

CHRISTMAS INTERLUDE

Resting In Christ's Christmas Messianic Titles

I. Resting In The Wonderful Counselor

(Isaiah 9:6; 8:18-22)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Right now, a lot of people face a lot of stress, and it is taking a toll on the mental health of many of them:

(1) A letter by Holly Poglitsch of Woodbury in the Republican-American (November 21, 2020, p. 10A) asserted, "Depression and anxiety are at an all-time high. I see it daily as a therapist. I cannot help but think what is being shared in the media [about COVID-19] is driving this . . ."

(2) Her point also applies to the issue of ideology: a letter by Andrew B. Burns of Southbury (Ibid., November 30, 2020, p. 8A) claimed, ". . . The Associated Press . . . has a long-established reputation for an extreme left-wing bias -- regretfully acknowledged to me by the Republican-American late editor and publisher, William J. Pape III."

(3) That bias is mirrored by many people, what can foment opposition to us believers in Christ: a letter by Rocco M. Pugliese, a retired public school history teacher lamented that President-elect "Biden . . . is faced with a Republican opposition dominated by "fundamentalist evangelicals" among others whom Mr. Pugliese opposes!

(4) However, Mr. Pugliese also expressed concern over how far-left officials could make life more stressful for the public, writing, ". . . Democrats have a tenuous majority in the House, which gives leverage to . . . Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., and other ultra-liberal Democrats who need reining in . . . [for] America is not ready for single-payer Medicare for All, free public-college education, a federal job guarantee, cancellation of \$1.6 trillion of student debt, and the absurdity of de-funding the police." (Ibid.)

(5) Even the struggle for justice produces stress: in its lead editorial, "Flynn pardon was justified," the Republican-American, November 28, 2020, p. 8A asserted that America's former reputation "as a place where justice is based not on who you are or whom you know but what you did" has potentially been ruined by the General Michael Flynn case. Now, "the rule of law is not necessarily a reliable defense for the innocent." (Ibid.)

(6) Then there's the ongoing election issue: I have heard several radio talk show hosts and Republican State Senator Rob Sampson, 16th District, express strong suspicions that there was massive voter fraud in the election! Even Joe Cavanaugh of Prospect, who supports the alleged President-elect Joe Biden, in his letter (Ibid., December 4, 2020, p. 8A) lamented that "(i)n a recent Reuters/Ipsos poll, about 50% of polled Republicans said Trump rightfully won but had [the election] stolen by fraud," a view that Mr. Cavanaugh wrote was "frightening and dangerous."

(7) Also, we have seen the number of our Church Prayer Chain requests spike this year: we usually get around 100 requests a year, but this year, with most of December still ahead of us, we have already received 172 requests!

Need: *So we ask, "What does God direct that we do about the high level of stress we face today?!"*

I. When God's prophet Isaiah wrote the Christmas prediction of Messiah's birth in Isaiah 9:6, the people of Israel and Judah were headed into deep depression due to anxiety over highly stressful issues:

- A. Aramea's king Rezin had joined the Southern Kingdom of Israel's king Pekah, planning to attack Jerusalem and replace Judah's king Ahaz with their own puppet king, Isaiah 7:1; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1046.
- B. News of this plan caused the hearts of Judah's people and Ahaz to shake like trees in the wind, Isaiah 7:2 ESV.
- C. Yet, instead of seeking God's help, Judah like Israel turned to mediums and spiritists, Isa. 8:19; Ibid., p. 1052.
- D. Isaiah predicted the result of this decision would be the nation's gloomy deterioration, Isaiah 8:21-22:
 1. Deuteronomy 28:15 with 28:16-24, 28-29 had warned of God's sending physical and mental hardships to punish Israel for sin, so turning to spiritists and mediums, itself a capital offense according to Leviticus 20:6, would lead to God's judgment of famine and severe mental and spiritual deprivations, Isaiah 8:21a.
 2. The people would then fret, and fretting would produce outbursts of anger and cursing against the king and God Who no longer blessed them, Isaiah 8:21b; Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, 1974, vol. I, p. 321.
 3. Whether the people looked up to their superiors, the king or God, or down to the earth for help from even subordinates, they would only find "darkness," a figurative reference to hopelessness, Isaiah 8:22a; Ibid.
 4. They would become slaves of gloom, subject to falsehood and prejudiced toward evil, v. 22b; Ibid., p. 322.

II. In CONTRAST to this dreadful state, Messiah would be Judah's WONDERFUL COUNSELOR:

- A. Some interpret the Qal active participle *yo'es* from the verb, *ya'as*, "advise, counsel" (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 419-420) in Isaiah 9:6 to mean "extraordinary [military] strategist," for the immediate context at Isaiah 9:5 tells of Messiah's future victory over Israel's enemies.

- B. However, Christ attains military victory at His Second Coming by just speaking a word to destroy His foes (Revelation 19:11-21), requiring no great strategy, so the title of a great military strategist does not fit Him.
- C. Rather, Isaiah's use of the same Qal active participle *yo'es* in Isaiah 41:28 (Ibid.) in a context similar to Isaiah 8:19-22 that is close to Isaiah 9:6 argues for *yo'es* in Isaiah 9:6 to mean "Counselor," and we explain:
 1. In Isaiah 41:28, *yo'es* rendered "counselor" (ESV, NASB, KJV) ["to give counsel" NIV] critiques false idols and gods that could not advise pagan Gentiles like God's Bible prophecy could foretell the future with edifying guidance, what is similar to Judah's problem in Isaiah 8:19-22 of consulting mediums.
 2. Isaiah 8:19b-20 also reveals that the people of Israel and Judah had ceased heeding written Scripture, replacing it with consulting spiritists and mediums for insight and guidance regarding the future.
 3. Thus, Jesus in Isaiah 9:1-2 in grace came as the Great Light to the tribal lands of Zebulun and Naphtali in Galilee to give spiritual guidance to His wayward people; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1052.
 4. The Isaiah 9:6 participle *yo'es* should then read "Counselor," the full title being "Wonderful Counselor."

III. As the WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, Christ is also the "Word of God" personified (Revelation 19:11-13, 16), so Scripture, the Word of God in written form, also constitutes Christ's "counsel" (as follows):

- A. The people of Israel and Judah had failed to say, "To the law and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20), what we in today's phrasing would paraphrase to say, "Let's get back to the Bible," the "only absolute and trustworthy standard" of spiritual truth and righteousness. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, footnote to Isaiah 8:20)
- B. Since Revelation 19:11-13, 16 presents Jesus Christ as the Word of God personified, for believers to expose their minds to Scripture and heed it applies the Wonderful Counselor's ministry of giving edifying advice!

Lesson: God wants His people to expose their minds and hearts to Scripture, applying it for their Wonderful Counselor Jesus Christ's nurturing insight and advice to handle the stress they face.

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) To handle stress, may we heed Scripture, the advice of our Wonderful Counselor, Jesus Christ. [In the Conclusion, we apply this lesson to the issues in the Introduction.]

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

- (1) On depression, Psalm 119:25-32 (Section Daleth -- see Psalms) reveals depression is caused by having adopted a falsehood as true, that we must then apply Scripture to correct the falsehood with God's truth for blessing.
- (2) On anxiety, Philippians 4:6-7, 8-9 calls us to commit our concerns in prayer to God, and that we then focus on heeding Biblical truths for God's peace to support us, and for the God of peace to be with us in our experience.
- (3) On bias in the mainstream media, 2 Timothy 3:13 ESV predicted that evil people and impostors would go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived, that in response, we must heed what we have learned and become convinced was true, recalling the credible people who taught us, and that we heed Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:14-17.
- (4) On handling those who oppose us "fundamentalist evangelicals," Psalm 119:41-48 (Section Waw -- see Psalms) shows that if a believer knows a Bible truth that applies to the confrontation event, and he applies it, God will relieve that believer of the debilitating effects by his persecutor(s), and the believer will be edified in his daily walk.
- (5) On financial oppression by officials or agencies, (a) Psalm 62:10-12 promises God's rewarding a man's income in accord with his workmanship on the job and (b) John 6:12 has Jesus exemplifying frugality, a practice needed to cut unnecessary costs and to save and invest for gain. (c) Philippians 4:16, 19 also promises God's sufficient supply of material needs if the believer is involved in donating to God's discipling ministries (local church, missions).
- (6) On obtaining justice, Psalm 119:153-160 (Section Resh -- see Psalms) reveals that in a crisis, the upright must merely call on God for justice. [In the Church era, this directive must be modified, for God's will may involve one's losing a court case in order to further God's overall plan as in Paul's experience in 2 Timothy 4:16 with 4:6.]
- (7) On the suspicions many have that the election was influenced by massive voter fraud, we have *often* taught that Christ in Revelation 3:21 with 7:13-17 predicted a Mini-Great Tribulation for our era of the Church when people will be oppressed by the world's religious-political-business complex that is marked by intrigue and by other trials of nature such as pandemics, storms, fires, etc. Accordingly, Jesus promised to give pastors who overcome worldliness in their personal lives and ministries great nurturing influence with other people who are oppressed by the era's trials, nurturing influence by way of Bible teaching. Thus, *instead* of being dismayed over the era's trials, God wants us to heed edifying Scripture truths and share them with oppressed people we know who seek insight and spiritual balm.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we handle the stress we face by exposing our minds to Scripture and applying it for blessing.