Isaiah 9:2 2The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned.

There are just times when what God’s Word reveals and says it absolutely mind boggling. Take for instance the words, really the prophecy that is before us. There is no doubt this is a prophecy about the coming Messiah. Yes, these words are about Jesus, about things that will happen when Jesus the Savior, the Messiah promised will come. We know that just by looking ahead to verse 6. I think verse 6 is familiar to everyone. It says: **“For to us a child is born. To us a son is given. The authority to rule will rest on his shoulders. He will be named: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”** Yeah, we hear those words and we say, “Definitely about Jesus!”

Today, instead of looking at the more popular parts of this prophecy of Jesus we are going to look at lesser known parts. But, my, oh my, what they reveal. That’s why I said sometimes God’s Word is just mind boggling. When you understand these words you understand just how in depth, how detailed God’s prophecies concerning the Savior really were. Our theme for today will be: **WHAT IMMANUEL WILL DO.**

Let’s just do a verse by verse look at what is said here. Here is verse 1. **“Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for the land that was in anguish. In former times, he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will cause it to be glorious, along the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles.”** Some historical background is needed.

The area being spoken of was originally a part of the inheritance and division of the land of Israel that was given to the tribe of Zebulun and Naphtali. If you look at a map that shows those areas of inheritance you would immediately see that these areas are about and around the Sea of Galilee on the northern end of the land. So a couple of realities about this area. First, many of the great enemies you are going to encounter in your life as the nation of Israel are going to be enemies that come from the north. That means that Zebulun and Naphtali are going to be areas first and foremost attacked as the enemies sweep south from the north. That is what is being alluded to as this verse speaks about **“the land that was in anguish.”** They always got attacked first and always took the brunt of warfare against the Jewish people. The prophecy is correct.

But there is more yet. God states that **“he humbled the land”** and refers to both of the areas. What does that mean? Well, again history provides the answer. As some of the great enemies of the land came and attacked an interesting fact took place. This area was most often, especially as a result of God’s discipline to the nation for being godless, under the control of foreign kings and empires. As per usual the land was then inhabited by these foreigners. The Jewish people had left, either by force or because it just wasn’t safe to stay and as a result foreigners, known as gentiles to the Jew, inhabited the land. Because of this the area became known as **“Galilee of the Gentiles.”** And just so you know, this was especially true under Roman occupation where this name actually had a kind of legal status. In Roman times when you spoke of **“Galilee of the Gentiles”** every Jewish person knew exactly what you were talking about. Mind you, Isaiah is some 700 years before this actually takes place. That is part of what makes it all so mind boggling.

Yet there is more! The verse says, **“In the later time he will cause it to be glorious.”** Now you think, “What in the world is that?” And the answer is astounding. Isaiah is being allowed to see that when the Messiah comes, the Messiah would do extensive ministry, indeed, we even know that Jesus and his disciples had their “headquarters” in this area, not to mention that even Nazareth, the place where Jesus would live and grow up is a part of this area. Think of all the people who are healed, who have the gospel shared with them, who literally have in their midst the very Son of God and who come to faith all because Jesus will live and operate in this area. I am sure you would agree that this is “glorious!”

My goodness! Look at all that is revealed about the Messiah and his times. It doesn’t seem like much, but when combined with all the other prophecies about the Messiah it is just information that highlights, indeed, screams at us that Jesus is the real deal. Jesus is the fulfillment of what these words speak of, details that help us grasp that God’s plan truly is done! 700 years before it even happened!

Let’s then go to the next verse, verse 2. **“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned.”** I am completely positive that everyone here grasps that this is about the wonder, wisdom, and salvation that Jesus is. Even as Matthew is writing his gospel, he is compelled by the Holy Spirit to make reference to the fact that Jesus’ ministry is a fulfillment of these words of Isaiah. And there is no doubt that Jesus is the Light. That’s because Jesus is God and God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. The people of this land were able to see, walk with, associate and believe in the Lord God who was visibly among them. They were able to see and hear the very truth, the voice of God in Jesus. Yes, Jesus is a light to this sin darkened world. He brings God’s wisdom and wonder to all. Now did you catch the words here that tie so nicely into the 23rd Psalm? Yes, the phrase: **“the land of the shadow of death.”** That phrase not only covers the land of Israel but actually includes the whole world. All of us have a need of this Savior and his wonderful truth. But we will hear more in just a moment about what Jesus will accomplish for us.

What I don’t grasp is how people can so callously ignore Jesus. If he is not the Son of God and our Savior sent to reveal the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, then why do you have anything to do with him? If he is not what the Bible says he is, then the Bible is false, wrong, and filled with lies and totally worthless information. But if Jesus is the Light, the truth of God, why don’t you give him your full attention? It just bothers me that people take a “well, I will believe this and that, but I am going to reject things that I don’t like.” It’s like saying, “Light is good, but I will wear dark tinted glasses.” Or, “I know God and Jesus is Light, but the dark is a lot more fun and intriguing,” or “I will dwell in darkness and God will just have to deal with it.” Yes, God will deal with it. And if you pay attention the Light makes it clear exactly how God will deal with it.

Our next verse says, **“You have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy. They rejoice before you like the joy at harvest time, like the celebration when people divide the plunder.”** Again what awesome and yes, joyful words.

In a nutshell, here are words that speak to the fact that Jesus was not just for Jewish people, but was and is for all people of all of time. In Old Testament times the ceremonial laws and such were indeed geared for Jewish people with the understanding that they were to speak the wonder of the promised Messiah, Jesus, to the world. They didn’t. They decided God was just for them. But when Jesus comes, he makes it clear he has come to save the whole world. The joy of salvation is for all and hopefully all will grasp the joy that Jesus provides. How truly uplifting these words are.

Then comes what I consider to be the next most important verse before us. Verse 2 a verse about the Light was central and now verse 4 is also central because it really does tell us the total of what the Savior will do. It says, **“For you have shattered the yoke that burdened them. You have broken the bar on their shoulder and the rod of their oppressor, as you did in the day of Midian.”** Now understand, Midian is mentioned because in the day of Gideon, from this area, Midian was the great enemy that Gideon fought and won against. So the message here is first, you will confront your enemy and you will defeat your enemy because God is on your side! You can win just like Gideon!

What will you win against? **“The yoke that burdened them,”** is one description. Here is language that describes the load of hardship that comes because of slavery. The load is heavy and difficult. It is described as a yoke, that tool put on you so that you could do hard labor. The yoke is shattered. It is a picture of what God is going to do with the burden and weight of sin. Sin oppresses us, but God is going to shatter the yoke and free us from its oppressive weight. Isn’t that what Jesus has done for us?

The verse goes on and tells us that God has also **”broken the bar on their shoulder and the rod of their oppressor.”** Again, here is picturesque language to describe our spiritual condition before the Lord and what God is going to do for us. We were burdened by sin, that’s the bar on our shoulder, another way of speaking of the yoke. But notice that the **“rod”** is also broken. The truth is that in this world, most “masters” are hard and cruel to their slaves. They will not hesitate to beat you and make your life miserable if you don’t do exactly as they say. God takes away that rod. Spiritually speaking, it is the rod, the weapon of Satan that has been using to crush mankind ever since the fall into sin. I have no doubt that the rod here is a spiritual reference to death.

I say that because I go back to that phrase in verse 2, **“the land of the shadow of death.”** That is our world. We live with the weight and horror of death, eternal death upon us. On our own, there is nothing we can do about it. On our own, the best we can say is that we will get there, that is, we will die! There is no comfort in that. God says that this weapon is broken. Do you want to hear that put another way?

Please turn your attention to the following passages: Romans 4:25 **“He was handed over to death because of our trespasses and was raised to life because of our justification.”** Romans 6:1-5 **“What shall we say then? Shall we keep on sinning so that grace may increase? Absolutely not! We died to sin. How can we go on living in it any longer? Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him by this baptism into his death, so that just as he was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too would also walk in a new life. For if we have been united with him in the likeness of this death, we will certainly also be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection.”** 2 Timothy 1:9-10 **“He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, and has now been revealed through the appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”** Or how about Hebrews 2:14-15, **“Therefore, since the children share flesh and blood, he also shared the same flesh and blood, so that through death he could destroy the one who had the power of death (that is, the Devil) and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.”**

Now don’t think those are all the passages that speak of this wonder of Jesus and his defeat of death. Yes, Jesus conquered sin, death and the Devil for us. That’s the reason he came! He came to offer us the forgiveness of sins, and with that gift of forgiveness, eternal life and salvation. And again, the issue here is faith. Faith that believes Jesus is the Light, the truth and absolute revelation of God for the salvation of souls. Faith that trusts that God will help us, guide us, strengthen us and cause us in Him to live new lives to his call and glory. Faith that trusts God’s Word as our truth and guide because behind this Word of God is the very power, majesty and awe of Jesus the Son of God the Light of God for us.

I pray that the joy of Jesus is clearly a part of your life. I pray that you grasp his greatness, his wisdom and most important, his sacrifice for your eternal life and salvation. Jesus brings you life, makes you his family and saves our souls from the pangs of sin and death. Jesus, I believe, help my unbelief! Amen.