

NOTE TO TEAMS: Be aware that there are significant translation differences among the CSB, NIV, and KJV in Isaiah 9:1-5.

Looking Forward to Christmas

Session 2

December 8, 2024

Looking Forward to Peace

Session Passage: Isaiah 8:20–9:7

The Setting for Isaiah 8–9. In the years 734–732 BC, Israel, Judah, and other nations of the ancient Near East were threatened by the Assyrian Empire. Syria’s King Rezin and Israel’s King Pekah planned a rebellion, but when Ahaz, the king of Judah, refused to join them, they laid siege to Jerusalem in an attempt to depose Ahaz (Isa. 7:1-2). The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Lord would deliver Judah (vv. 3-9), but Ahaz refused to trust the Lord (vv. 10-12). Instead eventually Ahaz sent gold and silver to the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser and offered to be his vassal if the Assyrian king would rescue Judah (2 Kings 16:7-9).

God again promised that He would deliver Judah from the immediate threat, but because of their failure to trust God, the only true refuge, Judah would ultimately fall under the power of the Assyrians (Isa. 7:13–8:17). In chapter 9, Isaiah foretold of a coming Prince of Peace who would sit on the throne of David and who would rule God’s people in righteousness and peace.

Isaiah 8:20-22

Connection to The Point. Isaiah prophesied the dire circumstances the people would find themselves in because they had abandoned God.

Go to God’s instruction and testimony! Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warningTo the law and to the testimony (v. 20). In the verse immediately before this one, the prophet spoke of how instead of seeking God, the people chose to “inquire of the mediums and the spiritistsconsult mediums and spiritistsSeek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter,” who sought to communicate with or summon the spirits of the dead (also known as mediums and spiritists). Such occultic practices were strictly forbidden in the Mosaic law for the people of Israel (Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Deut. 18:9-14).

Instead of seeking instruction from the dead, the people were to turn to the living God. His *instruction* *law* and *testimony* were the only true and reliable revelation concerning His will. Both terms refer to God's will concerning how His people were to live in covenant relationship with Him. *Instruction* *The law (torah)* means direction, instruction, or law. It refers to the written body of God's law and is particularly associated with the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament). *Testimony* *Testimony of warning (teudah)* means an attestation, particularly through God's prophets. It is a term that was associated with the sealing of legal agreements and in this context emphasizes the truth and authenticity of God's Word.

No dawn **No light of dawn** **No light** (v. 20). *Dawn* *Light (shachar)* in this instance figuratively refers to God's Word or truth. Those whose words contradict God's revelation do not have the light of God's truth in their words. They have only darkness (8:21-22). In John's Gospel Jesus is called the Light (John 1:4-5,9). Jesus even called Himself "the light of the world" and said, "Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life" *Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life* *He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*" (John 8:12; see 9:5; 12:46). He is the Word of God incarnate (1:1,14).

Enraged **Shall fret themselves** (v. 21). The term (*qatsaph*) means to be anxious, displeased, or angry. It can refer to one who is in a state of anxiety. It can also refer to a person who puts himself into a rage due to being under great pressure. When a crisis happens, whether they are anxious or furious, people tend to look for those on whom to place the blame. In this case, the people's situation would lead them to blame their king correctly (to a large extent) and God incorrectly. If they had listened to God's prophet rather than the mediums and spiritists, they would have been delivered from their enemies.

Looking upward (v. 21). If the people had turned to God in their distress, they would have been delivered. But now when they look upward, they look not in faith but rather to curse God and their king.

Curse (v. 21). The term (*qalal*) means to desire that a person would suffer insignificance or contempt. In the Old Testament, the person who pronounced a curse was predicting or praying for the targeted individual to experience great trouble or hardship. This is particularly ironic in this context, since the people were cursing God. The people's action of cursing conveys strong feelings of utter disdain for both the king and God.

Look upward (v. 21). If the people had turned to God in their distress, they would have been delivered. But now when they look upward, they look not in faith but rather to curse God and their king.

Look toward the earth**Look unto the earth** (v. 22). Unwilling to look upward to God in faith, the people now look upon their land, only to find **distress, darkness, and the gloom of affliction****distress, darkness, and fearful gloom****trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish**. They see and experience the destruction of their lives and their land.

*Distress**Trouble* (*tsarah*) literally means tightness and figuratively refers to trouble—experiencing adversity, anguish, and tribulation. *Darkness* (*chashekah*) refers to literal darkness but can also figuratively refer to a lack of understanding, in this case a rejection of God and His instructions concerning how the people were to live. *Gloom**Dimness* (*mauph*) has the meaning of being covered in dimness gloom or darkness, but here the people are covered with *affliction**fear**anguish*.

Thick darkness**Utter darkness****Darkness** (v. 22). While *thick darkness**utter darkness* could be referring to death, here it most likely refers to God’s intention not to deliver the people from His judgment for their unbelief and sinful actions. Instead of deliverance they will experience His judgment.

Light and Darkness. In Scripture, *light* and *darkness* are often used to symbolize the difference between belief and unbelief. Those who believe in and obey God walk in light, while those who reject God walk in darkness. The psalmist said of God, “Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105). The apostle John wrote that “God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him God is light; in him there is no darkness at all God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” and those who obey God “walk in the light” (1 John 1:5,7). Jesus (the Word of God) is life and this life “was the light of men was the light of all mankind” (John 1:4). Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness of a lost and sinful world (vv. 5,9-10). Darkness symbolizes evil and the absence of God. Those who reject Jesus remain in darkness because they love the darkness of sin rather than come to the light of God and His Messiah (3:18-20).

Isaiah 9:1-5

Connection to The Point. Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would shine a light on all peoples.

Nevertheless (v. 1). This verse serves as a transition from what has been said in the previous chapter. Isaiah 9 looks to a future time of hope when God will rule over His people and all the nations of the world. It focuses specifically on the Messiah and His reign.

Lightly afflicted . . . did more grievously afflict (v. 1). These words represent the judgment God brought upon His people. It may refer back to the sufferings detailed in 8:21-22.

Former timesThe past (v. 1). There is no indication of what the *former times* or *the past* is referring to. It may be referring back to the war, distress, darkness, hunger, and famine of 8:21-22. Or it may be contrasting the darkness of this present age with the light and hope of the future messianic age.

The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali (v. 1). *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* were the northern-most tribes of Israel that had been the first to take the terrible humbling defeats from the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser III in 734–732 BC. Because of their locations, these two tribes were probably influenced by foreign cultures and religious ideas. *Zebulun*, the tribe of the patriarch Jacob's tenth son (Gen. 30:20), was located in the land between the Sea of Galilee and Mount Carmel. *Naphtali*, the tribe from Jacob's sixth son (vv. 7-8), settled in the area north of the Sea of Galilee along the northwest side of the Jordan River beyond Lake Huleh.

But in the future (v. 1). This describes the reversal of fortune that would occur at an unspecified, future time. It would be the beginning of a new Messianic age which is described in verses 2-7.

He will bring honorHe will honor (v. 1). The term *honor* (*kabad*) means to be heavy or weighty, in this context weighty in importance. God will bring honor to the tribes that were at one time humbled in war and defeat.

Galilee of the nations (v. 1). This refers to the northern part of Galilee in which Zebulun and Naphtali were settled. The phrase indicates the strong influence of foreigners in this region.

Way of the seaSea (v. 1). This probably refers to the geographical area north of the Sea of Galilee to which the tribes mentioned were closely located.

Land east of the Jordan**Beyond the Jordan****Beyond Jordan** (v. 1). This refers to the land east of the Jordan River, known as the Transjordan, where the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh settled.

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The people walking in darkness**The people that walked in darkness** (v. 2). The text now shifts from prose to a poetic birth announcement hymn of sorts. It begins with a contrast. *Walking**Walked* is a metaphorical way to speak of how people live. *Darkness* figuratively describes both the evil way the people were living as well as the absence of God (who is often associated with light).

Have seen a great light (v. 2). This is a sign of hope for the people. It signifies deliverance from the darkness in which the people were living. It also emphasizes that God had not given up on or abandoned His people.

A light has dawned . . . in the land of darkness**In the land of deep darkness a light has dawned** (v. 2). A common characteristic of Hebrew poetry is repetition. These words repeat the idea in the previous part of verse 2. *Light* signifies the presence of God. That light *has dawned* signifies a new day has come, a new beginning. Isaiah 60:1-3 describes the coming of God and His kingdom as light. *Darkness**Deep darkness* signifies the absence of God in which the people were formerly living.**They that dwelled in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined** (v. 2). A common characteristic of Hebrew poetry is repetition. These words repeat the idea in the previous part of verse 2. *The shadow of death* refers to physical death, but may also mean the absence of God, while *light* signifies the presence of God. *Shined* signifies that a new day had come, a new beginning. Isaiah 60:1-3 describes the coming of God and His kingdom as light. This passage is quoted in Matthew 4:14-16 as being fulfilled by Jesus.

Enlarged the nation . . . increased its joy**Enlarged the nation . . . increased their joy** (v. 3). The coming of the light of God will lead to a time of growth and expansion for the nation of Israel. This normally occurs in times of peace and prosperity. This era will be a time of great joy and rejoicing for the people.**Multiplied the nation** (v. 3). The coming of the light of

God will lead to a time of growth and expansion for the nation of Israel. This normally occurs in times of peace and prosperity.

Harvest time**At the harvest****Harvest** (v. 3). In contrast to the former times of famine (8:21), with the coming of God the farmers will rejoice in the bounty of harvest time. Important crops in Israel included wheat, barley, olives, and various fruits and vegetables. A good harvest was a blessing from God. The loss of crops was often a sign of God's judgment.

When dividing spoils**When dividing the plunder****When they divide the spoil** (v. 3). Victory in war brought the spoils of war. In ancient warfare, the victorious army took whatever they wanted from their defeated foes, including clothing, cattle, precious metals, and even people. In this new era, people would rejoice like those who were the recipients of the spoils of war.

The day of Midian's defeat (v. 4). This is a reference to Gideon's victory over the Midianites in the days of the judges (Judg. 6–8). Gideon was able to defeat the huge Midianite army with only three hundred men because he depended on the Lord to give him the victory. Just as the Lord gave Gideon victory so He will in the future crush Israel's oppressor. This is another cause for Israel's rejoicing (Isa. 9:3).

Shattered**Broken** (v. 4). The Hebrew term (*chatath*) means to be broken and was figuratively used in reference to the nations of the world being under divine judgment. It can also mean to be dismayed. While no specific details are given, in this new era God would utterly defeat Israel's enemies.

Oppressive yoke . . . rod on their shoulders . . . staff of their oppressor**Yoke that burdens . . . bar across their shoulders . . . rod of their oppressor****The yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulders, the rod of his oppressor** (v. 4). A *yoke* was a wooden frame normally fitted on the necks of oxen or horses so they would pull a plow or work a millstone. In Scripture the yoke was used as a metaphor for slavery and hardship (1 Kings 12:4; Jer. 27:8). The *rod* and *staff* were heavy wooden bars used to goad slaves to do their work. Figuratively, the terms could be used in reference to slavery and hardship. The *bar* and *rod* were made of wood and used to goad slaves to do their work. Figuratively, the terms could be used in reference to slavery and hardship.

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Lord gave Gideon victory so He will in the future crush Israel's oppressor. This is another cause for Israel's rejoicing (Isa. 9:3).

Trampling bootWarrior's bootFor every battle of the warrior is with confused noise (v. 5). A soldier's footwear was a key part of his gear as he had to establish a solid foothold while engaged in sword-to-sword combat. The boots usually had hard leather soles to protect against shards on the ground. It may also suggest the armies of oppressors treading on the Israelites' land. *With confused noise* describes the chaos into which most battles descend.

Bloodied garments of warEvery garment rolled in bloodGarments rolled in blood (v. 5). The image is of a dead soldier's tattered uniform lying covered in blood from his wounds. In the new kingdom, war will never happen and such garments for soldiers will no longer be required.

Will be burned as fuel for the fireWill be fuel for the fireBut this shall be with burning and fuel of fire (v. 5). The burning of the gear of enemy soldiers was part of the practice of the Israelites (Josh. 11:6-9; Ezek. 39:9-10). All this battle gear will be used as fuel because it will no longer be needed. God will defeat Israel's enemies and the new era of peace will dawn (Isa. 2:4), although Isaiah gives no indication of when this will happen. The ultimate time of peace will come when Jesus returns to establish His eternal kingdom (Rev. 21-22).

Isaiah 9:6-7

Connection to The Point. Isaiah prophesied the light would come to us as a child, the Prince of Peace.

For a child will be born for usTo us a child is bornUnto us a child is born (v. 6). The term for *child* (*yeled*) means a boy, child, a youth. It comes from a verb (*yalad*) meaning to bear or bring forth (as a mother gives birth to her child). The position of *yeled* in the Hebrew puts the emphasis on the child himself rather than the fact that the child is born *for unto us*. The rest of this section makes clear why this is so.

A son will be given to usTo us a son is givenFor unto us a son is given (v. 6). The second line again demonstrates the Hebrew practice of repetition or parallelism. The child is a *son*

who will be given by God as a gracious gift. Furthermore His coming is according to the will and activity of God.

The government will be on his shoulders**The government shall be upon his shoulder** (v. 6). The term translated *government* (*misrah*) appears only here and in verse 7 (“dominiongovernment”) in the Old Testament and means dominion or rule. *On his shoulders**Upon his shoulder* is a metaphor that emphasizes authority. The child who will be King will be responsible for the rule, safety, and well-being of God’s people.

He will be named**He will be called****His name shall be called** (v. 6). The promised child/son will be unlike any other king. Each of the four names describes a characteristic of the promised King, but most of them are also associated with God Himself. All of these aspects were fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who is both fully God and fully man.

Wonderful Counselor**Wonderful, Counsellor** (v. 6). *Wonderful* (*pele*) suggests that the King’s actions will be marvelous or amazing. *Counselor**Counsellor* (*yaats*) refers to an ideal Ruler who gives wise and valuable advice.

Mighty God (v. 6). The use of *God* in the name does not automatically indicate that this individual is God, because other human Hebrew names use *God* in them as well. Two examples are Daniel (“God is judge”) and Ezekiel (“God will strengthen”). However, this title is later used by Isaiah to refer to God Himself (10:21). This title suggests the coming King will be very closely related to or associated with God. It also suggests God’s omnipotent power to bring His plans to pass.

Eternal Father**Everlasting Father** (v. 6). In the Old Testament, the term *Father* is rarely used in reference to God (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; Mal. 2:10) and only of a human king once (1 Sam. 24:11). *Eternal**Everlasting* (*ad*) means everlastingeternal, continually, and always. *Ad* is also only used in reference to the rule of a human being once, the Davidic ruler who will reign on the throne of David “for ever” (2 Sam. 7:16). Since the *Eternal Father**Everlasting Father**everlasting Father* also will rule on David’s throne forever (Isa. 9:7), the two must be the same person.

Prince of Peace (v. 6). This last title suggests the King will establish and reign over a kingdom that will experience the absence of war and the blessings of peace. *Peace* translates the Hebrew word *shalom*, which means completeness, soundness, welfare, and peace.

The domain will be vast, and its prosperity will never end**Of the greatness of his government and peace their will be no end****Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end** (v. 7). The Hebrew conveys the ideas that the Ruler's eternal kingdom will be limitless and that no one will be able to oppose His authority, reign, and the blessings of His rule.

He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom**He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom****Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom** (v. 7). The Ruler is the promised heir of King David who will fulfill God's promises to David (2 Sam. 7:16).

Establish and sustain**Establishing and upholding****To order it, and to establish it** (v. 7). The term *establish**establishing**to order* (*kun*) carries the ideas of being steadfast and firm. *Sustain**Upholding**To establish* (*saad*) means to hold up, sustain, and strengthen.

With justice and righteousness**With judgment and with justice** (v. 7). The Ruler's kingdom will be established and sustained on the principles of *justice* and *righteousness*. The King will be righteous (11:5) and He will rule His people with perfect justice for all (vv. 3-4). The Ruler's kingdom will be established and sustained on the principles of *judgment* and *justice*. The term *judgment* (*mishpat*) refers to judicial pronouncements and formal decrees. *Justice* (*tsedaqah*) refers to righteousness, to that which is just and right. The King will be righteous (11:5) and He will rule His people with perfect justice for all (vv. 3-4).

Zeal (v. 7). The Hebrew term (*qinah*) means jealousy and literally refers to the color of one's face brought about by deep emotion. *Zeal* can be either negative or positive depending on the context. Here it refers to God's passion and commitment to accomplish His will in relation to the promised Ruler.

The Lord of Armies will accomplish this**The Lord Almighty will accomplish this****The Lord of hosts will perform this** (v. 7). The coming of this Davidic King and the establishment of His kingdom will be the result of the power of God. The *Lord of Armies**Lord Almighty**Lord of hosts* can also be translated "Lord Almighty" or "Lord of Hosts" or "Lord of Armies." The phrase refers to God's command over the armies of heaven and of Israel. God is the sovereign, omnipotent Lord of the universe and only He can accomplish what He has promised.