

CHRISTMAS INTERLUDE

Christ's Christmas Messianic Isaiah 9:6-7 Provisions For Today's Needy World Part V: God's Great Motivation To Rescue His People From Critics Of Their Faith (Isaiah 9:7d)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

One of the biggest challenges we believers face is handling strong, brazen criticism of our Christian faith:

(1) Josh McDowell notes that in a debate he once had with a Marxist, she had said: "Historians today have fairly well dismissed Jesus as being historical." (J. McDowell, Evidence That Demands A Verdict: V. I., 1991, p. 81)

Such brash claims can really bother believers in Christ: as an example, last week, I was questioned by a man who has often asked about the reality of the Christian faith. He suffers a gnawing restlessness that dates back to his exposure to strong Postmodern, anti-Christian influences he faced at large, secular university.

(2) The latest issue of Answers ("Belief in Creation on the Decline," Nov.-Dec., 2017, p. 47) cites an article in USA Today by Tom Krattenmaker from Yale Divinity School that reports that many American Christians now accept what they believe is "overwhelming scientific evidence for evolution while seeing a divine role in the process."

However, yielding this way to evolution contrasts with Jesus' handling of Genesis 1-2 in Matthew 19:4-6!

Need: *So we ask, "What is God's answer to the potent criticism of the Christian faith that we often face?!"*

I. In viewing the Isaiah 9:6-7 Christmas Season prediction of Christ's first and second comings, Isaiah 9:7d uses a phrase showing God's great incentive to save the believer from facing strong criticism of his faith:

- A. The Isaiah 9:7d phrase, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" appears elsewhere in Isaiah **only** at Isaiah 37:32b (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 621, 659; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 888), and the context there tells of God's rescue of Hezekiah whose Biblical faith was under attack by Assyria's king:
1. Assyria's king Sennacherib had heard of Judah's king Hezekiah's trust in the Biblical God to protect Jerusalem from his invasion, so to try to demoralize Hezekiah into surrendering to him, Sennacherib sent messengers to Hezekiah to charge him not to be deceived into thinking his God could protect him from Assyria, for the gods of the other nations had not kept Assyria from defeating their peoples, Isaiah 37:8-13.
 2. Hezekiah received this blasphemous message in the form of a letter from the Assyrian king's men, so he took it to God's temple, opened it up and spread it out before the Lord that He might read it, Isaiah 37:14.
 3. Then, Hezekiah prayed, asserting that Israel's Biblical God was the Creator of the universe, that though Sennacherib had defeated the other Gentile nations, those nations relied on idols that were the works of men's hands, Isaiah 37:15-19. Thus, keeping his faith in the true God, Hezekiah asked the Lord to save Judah from Sennacherib that the nations around might know that He alone was the true God, Isaiah 37:20.
 4. God answered Hezekiah with the message that it was He who had let the Assyrian army defeat other nations in carrying out His judgment (Isaiah 37:12-27), but that the Lord had also seen Sennacherib's raging against Him so that God would exercise fitting judgment on Sennacherib, Isaiah 37:28-29.
 5. Furthermore, Judah would not only be saved from Assyria, but she would flourish in God's blessing, that "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" great turn of events, Isaiah 37:30-32 KJV.
 6. Accordingly, that night, the Preincarnate Christ, the Angel of the Lord, slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, and Sennacherib returned to his home city of Nineveh where he himself was slain in the temple of his god Nisroch by two of his sons, Isa. 37:33-38. Sennacherib's boast that no god of the nations, including Israel's God, could protect their nations from him, was turned against him by the Lord so that Sennacherib's god in his own god's temple could not protect him from a violent death at the hands of his own sons!
- B. Thus, the Isaiah 9:7d phrase, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" shows God will reverse the plight of believers in Christ who face strong denials of their faith akin to what God did for Hezekiah in his era!

II. The text reveals just HOW God will reverse the believer's plight of facing strong denials of his faith:

- A. Isaiah 9:6-7 predicts the first and second advents of Christ Who will ultimately sit on David's throne to establish His Kingdom of eternal justice and righteousness over the foes of His people, Isaiah 9:3-7c.
- B. However, like Hezekiah's facing opposition from Assyria's king to his Biblical faith, believers today face foes to their Biblical faith, so God wants today's believers to know that just as He told Hezekiah in his era "the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this," He will similarly deliver them. Expounding the phrase clarifies how:
1. The Hebrew word for "zeal," *qin'ah*, is always used in Isaiah's prophecy of God's "zeal" as a Warrior in behalf of His people as He directs His wrath toward sin and sinners who afflict His people, Ibid., B. D. B.

2. The word "Lord," *Yahweh*, used in both Isaiah 9:7 and 37:32, is the name for God by which He delivered Israel from Egypt with mighty signs and wonders, including His destruction of the Egyptian chariot army at the Red Sea, Exodus 3:13-17; 4:1-14:31; *Ibid.*, Kittel, p. 81-82, 621, 659.
3. God's title as Lord of "hosts" (plural = *sabe'ot*) uses the word *saba'*, "army, war, warfare," that alludes to His role as Mighty Warrior over His people's foes, *Ibid.*, Kittel, p. 621, 659; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 838-839.
4. Thus, God wants those who today trust in Christ as Savior, the Lord Who was predicted in Isaiah 9:6-7 to come, to know that at His Second Coming, He will act as their Mighty Warrior, combating foes who counter their faith in Christ like Sennacherib countered Hezekiah's Biblical faith, ending their oppression and giving believers great blessing in His Messianic Kingdom like He blessed Judah in Hezekiah's era!

III. This coming deliverance by Messiah Jesus Christ in light of the contextual use of the phrase, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" offers edifying APPLICATIONS for US RIGHT NOW as follows:

- A. As in the case of Hezekiah of old, if we face strong criticism of our Biblical faith, we like Hezekiah should pray for God's help in handling the opposition, Isaiah 37:14-15.
- B. Like Hezekiah, we should reaffirm our faith in God (Isaiah 37:16), ask for His help (Isaiah 37:17, 20) and clarify our faith in the God of the Bible that our opponents deny, Isaiah 37:18-19.
- C. We should similarly follow Hezekiah's example in giving an apologetic, a defense of our faith, what Hezekiah did when he asserted that the gods of the nations Assyria's king had conquered were merely the works of men's hands that could be destroyed where our God is sovereign over the whole universe, Isaiah 37:16, 18-19!

Lesson: *God's answer to the rejection of the reality of our Christian faith that we often face today is that we believe His Isaiah 9:7d promise that as He similarly promised Hezekiah to reverse Judah's fortunes when Assyria's king sought to undermine his Biblical faith, Christ in His return will reverse our fortunes at the hands of the foes of our faith. Meanwhile, like Hezekiah, God wants us to pray about our opposition, reaffirming our trust in Christ, asking for His help and clarifying in an apologetic, a defense of our faith, the truth that our foes do not heed.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation from sin, John 3:16. (2) May we then (a) trust God's coming deliverance from all foes of the Biblical faith at Christ's Second Coming, and (b) pray about the opposition to the faith that we face, (i) asking God to intervene, (ii) clarifying the truth about our faith that our foes do not heed and (iii) preparing and asserting a practical defense of our faith that counters our critics, cf. 1 Peter 3:15!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

(1) In our introduction, we noted that Josh McDowell told how a Marxist he once debated said, "Historians today have fairly well dismissed Jesus as being historical." (*Ibid.*, McDowell) To apply today's message and develop an apologetic, we note that *even* some **ancient, non-biblical, secular** sources **support** the **historicity** of **Jesus**:

(a) Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman historian, in A. D. 112 referred to "Christians," claiming, "Christus [Latin for Christ], the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius." (Annals XV.44 as cited in McDowell, *Ibid.*, p. 81-82; brackets ours)

(b) Lucian of Samosata, a second century satirist, alluded to Christ as "the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world." (The Passing Peregrinus, *Ibid.*, p. 82)

Thus, even ancient secular sources testify to Jesus' historicity, countering the claim He never existed!

(2) We also noted in our introduction that many Christians are compromising the teaching of Scripture with evolution because they feel there is "overwhelming scientific evidence for evolution . . ." (*Ibid.*, Answers)

However, (a) Dr. Nathaniel T. Jeanson who earned a Ph. D. in cell and developmental biology from Harvard, claims "the total number of genetic mutations that we have discovered in human mitochondrial DNA (a tiny string of DNA in the cell's 'energy factory')" is "around 80," indicating "humans have been around for 6,000 years." Yet, "(i)f they had been around 200,000 years or more, as evolutionists claim, the number would be over 470." (b) Also, "This same amazing pattern occurs in other creatures, not just humans." (Rick Barry, "The New Origin of Species," December 27, 2017; answersingenesis.org) (c) In addition, Dr. Jeanson claims, "When we graph all these differences in human mitochondrial DNA, we discover that the human family divides into three different groups . . . just what we would expect if all humans came from three women who got off Noah's Ark just a few thousand years ago," *Ibid.*

Thus, the alleged "overwhelming scientific evidence for evolution" is shown to be lacking in the realm of genetic mutations, the key issue of Charles Darwin's landmark work, On The Origin Of Species! (*Ibid.*) In view of these new findings in genetics, we must support the creationist view as the only scientific thing to do!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we then pray for God's help and develop a fitting apologetic.