

“TO US A CHILD OF HOPE IS BORN” (Is. 9:6)

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given

The writer of this hymn, - John Morison, - was born in Whitehill, Cairney ... just off the A96 on the road between Huntly and Keith, in Aberdeenshire on 18th September 1746. Having graduated from King’s College, Aberdeen, and then taking several teaching jobs in Caithness, he carried out further studies and was ordained as Minister in Canisbay on 26th Sept. 1780. (Canisbay is along the most northerly A-road in Britain ... the A836.) ... He was minister there until he died in June 1798. The church and his graveyard are on the left-hand-side of the road, as you travel from Thurso towards John O’Groats.)

John Morison was one of a number of hymn writers in the eighteenth century who added to the Scottish Psalter paraphrases from Scriptures, other than the Psalms. This hymn he wrote, - “To us a Child of hope is born”, - is one such paraphrase, and is taken from the words of Is. 9:6-7. We are probably not too familiar with this hymn, so let’s read it ...

To us a Child of hope is born,
To us a Son is given,
Him shall the tribes of earth obey,
Him all the hosts of Heaven.

His name shall be the Prince of Peace,
For evermore adored,
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
The great and mighty Lord.

His power, increasing, still shall spread,
His reign no end shall know,
Justice shall guard His throne above,
And peace abound below.”

... Verse 4 in our hymnbook is originally the opening verse in this hymn, ...

“The race that long in darkness pined,
Have seen a glorious Light;
The people dwell in day, who dwelt
In death’s surrounding night.

To us a child of hope is born,
To us a son is given,
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,
The mighty Lord of Heaven.”

Two more verses we don't have in our hymnbook, are these ...

“To hail Thy rise, Thou better Sun,
The gathering nations come,
Joyous as when the reapers bear
The harvest treasures home.”

“For Thou our burden hast removed,
And quelled the oppressor's sway,
Quick as the slaughtered squadrons fell
In Midian's evil day.”

Basing our study on the first seven verses of Isaiah chapter nine, let's look with John Morison at this very familiar passage of Old Testament Scripture which prophesies the birth of our Saviour. Firstly, let's consider ...

HIS HUMILIATION Look at this very closely. You might think Isaiah is making the same statement in two different ways, - *unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given*, - but actually he is making a very clear and important distinction. He differentiates, the *Child is born* ... the *Son is given*. ... Jesus Christ was *born* into this world ... He was *born* in human nature, ... physically, as we all were, while, - at the same time, - as the eternal Son of God, He has been *given*, as Jn. 3:16 also makes that very clear distinction, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son* ... This is a truth we must strongly uphold as *Biblical truth*, - the Lord Jesus, in His human nature, begotten of the Holy Spirit, and *born* of the Virgin Mary. He is as truly-born as any person who ever lived upon this earth. *But*, as God's Son, He was *given*. From before the worlds were created, in eternity itself, He was *begotten* of His Father, not made or created, but of the same perfect and everlasting substance with the Father.

How can it possibly be true that *unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given*? To many, such a thought sounds like the myths and legends of ancient Greece and Rome. It's not something an educated and progressive member of the twenty-first century would admit to believing. ... How do *we* believe it then? *We* believe it to be an undeniable truth that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (I Tim. 1:15)* because the infallible and inerrant Word of God plainly and simply teaches it.

It is such a foundational truth to our faith ... and yet, we humbly confess, - it lies beyond our capability to explain ... but believe it, - and to be certain of it,

- *we must!* A God Whom we could understand in His entirety would be no God at all. ... How can someone like me possibly understand infinity? Me, - confined in my consciousness of time alone, - how could I possibly understand the eternality of God? How could I understand the marvellous work of His creation, and how He keeps it all in its place? I've got to bow before Him, as the psalmist did, and declare, ⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it ...* ¹⁴ *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*

He is infinite and eternal ... *and I'm not!* I am restricted by the confines of this earth ... *and He's not!* He is far above all we can comprehend. This is the foundation upon which Isaiah's words were spoken, *unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ...* *This* is the emphasis John Morison also draws on, "To us a Child of hope is *born*, To us a Son is *given*."

Some might say you believe it because you've been brought up in a Christian home, and you have been conditioned to believe these things. No, that's not why I believe it ... because there have been many brought up in Christian homes and they *don't* believe it. Why am I so convinced of it then? I'm convinced of it because the Lord says it *in His Holy Word* ... and that is the only concrete proof we need to have to be convinced of it! ...

You see, some others would say there's no proof of this God of yours. You can't say for certain He is. But those who make such an affirmation choose instead to believe in a theory that has absolutely no foundation in common sense or sound judgment. "There is no such thing as God", they say, "the concept of God is a crutch for the weak to lean upon". ... But no, it is anything but! While they are trying to make their minds up as to what next speculative evolutionary approach to concoct, it is already etched upon the minds of God's people, - as far back, almost, as the beginning of time, **Gen. 1:1** *In the beginning God.*

... And here is what He said to those who don't want to give Him His place, **Jer. 5:22** *Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?*

... Why do we bring the creation into Christmas? We bring creation into Christmas to demonstrate the same God Who began the *old* creation is the God Who is also the Author of the *new* creation, **1 Cor. 15:22** *For as in Adam all*

die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ... This is the Christ Who, **Jn. 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** The same was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... **Col. 1:15** Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: **16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **17** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. That is the same Jesus Isaiah writes about, **Is. 9:6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.

And yet, that same Lord Jesus Christ, **Phil. 2:6** Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: **7** But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: **8** And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

When you contemplate the coming of the Lord Jesus to Bethlehem over two thousand years ago, ... and you consider **His Humiliation**, you can't help but express your feelings in terms similar to the psalmist, **Ps. 139:17** How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

HIS EXALTATION

The race that long in darkness pined,
Have seen a glorious Light;
The people dwell in day, who dwell
In death's surrounding night"

... *Originally* that was the opening verse of this hymn. It refers to the spiritual darkness spreading over the land. The people were far from God, but then we read good news, **Is. 9:2** 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.

It is like how Paul wrote to the Ephesians, **Eph. 2:2** in time past ye walked according to the course of this world ... **4** But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **5** Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) ... But consider that thought a bit deeper ... Where were you and I? We walked according to the course of this world ... What did God do? Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ ... And how did He do it? by grace ye are saved ... And what does that mean? It means He sent His Son to redeem His people, unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.

You see, there is even more to this than simply believing Jesus came into this world because Isaiah is not simply referring to Him and saying a child is born. He actually wrote, *unto us a child is born*. This is the reason we celebrate the birth of Christ ... because *unto us a child is born*. This *Child* is being wonderfully and gloriously exalted. ... This surpasses the glitter and gloss for this is the *true* message of Christmas ... and is particularly the privilege of the believer, for *unto us a child is born*. ... As John Morison wrote, "To us a Child of hope is born" ... and as Paul put it, **1 Peter 2:7** *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious*.

Why is this Child so precious? Because He is God, and because our salvation was accomplished on the cross by Him, ... and our salvation is for eternity. The complete time Jesus spent on earth was all a work of God. That Baby born in Bethlehem is the beloved of the people of God, simply because He first loved us. ... And that is a precious knowledge when you know and are trusting Him as your personal Saviour and Lord.

And yes, we see **His exaltation** when the shepherds and the wise men came and worshipped Him ... but look ahead, for there is also the promise of the dawning of a new day, ... when *all* shall see and recognise **His exaltation**. The hymn writer follows the path of the Scriptures and he looks beyond Christ's arrival in Bethlehem to the time of His Second Coming, **Is. 9:6** *and the government shall be upon his shoulder*: That means He is coming to reign, - He is going to bear the responsibility as Supreme Ruler, the King of kings, the Lord of lords ... Presidents and Popes will fall before Him, Monarchs and Ministers, Dictators and Despots ... **Phil. 2:10** *at the name of Jesus every knee [will] bow ... ¹¹ And ... every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*.

Matthew Henry commented, "This child, this son, this Son of God, this Son of man, that is given to us ... is invested with the highest honour and power". ... And, what does that mean? It indicates to me that He, - as *the mighty God, The everlasting Father*, - is the crowned King of kings, and to Him literally, Morison wrote, "... shall the tribes of earth obey" ... as Isaiah went on to explain, **Is. 9:7** *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*.

Let's open that up a little further ... Is that happening today? Are we experiencing the kind of *increase of his government*, and peace without end Isaiah is prophesying? Are we seeing judgment and justice established in His

Name and ruling throughout the world today? ... No, of course not. Instead, God's laws are being torn down and replaced with man's law. God's Word is being *stripped* and torn out of the statute books, - none more so than our own land! ... In these present times, we are not seeing Christ's government ruling on earth ... Yes, God is still on the throne and He is in ultimate control ... but Christ is not reigning, as to the manner in which God's Word declares ... *not yet!* ... *Not yet* are we experiencing, "Him [*do*] the tribes of earth obey, Him all the hosts of Heaven"? Yes, in Heaven, His every word is obeyed ... but, - *not yet*, - "the tribes of earth" are obeying Him ...

In fact, it's the complete opposite. We are falling deeper into a widening chasm of unbelief! There is blasphemy, endorsed by high-ranking religious leaders. God's Word is being trampled upon. Christ Himself is made to be an object of mockery, scorn and humour.

No, there is no way "the tribes of earth obey" Him, at the present time. ... But the verse indicates when these wonderful days *will* be achieved because Isaiah draws a distinguishing line by using one simple word, and it helps us to understand it more clearly, **Is. 9:6** For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. **7** Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end ... That day is coming! Yes, but how will it happen when nothing in this world is pointing to it? ... It *will* happen, for Isaiah tells us *how* it will happen, for *the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this*. ... God will make it happen ... It will happen when the Lord Jesus Christ returns ... Yes, notice *that* future tense! Here is the song of the Redeemed in Heaven, **Rev. 5:9** Thou ... hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; **10** And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and *we shall reign on the earth*. ... These people were in Heaven, anticipating coming to this earth to future reign with Christ, as Isaiah also prophesied, **Is. 4:2** In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent.

... From **His Humiliation** to **His Exaltation**, and finally ...

OUR EXPECTATION

John Morison writes,

His power, increasing, still shall spread,
His reign no end shall know,
Justice shall guard His throne above,
And peace abound below.

Yes, we are still using the *future* tense. There are great times ahead for the believer! They'll not just last for a while, but they will last forever.

You see, the message of Isaiah *is* for today, *For unto us [today] a child is born, unto us [today] a son is given*. We are heading towards Heaven and towards all He has promised for us ... but we're not there yet. We have business to do, here on earth. We have 'the talents' the Master has given us ... and someday He will be returning from 'the far country' and He'll call us to account concerning our work for Him.

Are you looking forward to His return? Are you anticipating it with great excitement? I hope you are, believer, because if you are looking forward to His coming, you will be busy getting ready. ... In Isaiah's day, there were those who were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, awaiting His arrival, as they also were in the Gospels and the Epistles. ... One of the loveliest stories is about an old man and an old woman ... and neither the two of them wanted to die until they saw the Messiah (Simeon and Anna, Lk. 2:25-38). The Lord granted their desire.

We have been given the Gift by God of His only-begotten Son over two thousand years ago, - that's how long ago it was since He came the first time ... but He is coming back again, and "What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see!"

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ... We recognise **His humiliation** when He was born as a little Baby, - a little human being, - born into this world ... where in Bethlehem His Father *gave* Him to accomplish and fulfil salvation's plan on the cross.

He rose from the dead, ascended and already exalted to Heaven's throne, but there is, - when He returns to this earth, - **His exaltation** among the nations ... and that is **our expectation**, based upon the promises of His Word.

You see, "To us a Child of hope is born, to us a Son is given" ... **II Cor. 9:15**
Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.