

Christmas is Like...

1 But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

3 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

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.

7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, 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.

Isaiah describes the birth of the Christ in 9:6-7 through five prophecies, but first he describes the joy that birth should bring in 9:1-5 through three comparisons that illustrate that joy.

Sermon Outline:

I. The “like” part of “Christmas Is Like ...” is:

- A. Like going from gloom to glow (8:22-9:2)—a bright, sunny day after darkness.
- B. Like going from farm to fork (9:3)—a satisfying meal after hunger.
- C. Like going from oppression to liberation (9:4)—an improbable victory after long defeat.

II. The “Christmas” part of “Christmas Is Like ...” is:

- A. A child (9:6a)
- B. A son (9:6b)

- C. An heir (9:6c)
- D. A name (9:6d)
- E. A kingdom (9:7)

Discussion Questions

1. (8:22f.) Why does chapter 9 start with “But”? How would you describe the difference in tone between 8:22 and 9:1-2?
2. (9:1-2) Does “light-after-darkness” seem to you to be a good picture of joy? How about a good picture of Christ (Mt. 4:15-16; John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12)? How about a good picture of your own life story?
3. (9:3) The joy of the harvest was a familiar experience in Israel (Ruth 2:4ff.; 3:1-7; Ps. 126:5-6; Mt. 9:37-38; 13:1-9; John 4:36). What is it about the picture of farmers rejoicing at the harvest that seems like a good picture of joy?
4. (9:4-5) What is your favorite picture of improbable victory from sports, wars, literature, music, or film? Does the idea of liberation after oppression strike you as a good picture of joy? You may want to re-read the example Isaiah provides of Midian’s defeat in Judges 6-7.
5. (9:6) In the following chart, which prophecy of the Christ—from Isaiah, from before Isaiah, and from the New Testament—seems most remarkable to you today?

PROPHECY	BEFORE ISAIAH	NT FULFILLMENT
Child (9:6a)	Genesis 3:15	Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23; Gal. 4:4
Son (9:6b)	Genesis 15:6	Rom. 4:1-12; Gal. 3:5-9
Heir (9:6c)	Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17	Rev. 5:5

6. (9:6d) The name (see Is. 45:23; Phil. 2:9-11) of this promised child is suddenly exalted to Immanuel (“God with us”) status! Four couplet titles describe what has seemed like a prophesied but human child. Now this child seems to be “the Son of God” (see Luke 1:35). Which of these four names of Christ is most relevant to your current life situation and why?

7. (9:7) The mention of the throne of David in this verse calls to mind 2 Samuel 7:14 before it and Luke 1:33 after it, not to mention Mt. 1:1; 2:3-6; 22:41-46; Rev. 19:11-16 and all the Messianic psalms. As you read each of the verses listed in this question, which one fills you the most with wonder and awe? Why?

Going Deeper

1. Which part of Isaiah 9:1-7 strikes you more deeply today—the descriptions of joy in 9:1-5 or the meaning of Christmas described in 9:6-7? In other words, is your greater need to be “merry” (joyful, see Luke 2:10) or to remember the significance of this long-awaited child through the five prophecies about him?
2. Based on your answer to question 8, which of the 3 comparisons in 9:1-5 or which of the 5 prophecies in 9:6-7 most captures your attention? Is there a Christmas carol that reinforces that same truth? As you meditate on that one part of this passage, what practical application should you make from it?

This text should pump up our leaking joy by teaching us that Christmas is like the best day of our lives times 100, because Christmas means a Savior has come to us, who will deliver us from all the mess we have made in a way that no other (including ourselves) can!