

Small group optional guide: Advent series: It's Now!

UP; we grow in our love for Jesus through His word and worship

WORD: Isaiah 9:3 part 1; by Tom

This passage explores how despite King Ahaz's failings, God reassures him that these conspiracies will fail, rooted in God's promise to the house of David.

Key Themes:

- 1) **Reassurance** to Ahaz (Chapter 7): Despite his unworthiness, Ahaz's throne is preserved because of God's covenant with David.
- 2) **Judgment** on the Nation (Chapter 8): Isaiah warns a faithless nation that has embraced pagan practices of coming darkness, captivity, and disgrace. The faithful are instructed to trust and fear God, not the surrounding culture.
- 3) **Hope** in the Distance (Chapter 9:1-7): Isaiah prophesies a future, far-reaching salvation that will dispel the current gloom:
 - **Transformation:** From anguish to joy, from contempt to glory, from darkness to light.
 - **Fulfilment** of Covenants: The nation multiplied recalls God's promise to Abraham, with Christ's life, death, and resurrection fulfilling the blessing for all nations.
 - **Harvest Joy:** Symbolizing both physical and spiritual abundance, culminating in Christ's resurrection as the "first fruits" of a great harvest of redeemed people.
 - **Victory through Christ:** Through the cross and resurrection, Christ secures victory over sin and death, gathering a redeemed people from all nations.

Response: The prophecy inspires rejoicing among God's people. It highlights God's steadfast love, symbolized by...

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...the cleansing of sins ("scarlet to snow") and calls for gratitude and proclamation of the gospel. The ultimate victory and salvation belong to God, and His people are invited to marvel at His greatness and share this hope with the world.

"Rescue and Freedom," Isaiah 9:4, by Jane

Isaiah prophesies the breaking of oppressive yokes, rods, and staffs, which contrasts with the comforting rod and staff of Psalm 23. Isaiah's rod and staff symbolize oppression, while Psalm 23's represent guidance, care, and protection.

- the "day of Midian" recalls Gideon's victory (Judges 6-7), where God delivered Israel with only 300 men to emphasize His power. The breaking of the yoke signifies divine intervention, similar to God's deliverance at the Red Sea.
- Jesus embodies the ultimate rescuer, breaking the yokes of sin, Satan, and death through His birth, death, and resurrection. Unlike the oppressive yokes, Jesus invites believers to take on His easy and light yoke (Matthew 11:28-30), which provides rest and freedom.

Call to Freedom: Paul's writings in Galatians and Romans reinforce the freedom Christ provides from the slavery of sin and burdens of the law. Sin separates humanity from God, but Jesus offers forgiveness and justification through His grace.

Questions: Do you allow Jesus to guide (like a rod) or show compassion and support (like a staff) you? How do you embrace His yoke for rest and relief. Closing

- Jesus offers timeless hope and encouragement, especially during Christmas.

