



Prince of Peace

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, 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 9:6-7

The historical context of Isaiah 9 is not the calm nostalgia we usually associate with Christmas; rather it unfolds amid a political and military crisis. King Ahaz of Judah is pressured from two directions. On one front is the encroaching Assyrian empire gobbling up smaller kingdoms along its way to Egypt. On the other front is the anti-Assyrian league that wants Judah to join in the resistance.

A crisis is a time when the pressure or danger is so intense that you're forced to go one way or another. As was true of King Ahaz, our crises often reveals a deeper crisis of faith by exposing false hopes and pointing to genuine solutions.

1. What a crisis reveals.

A crisis nearly always brings out fear, and our fears can tell us something about our underlying structures of belief. In Ahaz's case, he feared other nations more than he feared God. "Do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The Lord of hosts is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread" (Isaiah 8:13).

2. How a crisis is resolved.

Often we look for a crisis to be resolved without addressing our underlying trust structure. For our real crisis—the crisis of faith—to be resolved, we need to discover (or get better acquainted with) the only worthy object of our trust: Jesus Christ. Isaiah's prophecy in 9:6-7 identifies a mysterious "child" who possesses attributes unique to God, yet is somehow a descendant of David and heir to the throne. Clearly, this is referring to Jesus whose life, death, and resurrection proves his identity as the divine Davidic king.

3. How to embrace the resolution of a crisis.

If Jesus is the true and final resolution to a crisis, this is a call for us to abandon false hopes, trust in him, and "soak" our hearts in truths about him until our affections and thinking take proper shape. Specifically, we can consider deeply what it means that Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Discussion

1. How does the historical context of Isaiah 9 (a time of political and military crisis) deepen our understanding of the prophecy about the child?
2. What do the titles given to Jesus in Isaiah 9:6-7 reveal about His character and role as the Messiah?
3. The material notes that a crisis often reveals deeper crises of faith. Have you ever experienced a time when fear exposed misplaced trust in your life?
4. In Isaiah 8:13, God calls Ahaz to fear Him rather than fearing earthly threats. What does it mean to “fear the Lord” in a healthy and biblical way?
5. The titles given to Jesus (Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace) each highlight unique aspects of His ministry. Which of these resonates most with you right now, and why?
6. Isaiah says that the “zeal of the Lord of hosts” will accomplish this. What does this reveal about God’s commitment to His redemptive plan?
7. The text encourages us to “soak” our hearts in truths about Jesus. What practices or disciplines help you do this effectively?