

Are You Ready for Christmas?

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[0 : 00] For the rest of you, please turn in your Bibles to the book of Isaiah.

The book of Isaiah. If you're a new visiting family coming in for the Christmas time, Christmas cheer, please accept my welcome.

My name is BK. I have the pleasure of serving as one of the pastors here. And just as Dave has talked about. And I'm glad he clarified that because when he sat on there, I thought he was advertising we could take pictures of him during the dinner.

But it's for us, right? You know, we can sit there and he had a great idea. I'm sure some of us, we will eat well tonight and might be good to take a nap there.

So, if you're just visiting, hey, you are just as welcome to our Christmas dinner as any one of us who've been here for many years. So please, if you'd like to eat well and enjoy some fellowship, you're certainly welcome to join us.

[1 : 09] So, please turn in your text, as I said, to Isaiah. Specifically, Isaiah chapter 8. As you all know, it is time for a Christmas sermon.

It's Christmas time. The shopping. Is everyone shopping done? Yes? I don't know if I can say this, but can I say praise the Lord for Amazon?

Am I allowed to say that? Because everything's been taken care of for me, right from the comforts of home. I love it. So, I'm ready for Christmas. How about you guys?

I love it. It has cured me of this last minute shopping. This morning, I want to ask you guys a few questions. And no, not all about shopping.

I want to ask you some questions about Christmas. One of the questions I was asking myself the other day is, do we really need to celebrate Christmas?

[2 : 14] I know it's a little bit of a shocking question. Now, before you give too much thought to this, and without understanding, let me fill you in a little bit of my thought process.

So, just a couple of weekends ago, my wife and I decided to make it a nice, quiet weekend. You know, we did those things at home, like, you know, roasting chestnuts and lighting nice, smelly candles.

The tree was up. My wife, of course, was very busy with the Christmas cards, doing the Christmas baking, putting up all the Christmas decorations, the festive pictures of family and friends.

And, of course, I spent that whole time napping with the dogs on the couch. But one of the problems that my wife and I had that day is we were looking at our music subscription, wanting nice Christian music to fill our home.

And it was a bit of a struggle. Of course, we had songs like Frosty the Snowman and roasting chestnuts by an open fire or jolly old Saint Nick.

[3 : 30] But it was a struggle to find real Christmas songs. You know what I'm talking about? Songs that actually talk about Jesus Christ and his birth.

And you know what? It kind of bothered me. Kind of bothered me. Does that bother you? All right.

Now, let me ask you another question. Just a couple of weeks ago, the federal government has officially declared that the big tree that goes up in Ottawa at Parliament Hill is a holiday tree, not a Christmas tree, right?

It's a holiday tree. Does that bug you? That bugs me, right? So I'm starting to get really, you know. So I started to wonder, what's going on here?

Or how about this? And my wife and I talk about this all the time. You know we're not supposed to say Merry Christmas anymore, right? Do you guys know that?

We're not supposed to for fear of offending someone. So I looked at what are some of the common alternatives that I can tell my friendly Squamish people as I go do my job around town.

[4 : 42] Which is really only meeting the Amazon delivery guy, right? Festive greetings. There's good tidings. There's holiday greetings.

There's merry greetings. Of course, happy holidays. The other one is season's greetings. But I was thinking about it, and I think the only honest one that we can honestly say is season's eatings, right? You know? I thought that was pretty much the most accurate one. Does that bother you? That bothers me. Right? Like, it bothers me so much that I lose sleep at night, and I have to nap during the day when my wife is setting up my house.

Right? Like, it just kind of gets in there, right? Now, it may surprise you why it bothers me. It bothers me because I am essentially a traditionalist.

I am a traditionalist. I am pretty much conservative to the core of my being. And what I mean by that is I like to conserve what is good.

[5 : 56] When a tradition has lasted this long, I think we should continue in that way. It's like someone asking me what I think of the new changes to the baseball rules.

Like, they might get a crack in the head, right? Like, you don't mess with something that's been so good for so long. And it's the exact same thing with Christmas.

But it may surprise you that when it comes to the subject of Christmas, I'd actually prefer if they didn't say anything at all. And I mean that.

Happy holidays. Why don't we say that during Canada Day? Right? When at least it's sunny and warm outside. Like, really? Today, this week, it's going to be like minus 20 here.

What is so great about that? All right, I'm letting out all my anger. But I want to bring this around to my first question.

[7 : 00] The question is, do we really need to celebrate Christmas? Well, I ask that question because it's a bit of a trick question. I don't believe we need to celebrate Christmas the way our culture does.

In fact, I am gravely concerned with our culture and how we have and how we celebrate Christmas. I think the real question isn't if we should celebrate Christmas. But do we still need Christmas? Well, it may surprise you, but in today's text, it's going to teach us one of the first mentions of the birth of Jesus Christ.

And it's going to explain to us why we really need Christmas. And what Christmas really represents. So if you do not have a Bible, please make sure you have one.

[8 : 10] If you don't, one of our ushers will get you one. There's also some great apps on your phone. If you don't know, you can actually, you version if you want to download one right now.

But I want to take you through a text of Scripture that happened over 27, maybe 2800 years ago, which points us to Christmas.

Now, the reading that Dave read for us this morning is actually found in Isaiah 9, 6, and 7, which is a very popular Christmas reading.

In fact, even Charlie Brown and the Charlie Brown cartoon that we grew up with, this is one of the passages they read to talk about the real, the true meaning of Christmas.

But this morning, I want to explain to you the reason for this text and how more than ever we really need Christmas.

[9 : 13] So before I go any further, let me just pray for us. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, I just thank you that we can enjoy a laugh as we think about some of the things that we deal with in our culture, oh Lord.

Lord, we do indeed need Christmas. And I pray that we'll be able to see this just from a life of a king who lived close to 3000 years ago.

And his example to us demonstrates more than ever that we really need Jesus. That we really need to be rescued.

That we really needed a baby to be born in Bethlehem close to 2000 years ago to save us. Father, we pray that this same baby, this true meaning of Christmas, would indeed save our culture.

And it only is capable of saving the culture as we engage this culture with truth of the word of God.

[10 : 22] So Father, I pray that you would give me clarity in what I say. And you'd give those that are hearing clarity in what they can hear and understand.

We ask these things in your most holy and precious name. Amen. So jump ahead. You're at Isaiah 8. Jump ahead to Isaiah 9 just for a second. And it's the same passage that Dave read to us.

But I want to allow this passage to set the stage, so to speak. This prophecy was given by a man named Isaiah. We believe this prophecy happened around 730 BC.

Sometime between 730 and 740 BC. Notice the words beginning in verse 6. Verse 6. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

And the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.

[11 : 29] On the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness. From this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. There's two promises in here. There's promise that a son will be given that will come. And we understand that to be Christmas morning.

When God will bring us the Prince of Peace. But we also have a further prophecy about how God will come back and make everything right. And he does that in the person of his son, Jesus Christ.

Now before I say anything more about this, I want you to understand the context of this passage.

The book that you're in, the book of Isaiah, is named after a man who wrote it named Isaiah.

It is the most quoted book in all of the New Testament. It is a book, as I said, named after the prophet Isaiah, whose name means the Lord is salvation.

[12 : 35] Now if you know your geography of Israel, and some of you who've been here for a while, understand that around 730 BC, Israel was a divided kingdom.

There's a northern kingdom. And if you remember the story, remember we've got King David. And just so you don't know, there was a man named David who reigned. And he was Israel's greatest king.

And he had a son named Solomon, who was the wisest man who ever lived. But after that, because of sin and decisions that they made, a disruption happened in the family line.

And Israel could no longer get along. So they fought. And they ended up naming two kings. The first king lived in northern Israel. Israel. And the capital of that time was in a country called Samaria.

And when you read your Bible, they're Ephraimites. But it's called Israel. The second part of Israel, which was in the southern part of Israel, they named Judah.

[13 : 35] And the capital was in the modern day city that we have as Jerusalem today. That same city was the capital. So you had these two. This country had broken apart.

And there's this kind of this warring faction going on between them. By and large, when we read our Bibles, we find that the northern kingdom was the least obedient of the two kingdoms.

So what God had been doing, he's been sending these prophets to the rulers of both of these kingdoms. And he's saying, hey, listen, God is noticing you.

He's noticing. He knows the words that you've been given through the words of Moses. How to obey him. How to love him. How to honor him. And the reason I'm coming to you over and over is to tell you he's there.

He's noticing. You need to pay attention. So this is what's going on.

[14 : 42] Now, at that time, there was this country named Assyria. And Assyria was the growing world power. And if you know your history, Assyria would go on and they conquered much.

They came from kind of the part of Iraq and Iran that we find in our times today. And what happened was Israel, the northern kingdom, got very afraid.

All the countries were afraid of Assyria. So they made an alliance with Syria, which is modern-day Syria today, and say, how about we come together and we join an alliance so we can battle Assyria.

So then they had their alliance. Then they go to Judah in southern Israel and say, hey, why don't you guys come and join our alliance and so we'll be so much stronger in order to withstand Assyria.

Well, Assyria or Judah, they had a king named Ahaz. He did not want to join the alliance.

[15 : 57] So Syria and Israel plotted against him. And basically, they wanted to assassinate the king and put a king on the throne that would join their alliance.

So you with me on that? So this is where Isaiah 7 tells us that when King Ahaz found out that Israel had joined with Syria against him, the text reads, There was great fear that came upon Ahaz at that time.

And the obvious question is, how can I survive this? My armies are not great enough to withstand both Syria and Israel who are plotting against me.

Well, we know that God being God and God taking care of his people sends this prophet Isaiah to have a talk with the king.

And Isaiah tells Ahaz, he says, Do not fear and do not let your heart be faint because of those two armies coming against you with evil intent on their hearts.

[17:16] And he tells them, this is what the Lord God says. It shall not stand and it shall not come to pass. They will be destroyed.

But then he gives them this admonition. He says, If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.

And what he says, and Isaiah says to Ahaz, he says, And in fact, test God. Ask God to do anything so he can prove himself to you that he will protect you.

So listen to God, Ahaz, in this situation. But Ahaz does and says something that is quite peculiar. He says, Now, before I go any further, let me explain who Ahaz is. If you are not familiar with him, you might be thinking, Man, this must be a really great man.

[18:26] This guy must have been a really great king. That God would send a prophet who would promise this man that God would protect him.

That he did not have to worry about the foreign armies. You would think he is a great man. That God would say, When do you think that? When do you want that? If you are having questions about God, That God would just say, Hey, test me.

Do anything you want me to do. I'll do it. Just to prove myself to you. Who gets that offer? Right? So we might be thinking that this guy is a real special guy.

In fact, when we hear the story, It kind of demands it. He must have been a faithful guy for God to be so willing to help him out. And it's interesting, at the time, Ahaz had already been warned by several other prophets to get his act together.

But Ahaz continued to ignore the prophets, Because everything was good in Israel. They were wealthy. They had a strong army at that time. His kingdom was untouchable.

[19:35] So he ignored them. I think there's a lesson for us in how easy it is to misinterpret our own fortunes, isn't it? Whether it be rich or comfortable or healthy, We may start believing that we are good people.

You see, on the outside, Judah, the southern kingdom, looked good. They had the temple of God. They practiced the laws of God as it was to man.

And what I mean by that is they did actions to make themselves look good to others. But inside, there was no real love for God.

Like I said, they had the temple. They followed all the temple rituals. And in fact, they were so good, they could compare themselves and say, Israel, they're the guys that are really corrupt.

How corrupt was Israel? They made an alliance with Syria. And Syria was evil. So compared to those clowns, we're great. God's got to love us.

[20:47] So Ahaz is thinking, man, because I have this, I am the king and I have this temple, I must be good with God.

So Ahaz responds to Isaiah and he says, I won't put God to the test. It's kind of a religious sounding response.

Well, as it would happen, Ahaz decided he wants to trust himself more than God. So what he does is he sends an envoy to Assyria ahead of time and says, hey, I've got this northern kingdom, Israel and Syria coming against me.

Would you help me? And Assyria, being Assyria, sure. So Assyria comes in, wipes out all the enemies.

Ahaz is all happy. But what Ahaz didn't bargain for is now he became a slave nation to Assyria.

[21:57] How badly is Ahaz remembered? 2 Kings 16.2 tells us this. And he, Ahaz, did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, as his father David had done.

But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. Do you get that comparison? He didn't do because David was his relative. David was a righteous king who was the man who had a heart after God.

That was the guy he was supposed to follow. But it actually compares him to the kings of Israel in the northern part of Israel, right? That's the last compliment you want.

And it said this. He even burned his son as an offering according to this despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.

And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

[23 : 07] So for Assyria's help, Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord and he gave it to the Assyrian king.

And he did so in Damascus. And because they experienced the victory in Damascus, Ahaz believed that it was the gods there that granted him the victory.

And because those foreign pagan gods demanded a child sacrifice, he killed his own son. And while he was there, he noticed that these pagan altars.

So he took that design and created those pagan altars to try to bring those powers from the north into God's temple and God's country.

So for his thanks to the Assyrian king, he took on the ways of a pagan nation and offered up children as sacrifices to the foreign powers.

[24 : 23] 2 Chronicles 28-22 summarizes Ahaz this way. He said, He uses those hardships to drive you to him.

If you know my testimony, I first came to the knowledge of Christ. I grew up Catholic. I was not allowed to do anything gospel oriented. And I'm talking old school Catholic, okay? Like my grandmother had 17 kids.

French. French. All right? The only Catholic school where I lived was the French school. Even though we grew up English, I was plopped in, forced to learn French right from the get-go.

Because that's what good Catholics do. And one of the things is when you went to Mass, guess which language it was in? Anybody remember? Latin. Right?

I'd come sit down on a Christmas service. I'd have no idea what was going on. But my dad left our family.

[25 : 49] And he wanted to be Catholic. But he left my mom for another woman. It caused disarray. But it was kind of interesting that my dad was a police officer. And his partner was a born-again believer.

And that partner invited us to church. In fact, it started with a children's club. I got invited to a children's club. And I still remember.

I was in grade five. And it was a lady by the name of Mrs. Florence Donaldson. Shared the gospel with me during that children's club. And that's where I got saved.

I accepted that. I knew that I could ask Jesus into my heart. I could follow him. Because I loved God, but I did not know how to properly respond to God. But I learned that he loved me so much that he died on the cross for me.

And I could accept that love and give my life back to him. As a way of loving and thanking for him. And that's what I did. Just as a child in grade five. That's the message some of the kids are hearing right now.

[26 : 47] Don't ever undersell children's ministry. Even in that first visit. And that's the church I grew up in. And we were able to finally go to a gospel-centered church that spoke English.

Right? It was great. So sometimes God uses distress to lead us to him.

But for others, it leads to more faithlessness. Because they want to fight God. Because they want to do things on their own terms. 2 Chronicles continues.

For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped me. His God offered to help him, but he didn't want that.

I will sacrifice to them that they may help me. But they were the rune of Ahaz in all Israel. For he made offerings and built altars throughout the land dedicated to these foreign pagans' gods.

[27 : 53] And the text says, This provoked the anger of the Lord, the God of his fathers. And if you know the rest of the story, Eventually, Assyria would be conquered by Babylon.

And Babylon, and about 200 years later, Would come in and utterly destroy Judah and Jerusalem. The anger of the Lord is not something to be trifled with.

So let me ask you a few questions. Is there anything similar in your life to that of Ahaz? I mean, you might be saying, I don't really have any pagan tabernacles in my home.

But, is there anything in your home that is more important than God there? When difficult time comes, do you rely on yourself rather than on God?

Do you become fearful? Anxious? Do you despair? Perhaps give in to depression? Like when Syria and Israel came against Ahaz, Do you shake like trees in the wind?

[29 : 11] Let me ask you another question. During these times of distress, Does your faith increase? Or does your faith decrease?

What do you think the world thinks about this? Is there more worship of the true and living God in our culture because of Christmas? Or less?

It was interesting. There was a recent article in the Squamish Chief About the lack of religions here in Squamish. When I see Squamish, I see a very religious town.

It's just not the normal religions that people follow. In fact, if I was to quantify, And someone asked me what Squamish was, I said it's like a great therapeutic health center.

Right? You can come. There's fresh air. There is beauty. There's magnificent mountains. All sorts of things that we can do from rock climbing To mountain biking, To skiing, Whether it be cross-country skiing.

[30 : 22] Greatest time I ever had here was snowmobiling. Right? Where do you get to snowmobiling? Like 15 feet of snow. Right? It's gorgeous. And it's not cold. Everything that life can offer To make one forget about The stress of life.

So you'd think there'd be no need For psychologists or therapists here. Right? Or maybe even yoga instructors. Everyone would be at peace And feeling great about themselves.

But I think there's a disproportionate amount Of therapeutic health centers In our cities compared to most. So do more people lean on Jesus Or do they lean on other gods?

I think we know the answer to these questions. So I ask you the real question once again. Do you think we still need Christmas?

Given how our culture is, I believe that we need Christmas, The true Christmas, More than ever. Going back to the original text of Isaiah 9, It's a prophecy.

[31 : 41] It is a promise made by God to his people That God will eventually establish And uphold his throne. He is a true, righteous, wonderful, Just, perfect king is coming.

And Christmas is the first act to that promise. How important it is for Christmas.

Look at verse 7 of chapter 9. There's that last phrase. It says, The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

In the zeal of God, He will make Christmas happen. And why do we need Christmas?

Because you and I are incapable Of winning the battle Against our oppressors on our own. In fact, you know who our greatest oppressor is? It's our self. It's the sin found in our own rebellious hearts.

[32 : 45] It's the heart that says, I want to go my way. And you see it all the time. Whether you're married, It's your impatience with your wife. The unloving actions you might be doing to your kids.

It could be the harsh word. Those are all actions found in your heart That you want to serve self.

You see, Ahaz had a choice to make.

He could trust God or trust man. Sadly, Ahaz trusted man And eventually led to the entire destruction Of his kingdom and nation.

Yet God, for us, begins by telling us God has zeal for our salvation. And this zeal is seen in his son, Jesus Christ.

Think about this for a second. What God would send his son to come live in our world? To entrust his one and only son To this young teenage couple in first century Israel.

[33 : 57] It's mind-blowing. But Jesus, or God the Father, Knew that that was the only way. So the question is, How are we to experience the real Christmas?

Well, this morning, I'm going to give you three ways And how to avoid becoming like Ahaz In missing Christmas. So look in your Bibles at Isaiah 8.

Isaiah 8. And I want you to see all three of these points In God's written word. The first decision that you make To see Christmas is to trust God.

It is to trust God. So look, I'm going to read for you Isaiah 8, beginning in verse 7. And this is the judgment that he's describing Against Ahaz.

Behold, the Lord is bringing up against them The waters of the river, Mighty and many. The king of Assyria in all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels, Go over all its banks.

[35 : 05] And it will sweep on into Judah. It will overflow and pass on. Reaching even to the neck of its outspread wings Will fill the breadth of your land, O Emmanuel.

And what he's saying is that Assyria is going to go everywhere. That's the power. But now in verse 9, He says, Be broken, you peoples, And be shattered.

Give ear, all you far countries. Strap on your armor and be shattered. Strap on your armor and be shattered. Take counsel together, But it will come to nothing. Speak a word, but it will not stand. For God is with us. Now just to explain what's going on there, When Ahaz heard about the armies That stood against him, We learn that he shook like trees in the wind.

But those who trust God, They are of no concern. So what he's talking about here, Trusting God is resting in the presence of God.

[36 : 13] To those who trust God, When the enemy approaches, They say, Do your worst. Put on your army. Show up with all your big armies With all their shiny armor.

Hire mercenaries from all across the land. It does not matter. Why? Because I trust God. 1 John 5, 4.

John writes this. John was an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was the longest living apostle. And near the end of his life, When he was in the final years, He writes this book.

And while he's writing this book, The Christian church is experiencing mass persecution. He says, For everyone who has been born of God Overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world.

Our faith. So the first things to do when the world comes against us, When you know Jesus, Is to trust him. Number two, Fear God.

[37 : 15] To not miss Christmas, We are to trust God, And we are to fear God. Let's look at verse 11 of Isaiah 8. It says, For the Lord spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, And warned me not to walk in the way of this people, Saying, Do not call conspiracy all that these people call conspiracy, And do not fear what they fear, Nor do in dread.

But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear. Let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary, And a stone of offense, And a rock of stumbling, To both houses of Israel.

A trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble it. They shall fall and be broken. They shall be snared and taken.

What he's saying is that, Who is it better to fear? Man or God? Ahaz in that moment, Did not fear God.

And when he's talking about these conspiracies, Do not call conspiracy, All that the people call conspiracy. That's the world constantly telling us, That there's an emergency.

[38 : 36] There's always something we have to respond to, An urgency. There's always something we need to deal with, And compromise ourselves with. See, the world is about motivating people by urgency.

The greatest one, And if I fence your political sensibilities, Forgive me, Really? A climate crisis? Man, I grew up in the 70s and 80s. I remember going to Toronto. I lived in LA for seven years. It's smog city. Not anymore. There's been a change. It's not. Remember the ozone layer that was going to kill us? It's all filled up. Funny how God does that. But I don't want to make it a political statement, But the world is telling me, Those are the things I should care about.

But God has already provided victory for us in Jesus Christ, Which begins with his birth. You see, we're living half the prophecy. We know God was good on his word.

We can look at all the day's events and see God is at work in every single one of them. You see, those who trust God, And fear God more than man, They are not distressed.

[39 : 54] They are not anxious. Psalm 1 says, They are like a tree planted firmly by the rivers of flowing water. They are strong, And they're able to withstand the day's events.

Now, I want to answer this question, What does fearing God mean? One author describes it this way. He says, The Lord of hosts, Him you shall regard as holy.

And what it means is, In other words, Dare to treat God as God. Do not respond to life In a way that makes God look helpless, And weak, And worthless.

I want to repeat that. For those of you who call yourselves Christians, What does your faith in God demonstrate to others looking in?

Dare to treat God as God. Don't respond to him in a way that makes God look helpless, And weak, And worthless.

[41 : 02] If that is our faith, What does that say about God? Stephen Charnock, He was a Puritan that wrote, In the 16th, 17th century, He says, Living emotionally, Is as if God were not really our

Savior, Is practical atheism.

If God is God, He is all that finally matters. Living emotionally, As if God were not really our Savior, Is practical atheism.

If God is God, He is all that finally matters. You see, When you trust in Christmas, You know that fearing God over man, Is the way to go.

So the first thing you need to do to see Christmas right, Is you need to trust God. You need to fear God. And the third way to know, To truly experience Christmas as is intended, Is that you have to know God.

Take a look at verse 16. In Isaiah, He says, Bind up the testimony. Seal the teaching among my disciples.

[42 : 17] I will wait for the Lord, Who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. And I will hold him. Bind up his testimony. God has spoken to you.

Hold it true. Learn it. You see, Ahaz did not value the word of the Lord, As it came to him, Live from the prophets. You see, Ahaz chose to ignore it.

Ahaz did not value God's word. The Bible tells us, That not only is it, The source of truth about life, But it has the power to transform us.

It has the power to bring us wisdom. And when it brings us wisdom, It brings us joy. Because we are living in Christ's wisdom, Not ours.

You see, Ahaz looked around at all the temple, And all the religious ceremony, That was going on, And he thought that would be enough for God. But it was nothing but hypocritical religion.

[43 : 24] Verse 19, And when they say to you, Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers, Who chirp and mutter, Should not a people inquire of their God?

See, That's what the kings were doing. They were going to necromancers, And fortune tellers, To see what was the future. But God had already provided, Not only his word through Moses, But these prophets, Should they inquire of the dead, On behalf of the living?

To the teaching and to the testimony. If they will not speak, According to this word, It is because they have no dawn.

What he's saying is, If they do not speak, According to the words of the Lord, They will have no dawn. They will pass through the land, Greatly distressed and hungry.

And when they are hungry, They will be enraged, And will speak contemptuously, Against their king and their God, And turn their faces upward. And they will look to the earth.

[44 : 28] But behold, Distress and darkness, The gloom of anguish, And they will be thrust into thick darkness. If you are looking to this world, To understand this world, You will find nothing but darkness.

It cannot solve its own problems. You see, Ahaz had these prophets, But you and I, We have so much more.

We have the complete word of the living God. In fact, The apostle, Peter, Who Walked with Jesus, Speaks about how Better is this world, Than to have modern day prophets speak to us.

Because we can see what came before. We understand all the people who have spoken in this book, Which took over 1500 years to write. We also have the realization of the prophecies.

When we read Isaiah 9, We know for to us, A child is born. We know he's speaking about Jesus.

You see, My belief, That the people today, Even though they do not live in Judah, They do not live in Israel, They do not have a temple, They do not have prophets that talk amongst them, I believe we will be more, How do I say it?

[46 : 02] Thoroughly judged, Than they were. The fact is, Why? Christmas is celebrated everywhere. In every city, In every town of this nation, Christmas is celebrated.

They know who Jesus is. If they knew and understood, It is a fulfillment of a prophecy, That was given 2700 years ago. But we still see that Jesus makes no difference.

That people would still rather choose darkness. Let me challenge you this morning, My dear friends. Are you choosing darkness?

Are you choosing to make decisions, Without taking the words of this creator, Of all in heaven and earth, Into consideration?

The one who created us. Genesis talks about how we were created, To worship God. That he gave us a man and a woman, To marry and create a family.

[47 : 09] And to bear kids that would honor God. Do you ignore God? Or perhaps you take the religion, But you still reject Jesus.

Is your faith and hope all placed in Jesus, The ultimate fulfillment of the prophecies of God? Do you live like an atheist?

Do your words say one thing, But do your actions say another? If you've been trusting man more than God, If you've been chewing foolishness over wisdom, If you've been choosing the knowledge of this world, Over the knowledge of the Lord, My prayer, And dare I say my command, If I could utter such a thing, Is that you would run to Jesus, Like a child runs to a Christmas tree.

See the free gift of salvation, As being the ultimate gift, That hides under the tree. Do not let this Christmas be confused, With the real and true gift, That is only offered through Jesus Christ.

If you presently find yourself, In a period of suffering and hardship, Perhaps it's time to place that burden on Jesus. Maybe you need to deal with things God's way, Not man's way.

[48 : 42] The truth is, God promises to meet his people first, When they've suffered the most. And we suffer the most, When we finally see, Our need for something, That we cannot give ourselves.

You and I cannot give ourselves peace with God. Only the Prince of Peace, Can give us true, And lasting peace. You see, It's a good thing to see ourselves, As being cursed, As being lost.

Because then we truly realize, That we need God. You see, Jesus Christ is the only person, Who can lead you out of your prison of sin. Jesus Christ is the only one, Who can lead you out of your destructive lifestyle.

Jesus Christ is the only one, Who can lead you to eternal peace, And salvation with him. And that salvation begins, When God sent his son, To be born of a virgin, To two young teens, Two thousand years ago, In a town called Bethlehem.

All on a day, Which we celebrate as Christmas, So that you could truly know peace with God. Christmas is truly the realization, That every promise, God gave his people is true.

[50 : 05] The prophecies were true. God did, What he told Ahaz, Exactly, What he would do, And he did it. And he provided, And he provided, And he provided, And he provided, And he provided, And he provided, And he provided, And he provided, For those he knew.

And our role, God's people's role, Is to provide witness, To what God says is, True. Do we live our lives, As if God is true or dead?

The reality is, God does what God does, And God does it with zeal. Well, My prayer is that you do as well. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, We just thank you for, This time where we can come together, And I pray that we would just think about, What this true, Meaning of Christmas is, It is the salvation of the world, That is offered to us.

Too often this world is hijacked, By all the wonderful neat things we can do, And they're nice, To give presents to our loved one, And gifts, And to take care of our needs, For one another, But sadly, All too often, That just lifts up ourselves, Rather than you.

We can just be, Temporary, Moments of salvation to people, But you offer, Eternal salvation. My father, I pray that these words, That I spoke in this lesson, From Ahaz would, Resonate.

[51 : 36] And for those, Who've never been to a church, Or unsure of where they stand with you, I pray that they look around, And see what the message of Jesus, Was supposed to be at Christmas, And to ponder, Upon these things, May you continue to be kind, Gracious, And loving to us, Oh father, We don't deserve it, But in your zeal, You love us so much, And you provide us, Our freedom and salvation, And peace, With you, In your most holy, And precious name, Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.