

# Shalom that Abounds

Isaiah 9:1-7

*Halifax: 20 December 2020*

## **Introduction**

Today I am going to break from our regular sermon series in Mark to do a message pertaining to the birth of Christ.

- As most of you know, I often preach special sermons on subjects that pertain to matters that are on everyone's mind.
  - For example, over the course of this year, I have done a number of special messages related to Covid-19 and similar matters.
  - At Christmas time, I often preach a sermon on the birth of Christ, and at Easter, on the resurrection.

However, as we have some new people with us, I want to explain something to you.

- You may have noticed that we don't have any special Christmas ceremonies here.
  - The elders of this church do not believe that either we or any church council has the authority to institute holy days. We may appoint special days of fasting or thanksgiving at appropriate times, but we may not institute standing holy festivals.
  - Therefore, while we do not oppose families decorating their houses, exchanging gifts, and eating a feast to remember the birth of Christ, we refuse, as a church, to observe such days.
    - The reason?
    - Because we believe that God has reserved to Himself the authority to institute holy days.
      - There is no mention of any annual observance of the birth of Christ or of Pentecost or any such days in the early church.
      - When God instituted such days in the Bible, they were instituted from the time of the event—not hundreds of years later, and the institution and ordinances pertaining to the day were recorded in the Bible.
      - What's more, in almost every case, the institution was by a prophet speaking in the name of the Lord.
        - The only possible exception is the feast of Purim, but we don't even know but what Mordecai did institute it by prophecy. This is our presumption since all other such days were instituted by prophecy.
    - But the main reason for refusing to institute holy days ourselves is that when it comes to worship, the Lord has clearly commanded in Deuteronomy 12 that we are neither to add nor take away from the worship that He has commanded.
      - It is not church counsels that determine how He is to be worshipped.
      - He tells us to leave that to Him.
        - It is audacious for any mere man or group of men to decide by their own will how our holy God who inhabits eternity should be worshipped.

- What's more, whenever this has been done, it has always led to the church esteeming these man-made holy days and ordinances as more important than the days and ordinances that God has actually appointed.
  - There is even a recent illustration of this in NS where our government set Monday of Christmas week as the day for lifting the five person limit to accommodate Christmas services instead of opening it up today, on Sunday, the day that God has appointed for our weekly gatherings.
  - They know that most Christians are much more zealous to observe Christmas than they are to observe the Lord's Day. This is an insult to God.
- In the OT, the common addition to worship was with the church establishing high places where they offered sacrifice.
  - God had commanded that sacrifices only be offered at the sanctuary that He appointed, but over and over again this was violated in Israel and over and over again, the Lord expressed His disapproval of it.
  - The argument that holy days or other well-meaning additions to God's worship are so widespread and commonly practiced in the church does not make these right any more than they did in the Old Testament.
- Neither does the argument that so many testify that these special days have been especially rich and meaningful to them carry any weight.
  - Surely sacrifices were not offered at the high places because they made people feel far from God.
  - Indeed, there was great zeal at these altars—and it got people more involved in offering sacrifices and worship to God that might not otherwise do so.
    - But notwithstanding all of that, God made it clear that He did not approve of them.
    - To be sure, if God had thought these special days would be useful for us, He would have instituted to them—
    - And if He had given the church liberty to appoint them, surely the apostles and others would have recognised their benefits and sanctioned them.
      - There is no observance of Christmas for centuries.

Nevertheless, I am glad that people think about the birth of Christ and I am glad to preach about it when it is on people's minds.

- For this reason, I invite you to turn to Isaiah chapter 9 where we will consider the first seven verses.
  - Understand that Isaiah wrote these words seven centuries before Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, declaring that a Son would be born to them who would Himself be God.
  - This is one of the clearest passages in the Bible, testifying to His two natures—the divine nature and the human nature belonging to one person.
- I would note as well that this is by no means the earliest promise of a Son born to God's people that would deliver them and make them whole.
  - The promise is found three hundred years prior to this with King David who is promised a Son that would come and reign forever, not only as a king, but also as a priest, until all of His enemies were destroyed and all of His people gathered to God.

- And five centuries before that (1500 years before Christ), it is found in Moses—shadowed with the sacrifices. Moses declares Him as the final prophet whose voice all must hear if they would be saved.
- And about five centuries before that, it is found in the promise to Abraham—that a Son would be born who would bring blessing to him and to all the nations of the earth.
- And another 2000 years before that, the promise of a Son who would deliver God’s people was given to Adam and Eve just after they fell.

But Isaiah’s particular prophecy that we are looking at today is one of the fullest of all the prophecies that were given of Christ’s advent. I present it to you today for your edification.

- Please listen as I read Isaiah 9:1-7.

**Isaiah 9:1-7:** Nevertheless the gloom *will not be* upon her who *is* distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed *her*, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation *and* increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil. <sup>4</sup> For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his

oppressor, as in the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For every warrior’s sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning *and* fuel of fire. <sup>6</sup> For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word and may He now bless us as this word is preached to us.

In looking at this passage today, I think it might be helpful for us to centre it around a Hebrew word that is definitely worth knowing—the word *shalom*.

- I think most of you know that the Old Testament was originally given in Hebrew.
  - Our English translations are very excellent. We should be so thankful that we have God’s word in such excellent translations in our own language.
- But sometimes, as is the case with the word *shalom*, there is no word in our language that is rich enough to do justice to that word in translating it.
  - *Shalom* is ordinarily translated by the word *peace*, as it is in our text in verse 6 & 7.
  - *Peace* is the best word we have for *shalom*, but it does not convey the wholeness and prosperity that is also conveyed by *shalom*.
    - *Shalom* refers to the fullness and blessing that God has for His people.
    - It refers to glory all around—a settled completeness and wholeness for you and for your surroundings—where everything is what it should be and all that it should be.

- It is *perfection, wholeness, completeness, solid happiness, well-being?* What word can I use? I will use the word *shalom*.

I will lead you through this passage where first we will see,

- The promise of shalom
- Then, the Prince of shalom
- Then, the progress of shalom
- And last of all, I will ask you to consider if you are on the path of shalom

So let's begin with:

## I. The promise of shalom

- The promise of shalom is found in verses 1-5.
  - Isaiah does not use the word *shalom* here, but that is what he is talking about...
    - He looks into the future and describes what he sees.
    - And what he describes is that wholeness, perfection, completeness, peace, fullness that is called shalom...
      - It is the blessing that God promises to His elect people.
      - It is the blessing that God especially has Isaiah present to His elect people who are hidden within a very corrupt visible church—a place where they might easily be discouraged.
      - He wants to assure them that shalom will come. God's promise will not fail.

A. First, he promises that where there was deep darkness, the light will shine.

- Look at verse 1 & 2:
  - **Isaiah 9:1-2: Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles.**
- 1. The true believers in Israel were distressed by what had happened in this region.
  - Over the years, the people of Israel who lived in Galilee had been rejected (or lightly esteemed) by the Lord because of their incessant idolatry.
  - In Isaiah's day, the LORD had brought enemies from Assyria upon them and wiped them out—
    - This was very distressing to those who were looking to God's promised blessing to Israel—to the shalom that He had promised—to the beautiful city that He had promised whose builder and maker is God—to the city of righteousness.
    - This had certainly not materialised and the people who had real faith were deeply troubled by the present state of affairs.
- 2. But Isaiah tells these people that to this region in particular the light would come!
  - In verse 2, he says:
    - **The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.**
  - This was fulfilled when Jesus Christ came.

- It was in this area that He carried out His ministry, preaching and healing.
  - They had been groping in the darkness, but with Him the light had come.
    - In his gospel, Matthew tells us that this prophecy was indeed fulfilled by Jesus' ministry in Galilee. It made the elect people very glad.
  - In the darkness, you are cut off from God and His promises, but when the light comes, you see the hand of God. It displaces the gloom with light and life.
- B. Second, Isaiah promises that the elect will multiply and rejoice.
1. He speaks of it in the way prophets often do—as something that has already happened.
    - In verse 3, he looks into the future and says to the LORD: **You have multiplied the nation *and* increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.**
    - When the light comes, there will come with it an unprecedented increase of those who believe—indeed, even the Gentiles will come to join with Israel as God's worshippers in Jesus Christ.
      - Even though many in Israel would reject their own Messiah, those who believe would be added to them from every nation—she who was barren will be blessed with many children.
  2. Those who believe God's promise are always desirous to see more people brought into the faith, and whenever this happens, they are filled with joy and gladness.
    - It is as it is when the harvest comes in or when a war has been won and victors share the spoils of war.
      - What joy we have when we see people pouring into God's kingdom to join us in experiencing new life in Christ in God's house!
- C. Third, Isaiah promises that the elect will be freed from bondage.
1. He describes this freedom that God has given to them with three symbols in v. 4:
    - First, that God has "broken the yoke of his burden."
      - The symbol here is of cattle hitched to a yoke to pull a plough for their owner—
        - Because of their sin, God had delivered Israel to serve foreign kings instead of serving Him.
        - They were unable to carry out His appointed worship or implement His laws under such bondage—
          - This was a great burden for the elect who loved the Lord.
    - Isaiah also speaks of the staff of his shoulder—which was perhaps the staff that was used to carry burdens on their shoulders,
    - And he speaks of the rod of the oppressor which refers to the chastening rod that was used when they did not obey these overlords.
      - The rod would include whatever form of punishment they might be given for their non-compliance, or just for a reminder of who was in charge.

- The future that Isaiah sees shows that all three of these will be taken away from God's people so that they will be free to serve the Lord their God.
  - They will not have these other masters who rule them with rigour.
  - They will be able to devote themselves and their resources to God.
- 2. Indeed, Isaiah pictures a deliverance so complete that they won't even need the implements of war to defend themselves.
  - Verse 5 says that they will be able to use their war sandals and their garments for fuel—there will be no need of them when God brings His people shalom.
- 3. Their deliverance from Midian is specifically mentioned to illustrate their future deliverance.
  - The Midianites were nomads who took control of all of Israel's resources and industry for themselves—until God raised up Gideon to lead an army to victory.
    - The Midianites were said to be like locusts in number so that they and even their camels could not be counted there were so many.
  - The specifics are worth considering...
    - At first, Gideon had an army of 32,000 to go against the Midianites—far too few to expect to defeat them.
    - But God told Gideon he had too many—because He wanted Israel to know that the deliverance was from Him.
    - The LORD said to let all who were afraid go. 22,000 went. Now there were only 10,000.
    - Then the Lord reduced these down to 300.
      - They defeated the vast forces of Midian using nothing by clay jars, torches, and trumpets.

TRANS> But Isaiah describes an even greater deliverance than in the day of Midian.

- Not by 32,000 against a numberless multitude.
  - Not by 10,000,
  - Not even by 300.
- But by one (1)—the Son that God had promised.
  - He is the one that God calls:

## II. The Prince of shalom.

- You can see where He is given that name at the end of verse 6—the Prince of peace.
- A. He is uniquely qualified to deliver us and to do it all alone.
1. He is fully human and fully divine at the same time.
    - Isaiah 9:6 is one of the clearest testimonies in the entire Bible to the fact that He is fully one of us and at the same time fully God.
  - a. He is described in verse 6 as a Child born to us and as a Son given to us.
    - He is the Son that comes from Israel—God's church in the Old Testament.

- He is the Son that was promised to come of the woman to lead those who were called out.
    - His job? To oppose Satan and to crush Satan for them.
  - He is the same Son that was promised to Abraham to bring deliverance to him and his offspring—
    - a son from his own body that would bless them and bring the blessing to the nations that they all might be God’s people.
  - He is the same Son promised to David, to take the throne of God’s people and to rule forever and ever—bringing deliverance to them also as a priest after the order of Melchizedek.
- b. Yet, at the same time, this same son given to us is shown to be a divine being.
- His names are divine names...
  - There are four pairs here, each expressing divinity.
- 1) Wonderful Counsellor—the word *wonderful* is a word that refers to one who is supernatural—a wonder.
    - In Judges 13, when Manoah asked the Angel who visited him His name, and the Angel replied, “Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?” Manoah immediately began to offer sacrifices to Him.
    - This angel (or messenger) was the Lord almighty—as shown by the fact that the angel accepted the worship—something no holy angel would have ever done.
      - The name “wonderful” tells us that this Son is God.
  - 2) Mighty God—is also a divine name... *el gibbor*—in which *el* (translated God) almost always stands for God, especially when joined with *mighty*.
  - 3) Everlasting Father—refers to Him as an eternal being—one who is everlasting.
  - 4) Prince of Peace, the fourth name, is not necessarily a divine name, but as used here it refers to Him as the sole source of shalom—
    - A title that is fitting only for a divine being.
2. Isaiah tells us that the entire burden of government will be borne by Him.
- In verse 6, He says, “The government will be upon His shoulder.”
    - He takes up the responsibility of the whole church, to represent them, to save them, to instruct them, and to bring them peace.
    - He takes on the responsibility to bring shalom to all the elect of God—for taking them from darkness, barrenness, and bondage to glorious shalom.
  - No one could bear such a burden but God,
    - Yet no one could represent us but a man.
    - He alone is a Son born to us who is and always was and ever shall be God.
      - He brings the whole church from ruined-in-sin to Shalom.
    - It is a work that only He is able to do.
      - No one else is even qualified to help Him.

TRANS> We saw how the four names that He is given speak of His divinity... now let us consider how:

B. Each of His names speak of His qualification for bringing shalom to us.

1. That He is wonderful counsellor speaks of how He brings light, wisdom, and truth to us.
  - In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
  - He brings to fallen ruined sinners
    - the truth about God—that has become so distorted and twisted by us so that we do not know Him as He is.
    - He reveals to us His holiness and purity, His majesty and beauty, His power and authority, His judgment and justice, His mercy and His wrath.
    - He reveals to us that we are His creatures, that He has made us and that we are made in His image to serve Him.
    - He makes known to us our obligations to Him that we have failed to meet and reveals to us how offensive and repugnant our conduct has been.
    - Yet, he also makes known to us His promise of redemption and mercy—even through the coming of this Son to save us by dying on the cross for our sins.
  - By Him, we are brought from groping in the darkness and having no clue about where we are going to knowing God and His saving work.
    - He is the divine word—the wonderful counsellor, whose voice we must here and believe that we might have shalom by Him.
    - What a change from darkness to light, from ignorance to the knowledge of truth.
2. That He is the mighty God speaks of His power to deliver us.
  - This divine power is necessary for Him to crush Satan and all of our enemies that are too great for us so that once He is finished with them, they will never spoil His world again.
  - This divine power enabled Him to bear the weight of all our sin, to bear the penalty and curse of our sin, and to pay the full price of our redemption before the Father that no one else could pay.
  - This divine power was necessary for Him to conquer death and rise triumphant after He had tasted death for all of us.
  - This divine power is necessary for Him to deliver us from our bondage to sin—to release us from its power and to set us free that we might serve God.
    - Indeed, this is the work of the Spirit that He gives us, but it also His work when we are crucified with Him and made strong by His grace.
  - By Him as mighty God, we are brought from helpless bondage to freedom, from misery and ruin in sin to shalom.
    - What a grand and powerful deliver He is.
3. That He is the Everlasting Father speaks of the loving care that He establishes.
  - The kingdom He restores is a kingdom of righteousness where each lives for the good of the other...



- Where fathers pour out their lives for their children and where children respond with loving delight and devotion.
  - His is a love so great that even when we were enemies, standing against Him to destroy Him with bitter hatred, He relentlessly pursued us and won us.
  - He sets that pattern of the way of love that He has known with the Father and the Spirit from all eternity,
    - And His kingdom is established in that love—a kingdom of justice and judgment—where the sons and daughters of Adam live in the beauty of that love—
      - This is the shalom He restores.
4. And it is for this reason that He is also called the prince of peace or the Prince of shalom.
- He is the one who restores shalom.
    - No one else can bring His people from darkness, bondage to sin and death, and bitter malice to shalom.
  - Isaiah says in verse 7 that of the increase of His government and of peace, there will be no end.
    - He is established upon the throne of David to whom God made the ancient promises of this mercy.
    - He is the one who came to fulfill these promises and who alone is able to do so that we might have peace.
    - Above all, He is the one who purchased our peace by His suffering and death on the cross that we might be reconciled to God by Him.

TRANS> But note well, shalom does not come all at once.

- Verse 7 speaks of the increase of His government and of peace of which there will be no end.

### **III. Thus we see the progress of shalom here described.**

- We can identify three stages.
- A. In the first stage, He laid the foundation of the kingdom of shalom by His coming and by His saving work on the cross.
1. He Himself possesses this peace, this shalom, in Himself and has possessed it from all eternity with God the Father and God the Spirit.
    - There has been this beautiful wholeness and fullness and beauty.
  2. In becoming man, He brought this peace into this ruined world, even to His church that would otherwise be in darkness, barrenness, and bondage.
    - He introduced shalom where it was not.
    - He was the first son of peace—brought shalom into the human population.
  3. But He did not stop with himself—He came to bring all those that the Father had given Him into this shalom.
    - That is the reason He went to the cross—there He purchased our peace with His own blood, taking care of our sin.
    - That is the reason He calls us out from death in sin to come to Him and live.

TRANS> And that is the second stage of the progress of shalom.

- Having laid the foundation of shalom, we have His present work.

B. The second stage is going on now. He is sifting, gathering, multiplying, and filling His kingdom with those the Father has given Him.

1. His kingdom is not from the world—but it is in the world through Him.

- Having established it, He now calls sinners to enter it.
- He calls them to come to Him, believing, that they might be reconciled by His suffering on the cross and have everlasting shalom in His kingdom.

2. When they come, they stand out in the world and in the church (there are both believers and unbelievers in the church).

- They shine with Him as the light of the world.
- They testify to the truth of Him as the only Saviour and of His kingdom, and they show the world that they are living for another kingdom than the kingdom of this world.
- As Jesus said, if His kingdom was of this world, His servants would fight, but they do not fight with weapons of human warfare.
  - They fight by living out the truth and upholding the truth in a world that assaults them the way it assaulted Jesus.
    - They speak the truth (preach the gospel) even though it is hated by the sons of darkness.
    - They have power to overcome their sin and lust by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.
    - They live in His love so that they love their enemies and do good to those who persecute them, counting it a privilege to suffer for their master and to testify to the unbelieving world.
    - As the sons of shalom, they stand out as those who are full, those who are whole, those who possess the joy and the happiness of shalom.

3. I do not mean that they are perfect, but if they are His true sons of peace (of shalom), they stand out with him and shine as light in the world...

- And those whom the prince of peace calls hear His voice through their words and their testimony and they come and join them as sons of shalom.
- This is the sifting and the gathering I spoke about...
  - By His grace, they are transformed into the sons of shalom and are separated from sons of this world.
  - And this will be done until the kingdom of shalom is filled.

C. The third stage is yet to come.

1. It is the stage of perfection and completion when the sons of shalom are brought to God in the fullness of shalom.

- Until then, they yearn for the promise of shalom when the Lord Jesus will return in all of His glory to give it to them.

2. In that day, He will perfect them both individually and collectively in shalom.

- They will be brought perfectly under God, and the earth (the creation itself) will be brought perfectly under them again... this will be shalom.
  - Satan and all who oppose God will be cast into the lake of fire, and the sons of peace, who, by God's grace and by the power of the prince of shalom were redeemed and came to Him in faith, will be saved forever and ever—
    - And not just saved, they will have perfect shalom—wholeness and completeness.
3. Until then, they have need of patience... and are kept by the Prince of shalom in the way of peace until the end so that it is not possible for them to be deceived.

#### **IV. It is imperative for each you to consider where you are in all of this.**

##### **A. Are you a son of shalom or not?**

- You cannot be somewhere in the middle.
  - Either you are with the Prince of shalom, under His government, or you are not.
  - Either the light has shined into you life or you are still in the darkness.
  - Either His almighty hand has delivered you from sin's curse and sin's power or you are still under these.
  - Either you know His love and are living in His love or you are still in bitterness and malice.
  - Either you are growing as a son of peace or you are daily adding sin upon sin, knitting a pathway to destruction.

##### **B. If you are not with Him how can you come to Him?**

1. There is nothing difficult about it all.
  - You are called to see that not you, but only the Son that was born to God's people is able to establish this peace.
  - That is the thing that trips people up.
    - They still want to find wholeness and peace on their own—they want to find it apart from God.
    - They do not want the cross of Jesus to be necessary.
    - They do not want counsel from the wonderful counsellor—they want to walk in their own light or the light of this world.
    - They do not want power from the mighty God—they want to work it out for themselves—they want to deliver themselves.
    - They do not want the love of the Son of who is the everlasting Father—they will find love their own way—they will decide what love is to be.
    - They do not want shalom from the prince of shalom, they want to find their own shalom in their own way—so they never come.
2. But for those who want this peace from the wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace...
  - Just cast yourself upon Him.
  - Cast yourself upon Him as the only one who is able to give you shalom.
  - Call on His name and ask Him to have mercy on you and to save you and trust Him to do it.

- He will not turn you away.
  - His whole business in coming was to seek and to save what was lost.
    - It is His delight to save you.
    - It brings honour to Him as the Prince of shalom to give shalom to all who call on His name.
3. Don't leave it up in the air.
- Decide one way or another.
  - The Son is the Prince of peace—to neglect Him is to exclude yourself from the only hope of salvation shalom.
    - Surely you don't want to do that, do you?

**Of the increase of His government and peace, there will be no end. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.**