this is how the light began to rise in Israel through the birth of a child.

[39 : 13] We sang about it, a little town of Bethlehem. And we find in that child born in Bethlehem, the king who is going to rule forever.

And verse six speaks about the different titles, the different characteristics of this ruler, of his rule. Got wonderful counselor there.

When we find ourselves in distress and darkness of some kind, we may decide we need to chat to a counselor. They might be able to help us through dark and difficult times.

And there is no more wonderful counselor than this child being born, this light that's rising, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he offers many words of counsel and comfort that we can read in the Bible.

Famous words, come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. What wonderful counsel that is to us. Or I have come that you may have life and have it in abundance.

[40 : 32] What wonderful words of counsel to us. there's an amazing scene in the Gospels where people are trying to get a paralyzed man to the Lord Jesus.

But there's no room to get to him when he's in a house and people are crowding around listening to his wise counsel, wise teaching. And so instead they decide to go via the roof and so they cut a hole in the roof and they lower the man down and the man's paralyzed.

Jesus has power to heal. He's been showing that. And the first words of Jesus to this man are not you're healed, it's your sins are forgiven.

And we're scratching our heads at that point thinking hang on a minute, Jesus, that's not what this man needs. sin. If I went into hospital with a bleeding arm and went to A&E; and they gave me, I don't know, a bit of tinsel to wrap around it, that's not what I need, is it?

I need proper attention, proper bandage. This is not what this paralyzed man needs, is it? Sins are forgiven and yet those are the words this wonderful counselor gives to him first.

[41 : 54] And he speaks these wise words to him because he needs his sins forgiven far more than he needs to be able to get up and walk. What a wonderful counselor he is.

But then we're also told he's mighty God. And again, in that scene with the paralyzed man, he says, your sins are forgiven and people mutter to themselves saying, only God can give sin.

Who does this man think he is? And Jesus knows what they're thinking. And to prove that he is mighty God, fully able to forgive sins, he then says, pick up your mat and walk. And all through the gospels, there are miracles like that of various kinds showing this is mighty God. This is the wonderful counselor and mighty God among you. And surely there is nothing more mighty, nothing more miraculous than raising people from the dead.

And Jesus did that, didn't he? He raised the widow's son from the dead. He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. He raised his friend Lazarus from the dead.

[43 : 10] But even more mighty gods, the Lord Jesus Christ is placed in a tomb. And we think the story's over, we think he's dead, but no, he raises himself back up to life to prove to the world he really is mighty God.

So look to this child. He is wonderful counselor, he is mighty God, he is also everlasting father. Which always confuses me.

How can a son, child, be father? But we're not meant to here be thinking in terms of trinity, but rather characteristics of this child's rule.

But what does everlasting father show about his rule? I think it shows us love. My favorite Christmas advert this year was the waitress act.

A widower is rather down in the pub saying, got no one to love. Then he goes to Waitrose, perfect place isn't it, and orders the Sussex Charmer cheese, local reference, and there at the waitress counter is Keira Knightley, who turns up and orders the same cheese and they gaze into each other's eyes and they very quickly fall in love.

[44 : 40] And that seems to be waitress suggesting to us, what you need at Christmas is love. And that's what we all long for, isn't it? We long for love, we long to be loved.

And in this child he's come down, he offers us wonderful words of counsel, he is mighty God and he offers us an everlasting love, an everlasting father-like love, a love that will never end, it's everlasting.

everlasting. He'll be like a wise and tender father for his people. I love the words of Isaiah 42, verse 3, which say this, a bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. This is how he loves. If we're feeling bruised in some way this morning, and like we're about to break, or if we feel like we're running out, running on empty, like a candle wick about to end, nothing left to give, he will not snuff us out, he will not break us, he will love us very tenderly and gently. He's a father who is lovingly caring for his people and he won't ever let his people go. That's how incredible his everlasting love is.

[46 : 24] And he is prince of peace. The peace that Israel had longed for was one to overthrow their enemies.

That's the peace King Ahaz searches for as he tries to make a deal with the Assyrians. But it ends up bringing the judgment of exile rather than peace.

And by the time the child Jesus is born, we find Israel is under Roman rule. And surely the Messiah coming is going to overthrow their rule.

But he comes not like a great warrior on a war horse. peace. He comes to bring us a greater peace. One between us and God.

And that peace is one for us at the cross. Where the wonderful counselor who says what we need is our sins forgiven, dies for our sins.

[47 : 28] Where the mighty God looks weak and vulnerable and bleeds and dies in our place. cross. Where the everlasting father shows us incredible love to take our place on the cross for us.

And where the prince of peace dies in order to bring us peace with God. This is the child we need. This is the greatest Christmas gift this world could ever have.

This is the greatest Christmas gift we could ever have and it's found in this child. God who came to be with his people in their darkness and gloom.

Thirdly and finally and much more briefly, a look with certainty. See what's going to achieve this. End of verse 7.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Not clever political and military strategy by leaders in our world.

[48 : 43] That's not going to accomplish this great ray of light and this great hope, eternal hope and this great eternal rule. plan is down to the zeal of the Lord.

It would be a long time before the fulfillment of these verses but God didn't forget them. God didn't forget his people. The zeal of the Lord will accomplish this.

darkness. Which means the Lord God Almighty is passionate to bring light to this dark world. It means the Lord God Almighty is passionate with everything he has because that child we know who came to the world is his very self.

The Lord Jesus Christ. Stepping down to be light in the darkness. We may look to the world around us and say that the same darkness there in Israel today is still around us.

People still go hungry and justice is being done. People are still cursing their maker. We look into our own lives, our own family's lives and see there is just darkness around us and no light of dawn.

[50 : 03] We may question what is the Lord doing about all this? Where is God in all the suffering we see? Where is God in all the evil that abounds? The zeal of the Lord accomplishes this.

The Lord does not sit idly by. He is passionate and he is zealous to do something about the darkness in our world. And Christmas has shown us that. He is with us in the darkness.

He is with us in the brokenness and suffering and the evil. And he himself was willing to experience darkness and evil as he himself was put to death at the hands of wicked men.

And the light of life, however much people try, did not get snuffed out. He is mighty God. He rose again and now he reigns in heaven and is seated on his throne.

And one day he will return. And we can be sure of that because the zeal of the Lord will accomplish this. He is passionate about this and he will do it.

[51 : 17] January is approaching. Apparently the Monday, the 19th of January, is called Blue Monday. Less than a month after Christmas, it's the most depressing day of the year.

But we've read of light dawning. we've read of joy expanding found in this child. And that surely, looking to him, looking to the light that he brings, that is what we need over these dark days.

Bring us hope and joy in the darkness. Let's pray. Amen. Father God, thank you so much that you have come into this world.

That your great light has dawned in the person of your son, the Lord Jesus. Thank you that the child was born, who is wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace.

Thank you for everything that he is. thank you that he is surely all that we need throughout our lives. Father, help us as we head into the dark, cold months of the year to be looking to and rejoicing in the light coming to this world.

[52 : 51] And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing a final song this. is a new song actually written this year but it goes to an old tune, the tune of Come Now Fount of Every Blessing.

And it begins, Come now see the Lord of heaven in a lowly manger laid. So we'll stand and we'll sing together when the music begins. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.