

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL #1: THE GIFT OF A KING

SOMETHING TO READ

Isaiah 9.1-7

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 Counsellor, 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.

SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

Here is a dialogue between two people discussing the Christmas story. What do you think about their conversation?

"He was very good-looking. Especially in uniform."

Vanessa's grandmother loved telling her the story of Christmas 1944.

*"We were engaged to be married when your grandfather left for the war. He used to write these beautiful letters. All through the war, he'd write. A letter meant that he was still alive. And then one day I got the best letter of all. It was short. All it said was: 'Our battalion's been discharged. I'll be coming home. Soon. Expect me!' It took another 6 months. The longest 6 months of my life. Every morning I'd wake up: 'Could this be the day that he comes back?' Every morning I thought '**Today the darkness becomes light! Today the promise comes true!**'"*

*"And then he came. He arrived on Christmas morning, 1944. We were married by New Year's Eve." The old lady's eyes glistened. "But a 6 month wait is nothing," she said, turning to Vanessa. "Just think how long it took for Christmas to come for Isaiah's listeners! 750 years! That's how long they had to wait for the first Christmas from Isaiah's prophecy. Those people were walking in darkness. It was deep darkness. And gloom. **But Isaiah said that God was going to come to them.**"*

"Like God was saying through Isaiah that the cheque was in the mail," Vanessa suggested.

"Exactly! But this was no ordinary cheque. It was God Himself. Wonderful Counsellor! Mighty God! Everlasting Father! Prince of Peace!"

"And yet He came as a baby," Vanessa thought out loud.

"To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder."

“A tiny baby. As powerful as the government. Like those infant Chinese Emperors?”

*“O, much more powerful than that, dear,” Vanessa’s grandmother said. “Of the increase of his government there will be no end. The promised child would reign on David’s throne. **It would be an international kingdom. And it would span all time.**”*

“But they’d have to wait 750 years for it,” said Vanessa.

“It was worth the wait,” the old lady continued. “The baby was going to be a great light. He was going to increase their joy and bring multiplication. His birth would cause rejoicing like when someone gets an annual bonus way bigger than expected. But best of all—”

The old lady paused. **“—Best of all, the coming of the child meant the end of the war. The child would break the yoke of the enemy. This baby would shatter the rod of the oppressor. The soldiers would burn their uniforms and get rid of their weapons. There would be feasting. Lots of feasting as they divided up the spoils of war. Victory! The baby was going to bring victory.**

*“I had to wait a whole war for your grandfather. Then I got a husband out of it. **Isaiah’s people had to wait 750 years. But then they got a victorious king out of it.** That’s some gift. No wonder people have been giving gifts to each other, every Christmas, ever since.”*

SOMETHING TO RESPOND TO

Here are some questions to help you meditate on the Christmas story:

- How grateful are you that Jesus came? Tell the Lord.
- Do you connect Christmas with Jesus as a mighty King ruling over the nations?
- Jesus has won the war against sin. What does it mean for your life that Jesus is victorious against sin?
- Isaiah’s role was to introduce Jesus. Is there anyone you need to introduce Jesus to?
- Does your level of *gratitude* for Jesus’ coming match the level of *anticipation* the people had for the Messiah in Isaiah’s time?

SOMETHING TO DO

Here are some suggestions for practical things you can do during this Advent season:

- Make a gratitude wall. Write post-it notes thanking God for sending Jesus, telling Him how His gift has impacted your life.
- Consider writing out your journey of how Jesus brought you out of darkness into light. Share this with a friend to encourage them in their faith.
- Write a meaningful snail mail letter to a friend. Tell them a letter is coming for them, and use the week to build anticipation in the same way God’s people had to wait for their Saviour.
- Pray for a friend or family member who does not yet know Jesus. Invite them to our Christmas Eve event using one of our ticket invitations!
- Organise a group to help our ReadAble kids & families prepare for the next year. See more info here: tinyurl.com/RHCreadable
- Consider reading a book from these list: tinyurl.com/RHCadventBooks
- Consider these books, movies, and activities for kids: tinyurl.com/RHCadventKids

SOMETHING TO LISTEN TO

Here is a playlist of songs to help you respond to the truths we have heard:

Go to tinyurl.com/RHCspotify2Dec to listen to this week’s playlist.

