

Jesus, Prince of Peace  
Isaiah 8:19-9:7  
Key Verse: 9:6

by Sarah Barry

"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."

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Praise God who blessed our Christmas worship service and Sh. Teddy's message from Matthew 2, "A Shepherd for my People." We praise and worship our Shepherd King Jesus. Last week Pastor Ron gave us a joyful message about the Baby in the Manger. Christmas is officially over. This is the last Sunday in 2009. It's time to say, "Happy New Year." But before we plunge into 2010 there is one more message that we need to hear and think about. It is the message of the Prince of Peace: Jesus. Our key verse is Isaiah 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We need to hear the message of peace because we live in a troubled world. At this time of the year we can worship the baby Jesus and sing with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men on whom his favor rests." We long for peace. We want peace in our world, peace in our homes and peace in our hearts. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and pushed us into WWII. President Roosevelt called it "a day of infamy." We had fought "the war to end all wars." But it didn't end all wars. There is only one war to end all wars. It is the war which the Prince of Peace fought with Satan. He won the victory through his death and resurrection. How can we claim that victory? Let's learn from Isaiah who wrote about the Prince of Peace. May God give his peace to our world. May the Child whom God sent as a gift of his love be born anew in each of our hearts to give us his peace.

The Prophet Isaiah also lived in troubled times. King Ahaz of Judah was afraid of the powerful nations to the north. "The hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.." (7:2) He was afraid of Syria and Northern Israel. Fear made him foolish. He asked Assyria for help. The Assyrian empire that was poised to strike Syria and Northern Israel, would come like flood waters into his own country, Judea, as well. When we give in to fear, we cannot make right or wise decisions. In Isaiah's time, the fearful people turned to mediums and spiritists and consulted fortune tellers. Read verses 19-20. Darkness deepens when people give in to fear and do not turn to God. They let anxiety overwhelm them. Isaiah wrote to directionless people who did not study the Bible or pray. He says, "To the Law and testimony" (In other words, "Back to the Bible!") He continues, "If you do not speak according to this word, you have no light of dawn."

The terrorist attack of 9/11 planted fear in many people's hearts. The financial crisis has made many people fearful. Today people blame the government or the president or their bosses or someone else. Blaming others makes the darkness deeper. In Isaiah's time they looked up and cursed God and the king and looked down and saw distress and darkness and fearful gloom.

In those dark times, however, Isaiah had the Christmas message in his heart. Look at 9:1-2a. Isaiah wrote, "Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress....The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." (9:1a,2) He was looking forward to Jesus, the light of the world. About 700 years later Jesus quoted Isaiah as he began to work in the same dark place-- Galilee of the Gentiles, the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (Mt 4:12-17).

In the darkest of times, Isaiah had hope. He thought about another dark time in Israel. In verse 4 he mentions Midian. It was in the time of the Judges. (Jdg 6-7) The Midianites oppressed Israel. They camped on the land and ruined what they did not take. The Israelites cried out to the Lord for help. The Lord raised up a deliverer, Gideon. He was just as weak and fearful as anyone else. But, by faith, he obeyed God. One night he took 300 men, equipped each of them with a lamp in a jar and a trumpet and climbed up a hill overlooking the Midianite camp. At the signal, they all broke their jars and blew their trumpets and shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon." When the bright light burst into the darkness, the Midianite army was completely demoralized. They fought each other and fled. It was a great victory that ended the Midianite oppression of Israel. Chapter 9:4-5 tell us that the yoke of oppression was broken. The implements of war were burned because peace had come (5). God also would break the

yoke of sin and Satan, the great oppressor of people. God still shines his light into the darkest world through weak and humble people like young Gideon.

What was Isaiah's good news? What was this light that dawns to dispel the darkness? Look at verse 6. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled when God sent his Son to be our Savior. At Jesus' birth the angel announced: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." (Lk 2:10) We also learn from Isaiah who Jesus Christ is. He is the Messiah. He is the one who sits on David's throne. He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Let us think about what each of these titles mean.

First, he is the Wonderful Counselor. The Bible calls the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Counselor who leads us into all truth. ("And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth"--Jn 14:16-17a) Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." We need this Wonderful Counselor. He promises to be with us forever. He is Immanuel Jesus. We all need such a friend. From time to time we have decisions to be made which change the direction of our lives. We make small decisions every day. Even getting up in the morning to pray and do daily bread requires a fresh decision for some of us. We must make big decisions also: What shall I study? Whom shall I marry? (Or shall I marry?) Shall I take that job? Shall I go out as a missionary or serve God at home? The most important decision of life is the decision to accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord and commit my life to him. We need the Wonderful Counselor to guide us in all of our decisions. We need his wisdom and his help. When we pray and ask him for wisdom, he will give us wisdom (Jas 1:5-- "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him). When I was a sophomore in college I was overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of life. I claimed the promise in James 1:5 and asked, God, if you are really there, give me wisdom according to this promise. The Wonderful Counselor heard my prayer. He sent someone to invite me to study the Bible. Through the study of Romans, I met Jesus, who shed his blood to forgive my sins. I studied John's Gospel and met my Savior and Lord, the living water and the bread of life. The Wonderful Counselor is our Good Shepherd. When we trust him with all our hearts, and do not lean on our own understanding, our Wonderful Counselor makes our paths straight (Pr 3:5,6). The Wonderful Counselor's presence with us is our peace.

Second, he is the Mighty God. The Child born to us is the Mighty God. He is the one worthy of our worship. He is the Word who was with God in the beginning. He is God who holds the whole world in his hand. He is the God who divided the waters of the Red Sea; the Mighty God raised Jesus from the dead. John wrote in Revelation, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise" (Rev 5:11-12) Jesus is God. Jesus is the Mighty God. He created all things. He said, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom..." (Isa 40:28-31) Jesus is the Mighty God. Nothing is impossible for the Mighty God. He created all things. John 1:3 says that through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. He created me. He is the Owner of my life. The wise men from the East were searching for the One worthy of their worship. They rejoiced when they saw his star. They bowed down and worshiped him. They offered him their treasures. Their hearts were filled with joy and peace as they returned home. Mighty God stooped to save helpless sinners. A thirsty Samaritan woman sought the one worthy of her worship. She worshiped Jesus, who is God. Her thirst was quenched. She learned that only Jesus is the one worthy of worship. When we worship Jesus, the Mighty God, we have peace.

Third, Jesus is our Everlasting Father. A father is one who should give love and protection to his children. Boys need a father. Girls also need a father. There are many fatherless children in our world today. There are those who have broken relationships with their fathers. Children deprived of the love and care of a father feel that something is missing in their lives. Some become angry and crooked. They are vulnerable, and so are easy prey for the devil. In the times of Jesus and John the Baptist the hearts of fathers were far from their children. John the Baptist called people to repent. He called fathers to turn their hearts to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous. (Lk 1:17) In the aftermath of the Korean War there were many fatherless children. Anna Yang never knew her father. He died in the war. Mark Yang lost his father when he was 5. But God sent them a father-like shepherd and they each met the Everlasting Father, Jesus. Only the Everlasting Father, Jesus, can give what is missing to everyone always. He gives real love and protection. Human fathers, even the best of fathers, cannot be

everlasting. Kevin Albright's father was a good father. But he died while Kevin was in high school. Kevin lost direction for his life. Then he met Jesus the Everlasting Father through Genesis study. Sh Steve's father died September 23rd. He was a good father and Steve's heart now has an empty place. No one can be an everlasting father. Dr. William Altabar of the Philippines has a father's heart for fatherless children. He has three children of his own, but he continues to adopt needy children whenever he sees one. (The newest baby's name is Obama.) But even Dr. William cannot be there for his children forever. But Jesus is our Everlasting Father. He promised, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (Jn 14:18). He promised to be with us forever. [Surely I will be with you always, even to the end of the age."(Mt 28:20)]. Jesus is a Father who cares about all his children. He gave his life to rescue his children from the power of the evil one. Jesus is full of love. His heart is always turned toward his children. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is our Father who will love us forever. In the arms of the Everlasting Father we have peace.

Fourth, he is the Prince of Peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Isaiah depicted peace as a holy mountain on which natural enemies like the lion and the lamb become friends. There will be righteousness, justice and faithfulness. "They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isa 11) When Jesus was born, the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men on whom his favor rests." I chose as the title of this message, "Jesus, Prince of Peace." The other names of Jesus--Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father--all seem to lead up to and find a climax in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Everyone longs for peace. God promises peace to those whose minds are stayed on him ["Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee." (Is 26:3, RSV)] Sometimes we seek peace by going to a quiet vacation spot. Some people seek peace in drugs or alcohol. Some seek to forget their troubles by playing sports or video games. Some seek peace in listening endlessly to music or by sleeping in all day. These things may give temporary peace, but when time passes, troubles come back like an avenging angel. A dark cloud of depression settles on some people; some take drugs. Others simply pray. All long for peace.

One US President thought he could bring peace to the world by attacking a country whose leader continually threatened terrorism. Another president is convinced that sending more soldiers to the battlefield will win peace. But peace is not won with war. Violence breeds violence. Hatred breeds hatred; retaliation produces retaliation; revenge demands more revenge. Only Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, ruling people's hearts can bring peace to the world.

When I was in college, the Korean War was going on. I was a pacifist and I was opposed to war. But when I listened carefully to the issues involved, I realized that sometimes war is necessary. If the atheistic communists should take over the whole of Korea, Christians in South Korea would suffer like those in the North. So it seemed that a defensive war was justified. But war could not bring real peace. After I met Jesus I found peace for the first time.

History proves that the War between the States in the US was also a necessary war. It ended slavery. Still, war could not be the real solution. Mutual trust and respect, the recognition that all people are equal and of equal value, could not be put into people's hearts by force, law, or reason. If there is no mediator, people still mistrust and despise and take advantage of one another. The Bible teaches us that there is no such thing as many races. There is only the human race. We are all of one blood. Only the gospel heals racial discrimination. Only in Jesus can people from different races and cultures and different backgrounds be one. I grew up in Mississippi, in a society where segregation and racial discrimination were taken for granted. Through Bible study I realized that all people are the same human beings. We can only find love and respect for all kind of people in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts. I realized that only the gospel of Jesus can bring real peace to our world. So I promised God that if he wanted me to, I would be a missionary and stay or go wherever he sent me to share the gospel of the Prince of Peace.

We pray for North Korea. The people there are starving both physically and spiritually. Someday God will open the door for the gospel to be preached and believed and obeyed in North Korea. Lord, open the door for King Jesus, Prince of Peace, to come into Chosun--North Korea.

How does the Prince of Peace give peace? When we live in sin, we are slaves of the devil and enemies of God. When we are enemies of God we have no peace. Romans 5:1 says, "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God." Once we were God's enemies; by faith in Jesus' blood we have been reconciled to God. The peace that Jesus gives begins with being reconciled to God. Then, through him we can be reconciled to one another.

"God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: (2Cor 5:18) Only Jesus gives real peace. He promised, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (Jn 14:27)

The Kingdom of the Prince of Peace never ends. Read verse 7. "Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this." This was Isaiah's dream. It was Jesus' dream when he taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It was Jesus' dream when he trained disciples and sent them out to make disciples of all nations. God loved the world and gave his Son. God wants the disciples of Jesus of every generation to proclaim the Prince of Peace to all the people of the world. The Risen Jesus who conquered sin and death will come in glory with his angels and bring his kingdom. His kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. This is our hope. His promise is our assurance of victory.

Let us welcome Jesus the Prince of Peace into our hearts. May we have peace with God through Jesus, the Prince of Peace. May the Prince of Peace bring his peace to our hearts and to our families. In 2010, may God use us as peacemakers as we share his gospel with a world that cries for peace. Let us pray especially for the people who live under the yoke of oppression and darkness in the Muslim world and for the suffering people of North Korea. Let us pray for peace in Afghanistan and Iraq, and let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

"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." We cannot bring peace to our world or even to our own hearts. But "the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."