

**Sermon File # 925**

**Scripture Text: Isaiah 11:1-9**

**Sermon Title: *The Birth of a King***

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## ***The Coming of the Savior: The Birth of a King***

### **Introduction:**

Open your Bibles with me to our text for today. During this Advent Season we've looked at some of the Messianic passages of Isaiah, who prophesied during a very dismal time in Israel's history, a time of deep spiritual darkness. He foretold that the Messiah would be born into a land of darkness, Galilee of the Gentiles (Isaiah 9:1-7). As we noted last Sunday from 7:14 and Chapters 52 & 53, Isaiah prophesied the birth of Immanuel, who is God with us and also God for us, who suffered and died for us.

Imminent danger from surrounding nations and a host of internal problems made Judah a pessimistic nation. Yet they were living in utterly heedless complacency regarding the threats surrounding them. Nevertheless, Isaiah spoke in this age of darkness a message of hope, hope that was centered in the birth of a king, Immanuel, who would be the greatest king in Israel's history. In fact, this king would be the anointed Messiah King, far surpassing the Davidic ideal.

The text for today is the most descriptive passage in the Bible for its portrayal of the Messiah-King, even though the word "king" doesn't appear. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy of God's perfect King.

Follow as I read **Isaiah 11:1-9**.

As you no doubt know, Belgium is a constitutional monarchy, with a reigning king, Albert II. Although the monarch has some appointive powers, his rule is primarily ceremonial, and the actual government of the country is led by elected officials (when in fact there is a functioning government!). King Albert II is part of a succession of kings that began soon after the establishment of the country in 1830, much to the chagrin of the Dutch, who at first refused to acknowledge Belgian independence. The first royalty who was asked to be king of Belgium, the second son of King Louis-Philippe of France, the Duke of Nemours, actually refused to be king. Finally on June 4th 1831 Leopold Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha was chosen, was welcomed into Brussels on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1831, and took the oath as King Leopold I. Having a monarch, even with limited powers, seems important to Belgium and many other countries, to symbolize autonomy, authority and identity as a nation.

Israel and Judah, the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, were monarchies that had seen much better days. Since the time of the prophet Samuel, the people of Israel had wanted their own king, if only to be like the surrounding nations. Their motive grieved Samuel, who told them they should have regarded the Lord as their only king. Yet, it was within the plan of God that they should establish a monarchy that would be the line of succession leading to the Messiah King (1 Samuel 8). About a thousand years before Christ, Saul was anointed as Israel's first king, but his rule was marred by his petty jealousy of young David, who had become Israel's military champion, and later was to replace Saul as king. David, though far from sinlessly perfect, nevertheless became Israel's ideal king. His son Solomon reigned over Israel at the height of its power and glory. And following Solomon, because of the foolish immaturity of his son Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided between Israel to the north, led by Jeroboam I and Judah to the south, ruled by Rehoboam. Both Israel and Judah had successive kings, some good and many bad. And by the time of Isaiah, both the northern and southern kingdoms were facing judgment. God was about to punish Israel with captivity by the Assyrians, and later the Babylonians, who were to defeat the Assyrians, would overthrow Judah, destroy the temple and city, and lead the people into exile.

In the context of the breakdown of the kingship and kingdoms of Israel and Judah, God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah about the coming of a perfect king and his perfect kingdom, the Kingdom of God, led by Messiah, the ideal David-like king. The people of Isaiah's time were ready to hear a word of hope. The pessimism that hung over Israel in the time of Isaiah is not unlike the pessimism of our day, having gone through the periods of optimistic humanism and scientific idealism. Like ours, Isaiah's age of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC was one of disappointment in kings, rulers and governments. Yet, the people failed to understand that their problem was not one of administrative breakdown in government, but rather one of sin. Israel had forsaken their God. And their kings had failed miserably. Isaiah looked beyond quick fixes for their national and international problems. He saw that their core problems

and needs would be finally and fully met through a king, the ideal king, of a character and leadership that would even surpass that of the greatest king they had ever known—King David.

Today I want us to think in terms of Christmas as a celebration of a kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

Notice what our text says about...

### **The ruler of the kingdom (verses 1-2)**

The Messiah King, as we note in verses 1-2, would not only reproduce the Davidic ideal, but would far surpass David in character, reign and influence. Verse one follows the thought of chapter ten, which describes, as though it had already happened, the downfall of Israel's enemy, the powerful nation of Assyria. Assyria will be cut down like a cedar tree (10:33-34). All that remains is a seemingly dead stump, and no shoot could possibly sprout forth. The message of the prophet is that Israel's enemy nations will die off, but Israel is representative of God's chosen, everlasting nation. In contrast to the enemy nation, Israel will be like an oak tree. It was to be felled, and then carried into exile, as happened in 722 for Israel and in 587 with Judah. Yet, out of the Davidic line of Jesse, which we see in Matthew's (1:1-17) and Luke's (3:23-37) genealogies, a shoot would come forth, and his kingdom would be Israel's greatest, and he would be Israel's perfect king.

#### *His character*

Messiah would be an eternal and anointed king. He would be anointed as David was anointed at Hebron (2 Samuel 2), yet as the perfect king he would be anointed with the Spirit of the Lord, making him perfect and complete in wisdom, counsel and holiness. And his reign would be one of perfect justice. His reign would be the expression of his character. This ideal ruler we acknowledge as Jesus of Nazareth, born of lowly birth, yet revealed as the eternal Son of God, born of the house and line of David (Luke 2:4).

All of us can think of tyrants in the world today, whose evil character naturally gives rise to tyrannical and ruthless rule. Probably the most efficient form of government known to mankind is an absolute monarchy, where decisions are made quickly and authoritatively by one leader with absolute power. But, in our fallen world, this is a dangerous and usually fatal proposition, as we can see in the situation in North Korea. As is said, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. History is a faithful witness to this, as are current affairs in nations ruled by tyrants, who refuse to share or relinquish their strangle-hold on nations.

No doubt as the people heard Isaiah's words about the perfect ruler, they wondered about such an unlikely possibility, in the light of their experiences under the thumb of wicked, incompetent King Ahaz. And we as followers of Jesus celebrate the birth of the one who was born as the God-Man, and was

fully human, yet was sinless and possessing all the fullness of the Deity (Hebrews 4:15, Colossians 2:9). Our Lord Jesus is all that God is, in his perfect holiness, love, wisdom and power. The Lord Jesus, in his brief sojourn on earth, showed us what is life lived in the fear of the Lord, and with perfect wisdom, understanding, counsel and power (verse 2). Such a king is worthy of the trust and submission of his subjects. Even in a generation distrustful of national and political leadership, you and I can give obeisance to a king like that, knowing he loves us, knows what is eternally best for us, and has the power and authority to bring it about. And, as we read in his word, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Related to his character we see also...

#### *His ability*

In Jesus' first public sermon he quoted Isaiah 61, about the Spirit of the Lord having anointed him for his messianic ministry (Luke 4:18f). And his anointing was attested at his baptism by John the Baptist (Luke 3:21-22 and parallels).

Jesus manifested perfect wisdom, revealing the truth of God by word and life. He had wisdom and power to do his work and God's will, performing mighty works. He lived an absolutely sinless life, and no one ever had such a relationship of absolute dependence upon and obedience to the Father. As has been pointed out, the concept of a king's being both divine and dependent requires the incarnation of the God-Man (Geoffrey W Grogan, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, page 87). Jesus was truly manifest among us as the righteous King and the only ruler in history worthy of all praise, glory and honor.

The wonder of being subjects under Christ's rule is that he has given all his kingdom denizens the same Holy Spirit who anointed him for his life and work. Just as Jesus lived by the Holy Spirit's help, so do we as his subjects. We have access to the same presence of God within us. The life he calls us to live requires our similar dependence on the Holy Spirit.

#### *His worthiness*

The Messiah prophesied by Isaiah is Jesus, in whom dwells all of the fullness of the Deity in bodily form (Colossians 2:9). As such, the Son perfectly fulfilled the Father's will. King Jesus is none other than the Christ, the Son of the living God. He is equal with the Father, and is worthy of all the praise of all his creation.

Wicked tyrants the world over demand the submission of their subjects. Yet they cannot coerce by human power the love and devotion of those they hold in submission. Only through acts of love and devotion can human hearts be persuaded to love. And so, we love our King Jesus, who is the Lamb of God, slain for us sinners.

The Apostle John, in his great apocalyptic vision, discloses the worship of the Lamb of God in heaven. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, alone was found worthy to open the scroll of the full and final outworking of God's plan for history and for redemption (Revelation 5:5). And, as we noted in our series of sermons from Revelation, the heavenly hosts cried,

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength  
and honor and glory and praise!” (Revelation 5:12).

Jesus alone is worthy as the ruler of all mankind and nations, and some day he will be acknowledged as ruler. Some will acknowledge him, being regretful that did not receive him unto salvation (Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 6:15-17). Jesus alone is worthy as ruler, worthy of our worship, praise and obedience.

Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Isaiah's perfect ruler, and also of...

### **His reign over his kingdom (verses 3-5)**

In verses 3-5 Isaiah gives the picture of Messiah-King's reign. Again, his reign, as with his character, is in stark contrast with the reign of Ahaz and other earthly rulers. Ahaz, for example, sought guidance for his reign “from every source but the right one.” He “consulted mediums, spiritists, even the dead” (notes from the *NIV Student Bible*, Philip Yancey, ed., on Isaiah 9). Ahaz even resorted to sacrificing his own son in the fire in order to appease the pagan gods of surrounding nations (2 Kings 16). As we see from our text, Messiah's reign over his kingdom is one executed by...

#### *His insight*

Jesus, whose birth we celebrate, is the perfect king with a perfect reign. He reigns with insight, and not merely by sight. As our text describes the ideal king, he is one whose wisdom exceeds that of Kings David, Solomon or any other earthly king or ruler. Messiah alone has insight into a man's heart. Earthly kings and rulers must decide on the basis of external data, man-made laws and on outward evidence and appearances, which any court of law will admit, are often fallible and may lead to judicial miscarriage.

Jesus could not disclose all things to man because he and he alone knew what was in the heart of man (John 2:25). People can deceive others about our goodness, and can conceal motives and thoughts behind actions. Yet God looks deep down into the human heart and sees our deception and hidden wickedness (1 Samuel 16:7). He also knows when people have been victimized by injustice. Our King Jesus is not deceived by religious pretext and appearances. He knows when our religious acts of “devotion” are merely rituals and routines (Mark 7:1-8).

This is a word of comfort for those who are often misunderstood. Our King Jesus knows you and cares deeply for you. And some day, God's justice will be meted out upon those who have mistreated you, should it be that they still will not have repented and sought God's mercy and forgiveness.

"Righteousness will be his belt" (verse 5). We are saved and made righteous, not by anything good in us, but by his righteousness transferred to us through our faith in Jesus Christ. He, by grace alone, makes us righteous before God, and enables us to live righteously in his sight.

I think of those court cases and trials in my own home country, when evidence was inconclusive and because of the cunning of trial lawyers, justice was not done. The guilty went unpunished. But notice as well how Messiah rules by...

### *His justice*

I think we all know something of the rampant injustice so prevalent in the world today. Wicked and selfish tyrants are willing for their own people to suffer for their own selfish lust for power and greed for wealth. And so, they are acting as the dupes and pawns of Satan himself.

This all-knowing God thus can reign over people and nations with perfect justice. He judges by standards of perfection. We can compare ourselves with others, but he will judge by comparing us with his own character, which is one of perfection. Jesus himself said that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law we will "certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). This is a hopeless dilemma! We all fall so far short, including those who sincerely seek to keep the law, who fall far short of Jesus himself, the only one to live a perfect life.

Yet the glorious Good News is that the Messiah is able to impute, or divinely impart his righteousness to us. His atoning death on the Cross made possible our forgiveness, when we repent and receive him as Lord and Savior. God, to the repentant, imputes Jesus' righteousness to us, and we become God's children, justified by faith. We receive the gift of transferred righteousness, and in God's sight we become righteous and perfectly acceptable and even delightful and desirable to him. However, those who reject this marvelous gift must face judgment on the basis of their own righteousness, resulting in condemnation and eternal punishment.

Our King Jesus already exercises a righteous reign over his subjects. Yet, we know that right now we don't live in a perfectly just society. So much injustice prevails. Yet, faith assures us that some day God's justice will catch up with everyone. Every person will be judged on the basis of God's judgment for every evil deed. The innocent victims will be exonerated and avenged and vindicated on the Day of the Lord. The devil himself will be cast into the lake of fire, which God has prepared for him and his fallen angels (Revelation 20:7-10). Yet the poor and meek, those who seek and trust God, will indeed inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

Our text doesn't picture God as delighting in judging his enemies, but as judging in behalf of the needy. God's purpose is to bring his reign of righteousness and peace to those who are in need of deliverance from the deadly tyranny of the Evil One. This is a message desperately needed by people living right here among us in Belgium.

The reign of our Lord Jesus beckons those who are on quest for spiritual meaning and a life of significance and a sense of purposeful belonging. And he provides the means by which we, as debtors and as violators of God's law, are released from our debt and exonerated from the penalty of the law.

Picture a young lady, standing before the judge for an auto speeding violation. She was caught and photographed by a radar camera, traveling 90 kph in a 50 kph restricted zone. The evidence is right before her and the judge's eyes and the fine imposed is beyond what she could possibly pay. The judge says the fine, however, must be paid. Then the judge arises from his bench, and walks down beside the girl, reaches into his wallet and takes out the 200 Euros required by law, and hands the money to his young lady, who happens to be his beloved, if careless and penniless, daughter.

This is a picture of the undeserved grace of God, who loves us as his children, and yet the penalty has to be paid. Justice must be served. And our Father, Judge, and King, is also our Advocate, and our penalty payer. This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote about God's being both the just one and the justifier of "those who have faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

The picture Isaiah's prophecy gives us is of the Messiah King ruling with...

### *His sovereignty*

And Jesus, the perfect ruler, will reign in perfect sovereignty. He is sovereign now. He has already won D-Day, the decisive victory over Satan and his rebellious kingdom of darkness. The picture we have in verse 5 is one of a warrior girded for battle. Jesus won the decisive battle over sin, death and the devil when he died on the cross. Now, by our faith in him and our surrender to his reign, we share in that victory as "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). We too may live in the victory that is ours, to live in the full anointing of the Holy Spirit. All that is Christ's may become ours. In Christ we are given God's wisdom, strength, and holiness. And we hopefully anticipate his great VE Day, the glorious Second Coming that will bring the consummation of the kingdom. Even now, history is in his hands. During his time on earth, Jesus told his disciples that he saw Satan fall from heaven (Luke 10:18). Even in this time of worldwide turbulence and international conflict, we affirm that Jesus is Lord and is sovereign king of his creation.

As I noted earlier, the king of Belgium is a limited monarch, and in some ways simply a symbolic leader with very limited power. But our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is the sovereign ruler of the universe, who through his cross broke the power of Satan and his strangle-hold upon the world. He is sovereign over our lives and circumstances, including our enemies and The Enemy,

Satan himself. As Creator of the entire universe, God could have devised victory through overwhelming power. But he chose to win our hearts through his loving sacrifice and self-giving. And we share in his reign through our submission to a similar way of the cross. And through the cross there is victory and peace, in life and in death.

In verse 4 we see that the Messiah King will rule by the power of his word. He created by his word, and he saves and keeps and rules by the word. He *is* the eternal Word (John 1:1-18) who thereby holds everything under his sovereign control (Hebrews 1:3). He is holding the universe together by his word. He's holding your life together by his word.

The older brother of Belgium's present King Albert II was King Baudouin, who died in 1993 at the age of 63. Baudouin was known to be a man of strong religious convictions, as well as a man of humanitarian concern for the weaker element of Belgian society.

"In 1990, when a law liberalising Belgium's abortion laws was approved by parliament, he refused to give Royal Assent, an unprecedented act since assent had always been considered a mere formality. The government declared him unable to reign on April 4, 1990. The Belgian constitution provides that, if the king is incapable of reigning, the government as a whole will fulfill the role of head of state. All members of the government signed the bill, and the government declared that Baudouin was capable of reigning again the next day, on April 5, 1990" (from *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*).

Although good King Baudouin was against abortion, he was forced to remain silent when the legislation was enacted. He fell silent. But our King Jesus cannot be silenced. His word still calls the lost to faith and fulfills his perfect will for the lives of his children who trust in and who call upon him. And his word will execute his justice and judgment upon those who refuse his reign and who oppose and harm his people.

This Christmas we can and must submit to his reign and joyfully participate in...

### **The realm of his kingdom (verses 6-9)**

Verses 6-9 picture for us the kingdom of the Messiah, a redeemed and transformed universe. The kingdom of God...

*Is an earthly realm*

Jesus came proclaiming the availability of his kingdom to all people, not just to those in a privileged religious tradition. In Jesus the kingdom of God became present and accessible (Mark 1:14-15). Through faith in Jesus we are delivered from Satan's kingdom into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus. And by our entrance into his kingdom we indeed experience the joy of his kingdom

reign, the joy of his presence and his purpose for our lives. And, whatever the circumstances of our lives, we may find his peace and joy in the real world in which we live, the world of everyday people and circumstances, the world of work, family, school and relationships.

Jesus taught us to live, think and pray with the kingdom of God in view. We are to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). And the rest of the Model Prayer shows us that to be in the kingdom of God is to know that Jesus cares about the material, and about our living environment, and what kind of social and political decisions are being made (See Stanley M Hauerwas and William Williman, “Your Kingdom Come,” an article published in *Sojourners Magazine*, May-June, 1996). Faith is not just an emotion, but an active following of Jesus in all the areas and decisions of our lives, realizing that Jesus is there too. And all our lives we are in the throes of having to decide, as did Jesus when tempted by Satan with the fallen kingdom of this world, which kingdom we will serve—Satan’s or God’s.

To pray “Your kingdom come,” is to thrust us into the arena of conflict, with King Jesus pitted against this fallen world as Satan’s domain. The realm of Jesus’ reign is a big threat to this fallen world, as was the birth of the Messiah to Herod, so much so that he ordered the execution of all male babies (Matthew 2:3). The fallen world is threatened by Jesus’ reign, so don’t be surprised when you follow Jesus and represent his truth and his values if the world either shuns you or opposes you. And today we can think about those who are praying “Your kingdom come, your will be done” at a great cost. They are making a clear and costly choice to follow the reign of Jesus over that of the fallen world. Those who are selling material goods to give to those in need are making a kingdom of God over the kingdom of things choice. Those who are living by heavenly kingdom values of love, mercy and sacrifice are pitted against the kingdom of darkness.

We are part of the heavenly kingdom, yet, ironically, the kingdom of heaven makes a radical difference in the way we live our lives here on earth. And Jesus is keenly interested in the way we live our lives and in what goes on in the every detail of our lives. As is said, “the devil is in the details,” and yet Jesus is concerned about those details.

I have a friend who sent me an e-mail about an advertisement for drawings for sale (good evangelical American sentimental commercialism and materialistic entrepreneurship!) of a Jesus figure standing behind or beside people in about every walk of life, both in work and leisure activities. The point of my friend’s e-mail was, “How tacky and materialistic, even making an image of God in the form of this nice-looking 33-year-old bearded man, wearing a white robe, who posed for these pictures!” The artist sells these sketches on line, and you are likely to find one that suits your work or favorite activity that shows “Jesus” standing behind or beside you. For example, a housewife is taking a pie out of the oven, and “Jesus” stands approvingly behind her, with his hand on her shoulder. I didn’t envy the golfer, who was getting ready to

take a swing, while “Jesus” is standing across from him, arms folded, as if to be critiquing his swing!

But, my shared disdain for this kind of sentimental commercialism aside, I see truth here. The kingdom is a very invasive thing. We like our privacy, and we don’t want governments getting too snoopy in our lives, even if some relinquishing of our privacy rights is required for security reasons. But the kingdom of God is invasive and our King gets quite personal with us. He is there beside us, and behind, and even within us. As Psalm 139 makes clear, even our thoughts don’t escape his attention. If you want a kingdom that leaves you alone to your ease and privacy and is a kingdom you can activate only in case of emergency, then the kingdom of God is not for you.

Even in this fallen world, Jesus reigns. He rules in the human heart. But also his kingdom...

*Is an extensive realm*

His kingdom extends from shore to shore. And his kingdom though coming by way of the “weak power of the cross,” transforms lives and even changes human relationships, society and governments. No hall of government can shut out the rule and realm of Christ’s influence and lordship. And we know that the kingdom will be consummated when Jesus returns again, and...

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

The picture our text gives us is of a world at peace with itself, totally redeemed and reconciled. And the borders between man and nature, the carnivorous and herbivorous beasts, are all erased. Children, infants, lions, bears, calves and poisonous snakes all “hang out” together in peace. The kingdom of God even now knows no borders between people and groups, races, and cultural distinctions.

Listen again to Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon:

“Baptism is a call to become citizens of Israel, to become part of God’s weird way of saving the world. That weirdness is signified, exemplified, specified in the act of baptism itself.

“When you join Rotary they give you a handshake and a membership card. When you join the church, we throw you into water, bathe you, half drown you, clean you up, and tell you that you have been born again. We thus signify that being a Christian is not natural, not a by-product of being an American (or citizen of any other country). To be Christian is to be adopted by a new nation, the kingdom of God. For the first time in our lives, those old labels and divisions which cause such grief - male/female, slave/free, rich/poor - are washed away, overcome, not by saying that such divisions don’t mean anything, but rather by showing how they have been relativized,

subordinated, washed by our new citizenship. Now the only division that makes much difference to us is church/world.

“To say ‘Your kingdom come’ is to be willing to become part of the rather weird gathering of strange people, often people the world regards as outsiders, who are now on the inside with Jesus. One of the most persistent criticisms of Jesus was the charge that he hung out with disreputable people” (See Hauerwas and Willimon, above citation). Jesus’ kingdom is for the poor, the misfits, the unsuccessful of the world. Hauerwas and Willimon again,

“Perhaps the elusiveness of the kingdom is why most of Jesus’ teaching was teaching about the kingdom. Imagine a sermon that begins, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth’ (Matthew 5:3-5).

“Blessed are those who are unemployed, blessed are those suffering terminal illness, blessed are those who are going through marital distress....

“The congregation does a double take. Blessed? Fortunate? Lucky? What kind of world is this? In America (and perhaps here in Western Europe) if you are unemployed, people treat you as if you have some sort of disease. They don’t want to catch what you have. If your marriage is a failure, you are a failure. That doesn’t sound very blessed.

“The preacher says, ‘Wait. I should have been more clear. I wasn’t talking about your kingdoms, the kingdoms built upon success and achievement and earnest striving. I am talking about the kingdom of God.’ In this topsy-turvy place, our values are stood on their head. Little in this kingdom comes naturally. It comes because God is in charge and because we are invited to be part of God’s rule” (Hauerwas and Willimon, above).

Even now, those who submit to his reign experience joy and peace, and become instruments of peace in rectifying an unjust society, and influence the fallen world for the good of the kingdom of God. And our text shows us the direction that God realm is heading—toward the perfection of his reign on earth and then in the new heaven and new earth.

We see in our text a picture of perfect order in nature. This strange, idyllic and pastoral picture of a restored nature shows us that even the hostilities of the fallen world order since the Fall of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden will some day cease (Romans 8:22). What a glorious redemption also awaits our souls, as we hold the hope of some day being like our King Jesus! We will be free not only from the penalty and power of sin, but also from its very presence. We have a purifying hope within us (1 John 3:2), even as we pray with expectancy, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

### *Is an expanding realm*

Our text tells us that “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (verse 9). God’s kingdom is advancing until the fullness of his elect are gathered in, when there will be representatives of every tribe,

language, people and nation, worshiping Jesus around the throne (Revelation 5:9). And you and I, as well as this church, are privileged to be a part of God's work in bringing his kingdom to its full growth, for his glory.

As God's people, we have been given his vision that the growth of his government and peace will have no end (Isaiah 9:7). And each one of us has a part in that growth, right here in Belgium. And our prayers must be those of dreamers. Our dreams for God's all-invasive, transforming work must become our prayers and thus our agenda as God's being-redeemed people.

And to be part of his growth is to walk with Jesus in the weak power of the cross, and to let him love and shine through us, as we relate to others and communicate with them the message of the kingdom of God.

### **Conclusion:**

The Magi brought gifts to the baby Jesus that remarkably seemed to acknowledge him as the promised Messiah-King (Matthew 2:11). As they bowed before the baby Jesus, we must now bow our hearts before the God-Man who was crucified for us and raised from the dead, and who now reigns in glory. The world seems to enjoy the image of Jesus as the baby in Bethlehem's manger, but is a bit discomfited by the image of the crucified, risen, glorified and preparing to return King of kings.

Our choice today is to either shun him or bow before him as our Lord and King. Jesus says that the kingdom of God is within us (Luke 17:21). You and I are evidence that the King is reclaiming his territory and is building an everlasting kingdom. Let's keep trusting and following a King who never disappoints, and whose realm will keep on expanding until the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (verse 9).

I think of this fantastic picture of the consummated kingdom in verses 6-9, and this was an incredible image for Israelites in Isaiah's day. Shepherds knew what wolves would do to lambs, and leopards to goats, bears to cows and lions to oxen. And no one in his right mind would let a little child play where there might be snakes, because all of them in this part of the world were poisonous. But God's kingdom is about doing the fantastic and unimaginable.

There will be with us in heaven formerly dangerous, poisonous people, including terrorists, those who perhaps now hate us and wish we were dead. I doubt if Saul of Tarsus was ever voted, "Most likely to become a dedicated Christian missionary" by those who feared his murderous tirades and plots against the church. Yet what a convert he became! And there will be with us in perfect love and heavenly fellowship many others whom we might now be tempted to shun or simply avoid as suspect or even society's dangerous element. But, believe it or not, King Jesus is drawing such people to himself, like he did Saul and Simon the Zealot, who became one of the disciples and fellowshipped with right-wingers like Matthew.

Let's be grateful that we too have come into this strange yet almighty, new kingdom. Yes, as we've heard from Peter, we all are strangers and refugees in this world but have received full citizenship in God's holy nation, his eternal kingdom (1 Peter 1:1; 2:9). And we can be involved with God, as we reach out to fellow foreigners, refugees and the weak, powerless, confused, rebellious and lost, with the life-changing message of King Jesus.

Are we willing to worship, follow and obey the King of kings?

**Questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:**

1. From verses 1-3, describe the character of the Messiah King as portrayed by Isaiah.
2. Note how that the Messiah King is described as dependent on the Spirit's anointing (verse 2). If the God-Man depended on the Holy Spirit, what does that say to us about our need for dependence on God's Spirit?
3. Earthly monarchs can try to command the loyalty and obeisance of their subjects. How does King Jesus win the loyalty and obeisance and obedience of the citizens of his kingdom?
4. Our text speaks of the Messiah King ruling with perfect insight, justice and righteousness (verses 3-5). How is Jesus able to be both our Judge as well as our Advocate and Deliverer? (See Romans 3:21-26).
5. Our text pictures the Messiah King as sovereign over all the earth. What does the sovereignty of Christ mean to you in regards to 1) your conversion, 2) your present circumstances and 3) your future destiny?
6. Reflecting on verses 6-9, how concerned do you think Jesus is about our present, earthly conditions? What place do you think the earthly creation will have in God's consummated kingdom?
7. Who do you think will be included in the eternal kingdom of God? (See Revelation 5:9). What does this say about your and the church's involvement in personal witness, works of compassion, working for justice, and doing evangelism and missions?

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