

Isaiah 9:2-7 ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire. ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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.

God began with a perfectly new and white canvas in the Garden of Eden. With each word He spoke, beautiful colors began to appear. Let there be light! Let there be a sky! Let plants grow! Let the Sun and Moon reign in the heavens! Let birds fly! Let animals crawl! Let there be man and woman! As God etched His name at the bottom of the canvas to mark the work as His own, He did so with pride. This work was not just well done, it was perfect.

But then the serpent appeared. Eve listened. As she reached for the apple, she knocked over God's masterpiece. Dirt and grime covered the whole thing. Adam stepped on the canvas as he speedily followed his wife into sin. Yes, that beautiful canvas that bore God's name could hardly even be recognized. And that was not the end. As Cain slew his brother, he opened up a can of black paint and sloshed it across the canvas. Each person found a way to destroy the canvas even more. The sin dripped off the canvas. God tried to restore the canvas by drenching the whole thing with water, but the damage was not undone.

The people at the tower of Babel darkened the picture even more with their pride. Sodom and Gomorra layered their own black paint on top of the canvas handed down to them. The black paint on the canvas dried and became thicker and thicker with each generation. The Israelites couldn't help themselves. With their constant running after other gods and grumbling against the true One, they made sure the picture would stay pitch black.

As the prophet Isaiah looked at the canvas in which he lived, one thing was evident. There was not a hint of the beautiful picture God had etched back in Eden. The darkness of sin-filled black paint was all that was on that once beautiful painting. He knew also that the people of his day's paint had found their way onto the canvas as well.

Yes, the history of the world became each generation adding layer and layer of sin upon the canvas of the world. And then we came along, each of us carrying in our hand a brush. Even from the time of our birth, we dipped our brushes in the darkness of sin, and splattered away at the canvas. We threw at it our pride, our

lust, our envy, or greed and all sort of other manner of darkness. No, we were not the ones to restore the canvas; we only added to the mess that we inherited.

A canvas soaked with blackness, drenched with darkness, dripping with deceit was the result of humanity attempts at artwork. We were by our own fault dwelling in a canvas of pure darkness. It is the kind of darkness that brings chills. It is the kind of darkness where not even one glimpse of light can be seen. It is the kind of darkness that causes one to stumble around not even knowing which direction you are headed.

Then a star appeared over Bethlehem. Light in a dark night. It was as if Isaiah's words were carried to Bethlehem by that star, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." What could make the canvas darkened with sin gleaming white again? Only one thing! Light, true pure white, as white can be light. And who could accomplish such pure white light? Isaiah tells us. Only, the zeal of the Lord of hosts could accomplish it.

Yes a canvas darkened by sin was made white again in the most extraordinary way that could have been imagined. Birth after birth had only made the darkness darker. But now unto the world a Child was born, unto it a Son was given. This birth would not bring more darkness but only light. How could a birth do such at thing? Well, look closely at the one in the manger. Although he looks quite ordinary, He certainly is not. He is the wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

On Christmas day some 2000 years ago God enacted the most igneous plan on how to rid the world of darkness. He would make the canvas white again. How? By jumping into the canvas He wad created. Yes, God himself rather than just throwing away the canvas entered the canvas to make all things right. He entered the canvas the way that Luke 2 describes, as a baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths. And from the very second that He entered the canvas, His pure whiteness dispelled darkness everywhere he went. Yes as He walked around light shone in darkness, those dwelling in darkness were brought to light again.

Jesus walked all over the canvas with his message of forgiveness. On the cross some 33 three years later he would wipe the canvas clean by taking all of the darkness upon himself and suffering in place of those who had painted such sinful strokes. There he would break the yoke of sin which had burdened man ever since Eden. And once clean He would again once again start painting a beautiful picture one conversion at a time, as one by one people were brought to faith, increasing his kingdom. And as Isaiah promised the increase of his government will know no end. God promised through Isaiah this King and His kingdom would be forever. No blackness will be allowed in his kingdom. No, light had come, and darkness could be more. As we all know from common experience, light is the conqueror of darkness. The second light appears darkness loses its paralyzing power. And that baby lying in a manger surrounded by Mary, Joseph and the shepherds is pure light.

Rejoice today, Christians, for unto you this day a child is born, unto you a son is given: and the government is upon his shoulders: and his name is Wonderful Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts has performed this. Darkness is gone, and the light is shining. Alleluia! Amen!