

Christ in the Carols **LIFE GROUP NOTES**

<p>Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King! Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." Joyful, all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies, With th'angelic host proclaim: "Christ is born in Bethlehem." Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"</p>	<p>Christ by highest heav'n adored, Christ the everlasting Lord! Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a Virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity, Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"</p>	<p>Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Son of Righteousness! Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with healing in His wings. Mild He lays His glory by, Born that man no more may die, Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"</p>
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Isaiah 9:2-7

Introduction

This week we consider Isaiah's powerful poem celebrating the Lord's intention to bring newness to 'people walking in darkness', through the birth of a new ruler.

Isaiah 9:2-3

- In what kind of 'darkness' had the people been walking? (See Isaiah 8:19-22)
- What is the 'great light' that Isaiah sees?
- In verse 3, to what does he compare the people's joy at seeing this great light?
- A good harvest, or the division of plunder, may not be a cause for national celebration for people today, so to what might we compare the joy that Isaiah mentions?

Isaiah 9: 4-5

There is a distinctly military flavour in these verses. The people Isaiah addressed were living under Assyrian military oppression.

- What was 'the day of Midian'? (Judges 6:2-6)
- What is Isaiah predicting in relation to the Assyrian oppression?



The Lord had used the Assyrians to overpower His people, so that they would return to Him (Isaiah 7:18-25). However, a day of deliverance would come for Israel, when the Assyrians would be punished because they became proud of what they had done to Israel. (See Isaiah 10: 5 & 12)

How do you think the Israelites would have interpreted Isaiah's promise of deliverance?

Isaiah 9:6-7

The deliverance that Isaiah promised was to come from God through the birth of a new ruler, “a son”. Isaiah describes this ‘son’, this new ruler, (Messiah), using four astounding titles:

What do each of these titles suggest to you?
How can a ‘son’ also be a ‘Father’?



A literal translation of the Hebrew used here is:
“An-extraordinary-counselor-is-the-warrior-God,
the-everlasting-Father-is-an-officer-for-well-being.”

Goldingay, John. Isaiah For Everyone . SPCK.

The New Testament writers had no hesitation in saying that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy. See Matthew 4:12-17. What do you think made them do this?

The Jews of Jesus’ day were living under Roman rule that was just as oppressive as the Assyrian rule. What were they expecting Messiah to do?

However, Messiah did not deliver the Israelites from foreign oppression. It continued under the Romans.

(After the Assyrians came the Babylonians, then the Persians, then the Greeks and then the Romans: all in different ways oppressed Israel).

In what sense, then, can it be said that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s promise of deliverance?

Issues

- Some Christians living after World War Two said that the defeat of the Nazis was a divine act of deliverance for Britain and her allies. Were they right to do so?
- Does God still use military power to execute punishment on wicked nations? If so, what constitutes ‘a wicked nation’? (*Where does Britain stand, with its history of involvement in the slave trade?*)
- How helpful is it to refer to the Lord as a “warrior God”? (‘Mighty God’ in Isaiah 9:6 means mighty ‘warrior’ God). Is it appropriate to use military language when talking about spiritual matters (e.g. phrases like ‘spiritual warfare’ & ‘armour of God’)?
- Can you think of any hymns or songs that use military imagery?
- How literally should we take references in the Book of Revelation to battles, such as the one predicted in Revelation 16:16 (Armageddon)?
- To what extent does the liberation that God gives us now through Christ guarantee us freedom from oppression and persecution?
- Isaiah spoke in terms of an everlasting Kingdom that would be established through the new ruler (Messiah-Jesus). To what extent do we see that Kingdom as a reality in the world today?
- What echoes of Isaiah 9 do you find in the Carol “Hark the herald angels”?