

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 9

Theme: Prophecy of the Child

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Chapter 9

This section is the most important document in the Isaiah files. If you understand this chapter properly it will unlock the rest of Isaiah for you. Chapter 9 verse one is the most important verse. We have therefore written a great deal, explaining it because it is pivotal to understanding the rest of Isaiah's style. It is not easy to say: but none of the modern translators have seen the import of this verse. Almost all make the mistake of making the contrast in verse one, a contrast of quality rather than of intensity. If you will read this chapter carefully and see the reasons why the contrast is as we state it you will then see clearly the changes in "scenes" between the Assyrians and the Messiah that Isaiah outlines. If you read anything with deliberation in these documents, we recommend that you spend some quality time here.

This chapter is one with which Christians are generally familiar because of the prophecy concerning the coming Child, who is Christ. Handel's use of this chapter in *The Messiah* has added to the familiarity of the church with this particular passage. I am always thrilled when I listen to a presentation of Handel's work, especially when they sing, "And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

The material presented in Isaiah 7 -- Isaiah 12 contains prophecies that Isaiah made during the reign of Ahaz. Ahaz was the one bad king that reigned during the period in which Isaiah prophesied. Isaiah began to prophesy at the death of Uzziah, who reigned for fifty-two years and was a good king. The next king was Jotham, Uzziah's son, who was also a good king. The next king was Ahaz, the grandson of Uzziah and the son of Jotham, who was a bad king and a phony besides. It was during the reign of Ahaz that Isaiah made these prophecies concerning the Messiah. It was a dark period in the history of the nation.¹

In these verses Isaiah spoke of the coming Deliverer who will effect the changes in the nation of which the prophet had been speaking. The Messiah's coming will lead the nation into joy and prosperity, which had been lacking for years. His coming will fulfill the promises to Abraham and David about the prosperous kingdom. The "child" motif again is evident (v. 6; cf. 7:14-16; 8:1-4, 18). The Child will grow up to be the Deliverer (9:7), not a sign (8:18) of deliverance but the Deliverer Himself. He will effect the changes necessary for prosperity and spirituality to come to the nation.²

God has warned the nation through Isaiah that because they have rejected His Word, they are in darkness. And the longer they walk in that darkness, the angrier they will become and the more gloom they will find.

¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

² The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

¹Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

This verse is actually the last verse of ch. 8 and is so arranged in the Hebrew text. This verse states that those regions in northern Galilee, the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali which had suffered the most from Assyria, would experience deliverance. "The way of the sea," known in later centuries as the "Via Maris," was a portion of the most important international route through Israel. It ran about 1,770 miles from Ur in Mesopotamia, northwest through Haran, then southwest through Palestine to Thebes in southern Egypt. Parts of the road had names. The "way of the sea" was the portion that ran from Gaza to Hazor, often coming near the coast, and passing along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. "Galilee of the Gentiles" is literally "the circuit of the Gentiles." It was so called because this northernmost part of ancient Israel was the gateway through which Gentiles entered the land of Israel, either as traders or invaders.³

The very region where Assyrian armies brought darkness and death would be the first to rejoice in the light brought by the preaching of Christ: Mt 4:15-16.⁴

"So in the latter time he hath brought honor on the way of the sea":

Nazareth = head of Zebulun.

The Way of the sea = Geneseret, Num 34:11; Galilee, John 6:1.

Galilee: "debatable" ground: 1 Kgs 9:10; Josh 20:7; 21:32.

[the dimness shall not be such as was] Gloom will be upon those who reject the Word. But, God promises, there will be no more gloom for "her who was in anguish in earlier times." Who is this? It is the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali. These were two of the twelve tribes of Israel, and their inheritance of the promised land was up north, next to the Sea of Galilee.

The lands of Zebulun and Naphtali are promised a time when there will be no more gloom. And they had plenty of it, for God had judged them previously. Because they had walked in the darkness of rejecting the Word of God, they were carried captive to Assyria (2Kings 15:29).

But God's promise was that this area would be made glorious.⁵

[Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation] [Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation] Isaiah pictures the spiritual darkness of the land when the Messiah comes as less than when God first let the land be judged by Syria under Benhadad in the reign of Baasha (1Ki. 15:20), and the more grievous invasion by Hazael in Israel (2Ki. 10:32-33). When the Messiah comes the people who walk in darkness shall see great light (Isa. 9:1-2).⁶

A time will come when gloom and darkness (8:22) will be a thing of the past. The gloom on the northern section of Israel came because of discipline. God humbled... Zebulun and... Naphtali for a while. Though Isaiah was probably using these two tribal names to represent the Northern

³ Believers Study Bible

⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, Khouse.org

⁵ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0901.php>

⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

Kingdom, it is striking that Jesus' upbringing and early ministry was mostly in that very area near the Sea of Galilee. His presence certainly "honored" that area. In 732 b.c. this northern portion of Israel became an Assyrian province under Tiglath-Pileser III, thus humbling the people there and putting them in gloom. Under Gentile domination, that area was called Galilee of the Gentiles.

The way of the sea describes a major international highway running through this region. This is the only place where the Bible used this phrase, but it appears often in Assyrian and Egyptian records. The invading Assyrian soldiers took that route when they invaded the Northern Kingdom. From that area the Messiah will arise and will wipe away the gloom and darkness brought on by Gentile domination.⁷

The translation of this verse is not established. Actually, contrary meanings are suggested. This poses no problem to the reverent mind but reveals a divine purpose in permitting both to be possible.

"And afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations." Others have translated it: "But in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations." It is difficult to see how both translations, "more grievously afflict" and "made it glorious," can be sustained, but I believe it is enigmatic for a reason. The first translation would refer to the near fulfillment when God did afflict the northeastern portion of the land comparatively lightly in the invasions of the Syrians and later brought heavier suffering upon them in the carrying away of the people into captivity by the Assyrians (see 2Kings 15:29).

But the other translation, "hath he made it glorious," refers to the far fulfillment in the first coming of Christ. He did "make glorious" that area. Galilee was the despised area because it was a place where Gentiles had congregated. The Lord Jesus passed by Jerusalem, the snobbish religious center of the day. Jesus was neither born nor reared in Jerusalem. Nazareth was His hometown; and, when Nazareth rejected Him, He went down to Capernaum, which is on the Sea of Galilee in the despised periphery of the kingdom. Zebulun and Naphtali were located in the north, with Naphtali along the west bank of the Sea of Galilee and Zebulun adjoining Naphtali on the west. Nazareth was in Zebulun, and Capernaum (Jesus' headquarters) was in Naphtali. As far as I can tell, the Lord Jesus never changed His headquarters from Capernaum. In fact, that explains why He pronounced such a severe judgment upon Capernaum -- it had access to light as no other place had.

Matthew 4:12-16 tells us, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." You will note that Matthew omitted the questionable clause. Otherwise, we would have the Holy Spirit's own interpretation of the passage. I believe that the double meaning is intended by the Holy Spirit. Both are surely true.⁸

⁷ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

In our gloom and despair, we fear that our sorrows and troubles will never end. But we can take comfort in this certainty: Although the Lord may not always spare us from troubles, if we follow him wholeheartedly, he will lead us safely through them.⁹

(Isaiah 9:1-2) A day of light for the northern tribes.

Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.

Nevertheless the gloom: The gloom carries over from Isaiah 8, where Isaiah warned Judah about the coming invasion from Assyria. Isaiah 8:22 said, Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness. The invasion of the Assyrians would be terrible for the Jewish people, especially for the northern regions of the Promised Land, the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.

In this context, the promise of Isaiah 9:1 is all the more precious: The gloom will not be upon her who is distressed. The northern regions of the Promised Land - around the Sea of Galilee (Galilee of the Gentiles) - were most severely ravaged when the Assyrians invaded from the north. The promise is that this land, once seemingly lightly esteemed by the LORD, will one day have a special blessing.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light . . . upon them a light has shined: The northern tribes were the first to suffer from the Assyrian invasions, so in God's mercy, they will be the first to see the light of the Messiah.

Matthew 4:13-16 quotes this passage as clearly fulfilled in the Galilean ministry of Jesus. Since the majority of Jesus' ministry took place in this northern area of Israel, around the Sea of Galilee, God certainly did have a special blessing for this once lightly esteemed land!¹⁰

A Light Will Shine In Galilee

How would the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali be made glorious? The people who had formerly walked in darkness would see a great light. And the light that they would see would be Jesus. The gospel of Matthew tells us when this was fulfilled...

Matt. 4:13-17 and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES - THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED." From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

When Jesus came into the region of Galilee, the people who had walked in darkness were suddenly bathed in the light. John wrote of Jesus, John 1:4-5 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

⁹ Life Application Study Bible.

¹⁰ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

And Jesus said,

John 8:12 ...“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

John 12:35-36 ...“For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light...”¹¹

In contrast to the gloom of the false counselors, the residents of Galilee in Israel, who would experience the Lord's chastening, would enjoy glory. God would bring light when His people had lost all hope. Galilee, in northern Israel, was the first region in Israel to feel the lash of the Assyrian invaders. It was a melting pot and home to many Gentiles, as well as Jews, because the international highway between Mesopotamia and Egypt passed through it. Glory came to this region later when Jesus lived and ministered there (cf. Matt. 4:13-16). But it will enjoy even greater glory during Messiah's earthly reign, as will all of the Promised Land.

"The three phrases at the end of the verse—'the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles' or 'nations'—indicate administrative districts of the Assyrian conqueror Tiglath-Pileser III as a result of the three campaigns he waged in the west around 733 B.C."¹²

²The 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.

Zebulun = Nazareth: Lk 4:16:21.

Galilee: Jn 2:11; 4:54 - 1st miracle.

Quote: Capernaum, Mt 4:13-17, LXX.

[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] Quoted in Mt. 4:14-16 (cp. Lk. 1:79).¹³

Regardless of the way verse 1 is translated or interpreted, it is obvious that the people in despised Galilee were in the darkness of paganism and religious tradition. That is one place where the Old Testament and paganism from the outside mingled and mixed. When the Lord Jesus began His ministry in that area, the people did see a great light. They saw the Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). This was fulfilled at the first coming of Christ. I think it is safe to say that the first two verses refer to our Lord's first coming.

But to what period do the following verses refer? It is the belief of certain outstanding Bible expositors, among whom are Dr. F. C. Jennings and Dr. H. A. Ironside, that there is a hiatus, an

¹¹ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0901.php>

¹² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

interval, between verses 2 and 3, so that while the first two verses refer to Christ's first coming, verse 3 refers to His second coming, as we shall see.¹⁴

With typical Hebrew parallelism the prophet described the effect of the Messiah on this northern part of Israel. The people were in darkness (cf. 8:22) and in the shadow of death. Then they saw a great light and light... dawned on them. Matthew applied this passage to Jesus, who began His preaching and healing ministry in that region (Matt. 4:15-16).¹⁵

The apostle John also referred to Jesus as the "true light" (John 1:9). Jesus referred to himself as "the light of the world" (John 8:12). Whenever we see the lights of Christmas, let them remind us that they recall Christ, our true Light.¹⁶

Light would come to those walking in darkness—the Israelites—as they lived in a dark land (v. 1). Many prophetic perfects in this section assure the certainty of the things predicted. In Hebrew, a writer sometimes described as past what was really in the future. He used this verb tense to emphasize that what was future was as sure to happen as if it had happened already. God would enlighten those in darkness by bringing new light to them, even though they did not deserve it (cf. Matt. 4:15-16). This was revelation about the future that was sure, compared to the unreliable predictions of mediums and wizards (cf. 8:19).

". . . the very region where Assyrian armies brought darkness and death would be the first to rejoice in the light brought by the preaching of Christ (Mt. 4:15-16)."

"The darkness-light motif points to a creative work of God, who alone can make such a transformation (cf. 4:5; Gn. 1:2-3; 2 Cor. 4:6)."¹⁷

³Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and* not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, *and* as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.

(Increase, not "not increased")

Joy of harvest: Feast of Tabernacles? (Succoth?) Of Ingathering? (Shavout?)

[Thou hast multiplied the nation] Thou -- God who has increased the nation in numbers and in joy, for deliverance from Assyria has been brought about by divine intervention as in the day of Gideon (Isa. 9:4-5; 36:1 -- Isa. 37:38; 2Ki. 18:1 -- 2Ki. 19:37).¹⁸

[not increased the joy] The word not should not be here, for it is out of harmony with the rest of the verse which says that the people do rejoice. The true rendering is: "You have multiplied the people, and increased the joy: they rejoice in the harvest as those who divide the spoils." The reason for this is the oppressor being defeated and driven out of the land (Isa. 9:4-5).¹⁹

¹⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

¹⁶ Life Application Study Bible.

¹⁷ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

¹⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

The nation had been greatly multiplied and the people were more religious, but the joy was gone. They had a lot of religion, but they never had Christ. It was a period of great manifestation but no real joy.

The hiatus between verses 2 and 3 has already been two thousand years long. Why didn't Isaiah give any prophecy about this period? Because during this interval God is calling out the church which was unknown to Isaiah. In Romans 16:25-26 Paul says, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." Paul makes it very clear that the prophets passed over that which they did not see, as Isaiah does in the chapter before us. In Isaiah 63 we will come to a place where, with just a comma, Isaiah passes over a period of time that is already two thousand years long. The people in Isaiah's day had no revelation concerning the church, but today the church has been revealed and the interval is filled in. This makes it clear that the rest of this chapter refers to the nation Israel, and the nation that was "multiplied" was the nation over which Ahaz was king. Notice that Paul says it was "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." So, you see, the revelation of the church was for a different congregation. Isaiah was speaking only to one nation, his own nation of Israel.²⁰

3-5 You probably refers to God the Father, who will lead the people from spiritual darkness into light (v. 2) by sending the Child (v. 6), the Messiah. The light will increase their joy like the joy at harvesttime or the joy of winning a battle and dividing the plunder. "Joy" is another emphasis of Isaiah's, mentioned more than two dozen times in the book. This will be a supernatural work of God much like the nation's deliverance when Gideon defeated Midian (Judges 7:1-24; Isa. 10:26). It will be like taking a burden off one's back (9:4). At that time, after the Child-Messiah will come, the implements of warfare will be destroyed (v. 5) because in His reign of universal peace implements of war will not be needed (cf. 2:4).²¹

(Isaiah 9:3-5) Joy in the Messiah's deliverance and victory.

You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning and fuel of fire.

You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy: The ministry of the Messiah would bring joy and gladness to Israel. Jesus said His ministry was like having a wedding party (Matthew 9:14-15). They will rejoice according to the time of harvest, the time when the hard work has paid off and the bounty comes off. They will rejoice as men rejoice when they divide the spoil, with a celebration of victory, as in the locker room of a championship team.

As in the day of Midian: This refers to Gideon's great victory over Midian in Judges 7. As wonderfully complete, joyous, and victorious as Gideon's victory over Midian was, this is the same kind of victory the Messiah will enjoy and give.

²⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

And the victory is complete. The reference to every warrior's sandal . . . garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning and fuel of fire means that the battle is over. This is what you did when the battle was finished and you had won!

Each of these promises - the reference to great joy, the breaking of the yoke of his burden and the rod of his oppressor, and the complete victory over all enemies has spiritual application to Jesus' work in our lives. These things are ours in Jesus!

When is Jesus sad or worried or afraid? When does Jesus groan under the yoke of his burden? When does Jesus feel the sting of the rod of his oppressor? When is Jesus' victory incomplete? The risen, glorified, ascended Jesus experiences none of these things, and He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). As we are in Jesus Christ, we share in His victory! We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37).²²

God would reveal His presence to His people, and the results would be national growth (cf. 7:20-23; 49:19-23) and abundance (cf. 5:10; 33:23; 35:1-2), really every type of joy.

⁴For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

Day of Midian - Gideon, Judg 7:19-25;
Oppressor, taskmaster: Ex 5:6 (Isa 52:4: "Assyrian"?);
Yoke, staff, rod? Why 3?

When will the burden be broken? It will be broken when Christ comes again. Why is it that Israel today cannot enjoy peace? Why are they plagued along every border? They are having all this trouble because they rejected the only One who can bring peace, their own Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The power of the oppressor will not be broken until the Lord comes the second time.²³

God would deliver them from their enemies, primarily physical but also spiritual enemies. The Assyrians would impose a yoke on the Israelites, but God would break that yoke off (cf. Exod. 1:11; 2:11; 3:7-8; 5:4-7, 10-14; 6:6-7; Lev. 26:13; Matt. 11:29-30). This deliverance would be entirely of God and against overwhelming odds, as when God broke the yoke of Midian (Judg. 6—7, cf. especially 6:35; 7:2-14, and 20).²⁴

3-5 Breaking The Rod

Speaking to Jesus, the Father tells Him that He will multiply the nation and increase their gladness. This is still yet future, after the second coming of Christ. The Jews who are oppressed and downtrodden will one day have their burdens lifted. They will no longer be under the rod of their oppressors.

The land of Israel will be increased to the promised borders. The gladness of the people of Israel will be unprecedented. Those nations who mistreated the Jews will be judged.

²² <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

²³ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁴ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

Joel 3:1-2 “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; And they have divided up My land.”

Because of their oppression of the Jews, God will judge them severely.

Matt. 25:32-33 “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”

Matt. 25:41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels”

And thus the yoke of their burden and the rod of their oppressor will be broken.²⁵

⁵For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but *this* shall be with burning and fuel of fire.

What a sad thing it was when those fine young Jewish athletes were killed during the Olympic Games in Munich a few years ago. They were murdered by terrorists; and, when their bodies were sent back to Israel, their loved ones and the whole nation mourned. What is in back of all this? Israel has a Messiah whom they have rejected. He is the Prince of Peace, and He is the only One who can bring peace to this troubled and persecuted people.

While these verses complete the thought of verse 3, they also look beyond the immediate time to the Great Tribulation period which is coming in the future.²⁶

God would not just give victory to Israel, but He would cause wars to cease (cf. Ps. 46:9-10). His people would enter into the fruits of a past victory, namely, the victory of their Messiah.

⁶For 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.

Now we see the prediction of their Messiah's coming:

Wonderful, Counselor” is actually one name instead of two.

How would this all come about? Through the birth of a child. The prophesied son of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), who would be "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). This is the One on whose shoulders all of the government will ultimately rest. The prophets all agree that the Messiah would be the king:²⁷

²⁵ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0901.php>

²⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁷ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0901.php>

Jer. 23:5-6 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness.’”

Unto us a Son is given: This Child would be a man, but more than a man. He is also the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Godhead. Theoretically, the Messiah didn’t have to be God. He might have been a sinless angel, or merely a perfect man like Adam. But in reality, neither of those options would have qualified the Messiah to be our Saviour and High Priest as Jesus was. The Son had to be given.²⁸

Child: humanity.

Son: God, Deity Mt 11:27.

Government: “misrah”; key on shoulder (vs. Lamb, Lk 15:5); 22:22

(Creation: Heb 1:2; Heb 11:3).

Destined to exercise supreme rule of all the universe!

Wonderful: (Cf. Samson’s parents, Judg 13:18); Mystery 1 Tim 3:16; Mt 7:28, teachings; doings 25:17;

Counsellor: Word; Rom 8:12-30; Revealer of Father; Word, 1 Jn 1:7.

Mighty God: El: Messiah only in Ps 45:6; Heb 1:8; Isa 7:14.

Everlasting Father: Jn 10:30.

Prince of Peace: Angels, Lk 2:14; (Melchizadech = King of Salem, Heb.;

Solomon = peaceful one...) Isa 32:1-18.²⁹

[us] Unto us -- Israel -- not just to Judah, but to both houses of Israel (Isa. 8:14). Christ was to come from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:19; 28:14); Judah (Gen. 49:10; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 5:5); Jesse (Isa. 11:1); David (2Sam. 7; Ps. 89:3-4,35-37; Mt. 1:1-16; Lk. 3:23-38; Rom. 1:3); and from Israel as a nation (Rom. 9:4-13).³⁰

[child] A coming child (Hebrew: yeled (HSN-<H3206>), a child; boy; son; young man). The prophet saw in the darkness of Israel the boy being born to them (both houses, for the darkness of Isa. 8:21 -- Isa. 9:5 was in Zebulun, Naphtali, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations, and Judah) and He would be a great light to the people (Isa. 9:2,6-7; 11:1-2).³¹

[son] Son, not daughter. Man was given the responsibility of headship of the race, so it took a man to redeem the race. Both man and woman played a part in redemption, for the Redeemer had to be a man born of a woman to fulfill prophecy and meet God's demands (Isa. 9:6; 7:14; Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4).³²

²⁸ <http://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

²⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, Khouse.org

³⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³¹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

Ten Uses of Child in Isaiah

1. Child contrasted with ancients (Isa. 3:5)
2. Isaiah's first child (Isa. 7:3,16)
3. Isaiah's second child (Isa. 8:1-4)
4. The Messiah child (Isa. 9:6-7)
5. The writing child (Isa. 10:19)
6. The Millennial child (Isa. 11:6)
7. The Millennial sucking child (Isa. 11:8)
8. The Millennial weaned child (Isa. 11:8)
9. The Millennial 100-year-old child (Isa. 65:20)
10. The man-child (Isa. 66:7)

[born] Born -- quoted in Lk. 2:11, and is the fulfillment of Isa. 7:14; 11:1; Gen. 3:15.

[given] There is an unmentioned period between this word given and the next prediction -- the whole period of grace not seen in particular by the prophets in name, but required to fulfill many of their prophecies.³³

[government] Hebrew: misrah (HSN-<H4951>), empire; government. Found only here (Isa. 9:6-7). It means the authority to rule; the right to be the Sovereign of all the earth.

[upon his shoulder] The responsibility of rule and judgment and justice is upon Him (Isa. 11:1-5; Dan. 7:13-14; Lk. 1:32-33; 1Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 11:15; 20:4-10).

He will rule over God's people (cf. Micah 5:2) and the world (Zech. 14:9). The government will be on His shoulders figuratively refers to the kingly robe to be worn by the Messiah. As King, He will be responsible to govern the nation. In Isaiah's day Judah's leaders were incompetent in governing the people. But the Messiah will govern properly.

What might such a government look like? First of all, it would look like its king.

- Politicians of this day look for what they can get from you. Jesus looks for what He can do for you.
- Leaders of this day surround themselves with servants. Jesus surrounds us with His servanthood.
- Leaders of this day use their power to build their empire. Jesus uses his power to wash our feet and make us clean and comfortable.
- Leaders of this day trade their influence for money. God so loved that he gave . . .
- Generals of this day need regular wars to keep their weapons and skills up to date and insure their own advancement. Jesus brings peace and rest to hearts.
- The higher the plane of importance one reaches in this world, the more inaccessible he becomes. Jesus was Emanuel, "God with us."
- Leaders of this day are desperate to be seen and heard. Jesus sought anonymity so He could be useful.

³³Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

- Obviously, Jesus is not in charge of the halls of Washington, London, Moscow, Baghdad, Paris or Bonn. So, how can we ever believe the “government will be upon His shoulders”?
- Actually, His government shows its workings in wonderful ways. Whenever I see someone who miraculously leaves a life of drugs or alcohol and is restored to his family and work, I can see that he is now governed by God.
- Whenever I see loving Christians gently caring for orphans and those rejected by family, I know I am watching people governed by God.
- Whenever I see people eagerly learning the Bible and joyously praising, I know who the governor is.
- Whenever I see people give up lucrative careers simply to go and share the Good News of Jesus, I know they are governed by God.
- When I see pastors carefully teach and lead the flock God has given them, I know they are getting signals from the great King.
- When I see people leave family to live and teach in distant lands because they love the people who have not heard, I know they are governed by God.
- So, indeed, the government is alive and working. Often silently, mostly unseen. We can be and are, by choice, governed by God. Hope and joy and peace and rest cover its subjects. Justice, mercy and grace, amazingly coexist. I like this Kingdom. The borders are open. Come on in.

[his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace]

Five Names of the Messiah

1. Wonderful. Hebrew: pele' (HSN-<H6382>), a miracle; a marvelous thing; wonderful. Translated wonder (Isa. 29:14; Ex. 15:11; Ps. 77:11-15; 88:10-12; 89:5; Dan. 12:6); wonderful (Isa. 9:6; 25:1; Ps. 119:129); wonderfully (Lam. 1:9); and marvelous things (Ps. 78:12).

2. Counsellor. Hebrew: ya`ats (HSN-<H3289>), advise; consult; to deliberate; guide. Translated "counsellor" 22 Times. This name expresses the idea that He is the Supreme Counselor -- the one who is qualified to give counsel and advice to all created beings.

3. The mighty God. Hebrew: gibbowr (HSN-<H1368>), powerful; mighty; strong; champion; chief, and 'El (HSN-<H410>), Almighty; the Strong One. It literally means the Mighty Almighty, or the conquering God. One of many places where the Messiah is called "God" (Isa. 9:6; Jn. 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 1Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:8; 1Jn. 5:20).

4. The everlasting Father -- the Father of eternity; the Planner of the ages; and Father of all time (Heb. 1:2). It does not mean that Jesus the Messiah is the one known as God, the Father, the first person of the Trinity, for He is another person. See The Trinity.

5. The Prince of Peace -- the Peaceful Prince. He shall promote and increase His government and peace without wars (Isa. 9:6; 2:2-4).³⁴

³⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

His name will be called: The idea isn't that these will be the literal names of the Messiah. Instead, these are aspects of His character, they describe who He is and what He has come to do.

"In Semitic thought, a name does not just identify or distinguish a person, it expresses the very nature of his being." (Longenecker)

Calvin, on the greatness of these titles: "This ought to be the more carefully considered, because the greater part of men are satisfied with his mere name, and do not observe his power and energy, though that ought to be chiefly regarded."³⁵

How will this come about? "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Is this a reference to the first coming of Christ? Most Christians seem to think it is, because they quote it at Christmastime. However, I feel sure that it refers to the second coming of Christ when He will be "born" to the nation of Israel. This is a complete prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming, as Isaiah 53 is of His first coming. These verses continue the thought which we picked up in verse 3, and they look forward to the second coming of Christ.

The question arises of how "a child is born" at His second coming. First of all, let me clearly state that He was not born "unto us," the nation Israel, at His first coming. They didn't receive Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). Although He was born at Bethlehem the first time, He was not received by the nation -- only a few shepherds welcomed Him. The wise men who came to worship Him were Gentiles from a foreign land. If you read verse 6 carefully, you will see that it was not fulfilled at His first coming, nor were Isa. 9:3, 5 and Isa. 9:7.

To say that Christ will be born to the nation Israel might be better stated. Actually, Israel will be born as a nation "at once," which is made perfectly clear in the final chapter of Isaiah: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed [that is the Great Tribulation], she brought forth her children" (Isa. 66:7-8).

Israel is to be "delivered of a man child" in the future, not by His birth, but by Israel's birth. This will be the new birth of the nation Israel when Christ comes again. Israel will be born at the second coming of Christ.

I see no objection to calling attention to the fact that the child is born -- that is, His humanity. The son is given, which will be true at His second coming. In other words, it will be the same Jesus who was here nearly two thousand years ago.

"The government shall be upon his shoulder." The shoulder speaks of strength. The government of this world will be placed on His strong shoulders at His second coming; it was not at His first coming.

Notice the names that are given to our Lord:
"Wonderful" -- this is not an adjective; this is His name. In Judges 13:18 we see the preincarnate Christ appearing as the Captain of the hosts of the Lord: "And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" "Secret" in this verse is the same word as is translated "Wonderful." In Matthew 11:27 the Lord Jesus said, "...no man knoweth the Son, but the Father...." The people did not know it, but He was Wonderful, and people still don't know it today. There are Christians who have trusted Him as Savior but really don't know how wonderful He is.

³⁵ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

He is going to put down rebellion when He comes to earth the second time, and He is going to reign on earth. His name is "Wonderful!"

"Counsellor" -- He never sought the counsel of man, and He never asked for the advice of man. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:34). God has no counsellor. The Lord Jesus Christ never called His disciples together and said, "Now, fellows, what do you think I ought to do?" You don't read anything like that in Scripture. The Lord called them together and said, "This is what I am going to do, because this is My Father's will." And Christ has been made unto us wisdom (see 1Cor. 1:30). Most of us are not very smart. We must go to Him for help.

"The mighty God" -- The Hebrew word for this name is El Gibbor. He is the One to whom "all power is given." He is the omnipotent God. That little baby lying helpless on Mary's bosom held the universe together. He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He is the Mighty God!

"The everlasting Father" -- Avi-ad, Father of eternity. This simply means that He is the Creator of all things, even time, the ages, and the far-off purpose of all things. As John said, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). In Colossians 1:16 Paul said, "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." Then in Hebrews 1:1-2 we read, "God... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds [ages]." The translation of the Greek word aion should be "ages" instead of "worlds," and that is the thought in this title of His -- Father of eternity.

"The Prince of Peace" -- Sar-Shalohim. There can be no peace on this earth until He is reigning. His government is not static; there is increase and growth. No two days are going to be alike when Jesus is reigning. He is going to occupy the throne of David. This is a literal throne which He will occupy at His second coming. Justice will be dominant in His rule. God's zeal, not man's zany plans, will accomplish this.³⁶

Wonderful

He is called "God with us," and "the Lord our righteousness." It becomes more and more evident as you read the Scriptures that this child born to a virgin and destined to govern the world is God Himself. He is also called here, "Wonderful."

You may remember that a "mal-AWK" (angel or messenger) showed up visit some parents-to-be. The couple prepared an offering which was miraculously consumed by fire on the altar. The man...

Judg. 13:17-18 ...said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that when your words come to pass, we may honor you?" But the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is Wonderful?"

This angel of the Lord was a Christophany, an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ.³⁷

³⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³⁷ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0901.php>

Counselor

He is also called "Counselor." This is the job description of a king (Mic. 4:9). Calling Him the "Wonderful Counselor" seems to indicate that as He rules, His kingly counsel is divine, or miraculously gifted.

Mighty God, Eternal Father

And, in case there was any doubt that the Messiah was divine, notice that He will also be called, "Mighty God, Eternal Father."

One of the marks of a cult is a group that denies the deity of Jesus Christ. They have found excuses for not believing John 1:1; John 10:33; John 8:58-59; 2Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:8; John 20:26-29; Titus 2:13; 2Pet 1:1... etc. But once again, we see it right in front of our faces: He is the Mighty God.

Now, some people misunderstand the term "Father" here, and confuse the different persons of the Trinity. Calling Jesus a father here doesn't mean that God the Son is also God the Father. It is referring to His position regarding eternity, not His place in deity. Remember that Paul told the Colossians,

Col. 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Jesus has preeminence over all things as their originator, their creator, their father. And so He is called the eternal Father, or a translation which would be more accurate, "Father of Eternity."³⁸

Prince Of Peace

Jesus will also be called the prince of peace. It's interesting to me that the Christmas cards often acknowledge Him as the bringer of peace.

But they often misquote the peace He brings. They often say, "Peace on Earth." But in reality, Jesus said,

Luke 12:51-53 "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

This doesn't sound like "Peace on Earth." So where did the Christmas card makers get this idea? From the angels who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. But there was a qualifier in the announcement:

Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

Peace on earth - only for those people with whom God is pleased. And so Jesus is the prince of peace, but it is only those who have grace that have peace.³⁹

³⁸ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0901.php>

³⁹ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0901.php>

⁷Of 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. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

Increase: Mt 28:18, 19.

Throne of David: Luke 1:32-33. A definite, historical throne; does not admit of “spiritualizing.” See Davidic Covenant, Zech 12:8, 2 Sam 7:16; Acts 15:14-16 (vs. Father’s throne, Rev 3:21).

[no end] Five eternal things:

1. The God-man (Isa. 9:6)
2. His government (Isa. 9:7)
3. Peace as a result of His reign
4. David's throne (Isa. 9:7; 2Sam. 7; Ps. 89:4; Lk. 1:32-33)
5. David's kingdom (Isa. 9:7; 2Sam. 7; Lk. 1:32-33; Rev. 11:15)

[zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this] In the event you do not believe the fulfillment of this prophecy literally, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it.⁴⁰

No End

You may remember that when David expressed a desire to build a temple for God, he was not allowed. However, God did send the prophet Nathan to him with some amazing prophetic promises. One of those promises was that David's kingly line would be established forever (2Sam. 7:13,16).

Regarding that very promise, the angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary,

Luke 1:31-33 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Throne Of Righteousness

The proverb says,

Prov. 16:12 ...a throne is established on righteousness.

And so we would expect nothing less from God's government on earth to be a throne which is established and upheld with justice and righteousness. Ethan the Ezrahite recognized this about God when he wrote Psalm 89, saying,

Psa. 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴¹ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0901.php>

⁸The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.

[upon Israel] Another example of Jacob and Israel referring to the same people -- all Jews. The prophecy is to both Judah and Ephraim (Isa. 9:8-9,11-12).⁴²

Though Isaiah was writing to the nation of Judah he often used the Northern Kingdom of Israel (also called Jacob) as an example of the fact that God judges His sinful people. The message was one of coming judgment on the North. When these words were written, the Northern Kingdom was already in some disrepair (v. 10a). The coming fall of Israel (in 722 b.c.) should have warned Judah that God is active in the affairs of His people. Judah should have realized that she too would be destroyed if she persisted in the activities that characterized the North.⁴³

8-10 Pride made Israel think it would recover and rebuild in its own strength. Even though God made the people of Israel a nation and gave them the land they occupied, they put their trust in themselves rather than in him. Too often we take pride in our accomplishments, forgetting that it is God who has given us our resources and abilities. We may even become proud of our unique status as Christians. God is not pleased with any pride or trust in ourselves because it cuts off our contact with him.⁴⁴

Coming judgment on the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

This section (Isaiah 9:8 to Isa_10:4) is in four parts, each part concluding with “For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand (of judgment) is stretched out still.” Some have called this section, “The Speech of the Outstretched Hand.”

(Isaiah 9:8-12) Because of their unholy pride, Israel will be defeated by her enemies. The LORD sent a word against Jacob, and it has fallen on Israel. All the people will know; Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria; who say in pride and arrogance of heart: “The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars.” Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and spur his enemies on, the Syrians before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with an open mouth. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

The LORD sent a word against Jacob, and it has fallen on Israel: The idea is that the LORD brought a word against all His people (against Jacob) and the word has scored a “direct hit” against the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria: The tribe of Ephraim was the largest and most influential tribe in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. So, often the LORD refers to the Kingdom of Israel by the name Ephraim. Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. There isn't any doubt whom this prophecy is directed to.⁴⁵

⁴² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴³ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁴⁴ Life Application Study Bible.

⁴⁵ <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

⁹And all the people shall know, *even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart,*

9-12 The coming judgment on Israel would be widely known, but it would not be enough to turn her back to God. Ephraim, one of Israel's largest tribes, often represented the entire Northern Kingdom (cf. 7:2, 17). Samaria was the Northern Kingdom's capital city. Apparently Israel's inhabitants felt that they would experience only a temporary setback (the bricks have fallen) and in proud confidence thought they could rebuild. In fact they felt that they would be able to make their nation better than ever. But this was not to be the case. They were going to be squeezed by Rezin's foes (Rezin was the king of Aram, 7:1, an ally of Israel). Those foes were from the east (other Arameans; Rezin was king of part of Aram) and Philistines from the west (cf. 2:6). This was the Lord's doing. But even this judgment did not appease God's wrath because the people continued to refuse to deal with their sin. So God would continue to chasten them. This section (9:8-12) ends with a refrain which is repeated three more times in the following verses: Yet for all this His anger is not turned away, His hand is still upraised (vv. 12, 17, 21; 10:4). This repetition heightens the effect of God's intense anger and underscores the certainty of continued judgment.⁴⁶

The People's Pride

"Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria" refer to the people living in the northern kingdom of Israel. God had seen their response to earlier judgments: not humble repentance, but prideful obstinacy. Every time God allowed attackers to bring destruction, He had desired Israel to pray and turn to Him. But instead, they just kept saying, "We'll make things stronger and continue in our sin."

And so God is going to bring more destruction upon them. King Rezin of the Arameans, who had allied with Israel against Judah, brought with him not only his help, but also his problems. When Israel allied with Aram, Aram's active enemies became Israel's active enemies.

Thus, Israel's destruction was coming not only from the expected foes, like the Philistines, but also from their alliance with Aram.⁴⁷

¹⁰The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change *them* into cedars.

[The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change *them* into cedars] The people defied the judgments of God, saying that the bricks are thrown down but we will build with stronger material -- large hewn stones and cedars that are stronger than sycamores which grew abundantly in the low lands of Judea but weren't considered good building material compared to cedars (1Ki. 10:27; 2Chr. 1:15; 9:27).⁴⁸

In their pride, the leaders and the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel said, "Who cares if God judges us? Whatever is torn down, we will rebuild with something better. We have nothing to fear from what God can bring against us."

⁴⁶ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁴⁷ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0908.php>

⁴⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

“Instead of humbling themselves before the face of God on account of the many calamities that had already descended on them, they still entertained a lighthearted optimism regarding the future. This optimism manifested itself in the slogans that were current in that day and apparently on everybody’s lips.” (Bultema)

“What a brief but deeply psychological picture this is of an unfaithful generation that keeps dreaming of better times to come and lightheartedly ignores the severe judgments of God.” (Bultema)⁴⁹

11Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together;

Rezin was destroyed by his enemies under the Assyrians (2Ki. 16:5-18).

Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries: Because they believed they would be able to weather the storm of attack and then rebuild, God would send successive waves of enemies against Israel (The Syrians before and the Philistines behind). The destruction of Israel would be complete, and their proud promise to rebuild would be unfulfilled.

12The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Philistines invasion of Judah (2 Chr 28:18) not Israel.

Hand stretched out: to smite, not save.

Context: Since no repentance was forthcoming from the northern kingdom of Israel, the Lord’s hand of judgment will continue to be outstretched unrelentingly and will result in their captivity. **[Israel with open mouth]** Specifically Judah, for Syrians and Philistines, as well as Ephraim who was allied with Syria (Isa. 7:1-9), invaded Judah (2Chr. 28:5-8,16-25).

[For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still] Five times this expression is used in Isaiah to indicate that God’s anger was still strong and that His people had not been punished enough to bring them to repentance and holiness, so other judgments would have to come (Isa. 5:25; 9:12,17,21; 10:4). Each time a series of punishments is mentioned, it ends with this statement.⁵⁰

The chorus is said: For all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still. The judgment against Israel’s pride was not enough. There was still sin to judge, and God wasn’t ready to stop His work of judgment.

Calvin could say of his day, more than 300 years ago: “How many are the distresses with which Europe has been afflicted for thirty or forty years? How many are the chastisements by which she has been called to repentance? And yet it does not appear that those numerous chastisements have done any good. On the contrary, luxury increases every day, lawless passions are inflamed, and men go on in crimes and profligacy more shamelessly than ever. In short, those

⁴⁹ <http://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

⁵⁰ Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible

very calamities appear to have been so many excitements to luxury and splendour. What then should we expect but to be bruised with heavier blows?"⁵¹

In Spite Of All This

These verses end with a statement which is repeated several times in the passage we're covering tonight:

Is. 9:12 ...In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out.

It appears at the end of each of four statements (9:12; 9:17; 9:21; 10:4). It signifies that He continues to judge. Literally, it says, "all this" (kole aw-SAW). God is saying, "All this judgment, but still there is more to come."⁵²

¹³For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts.

Two causes for further punishment:

1. His people do not turn to Him who sends the judgment.
2. They do not seek the Lord, so the purpose of chastening has failed.

The prophet lamented that even though the Northern Kingdom had suffered at the hand of God, they still had not returned to Him. So their continued refusal would lead to more judgment. Israel was like a child who stubbornly refuses to obey his parents and therefore is punished more severely.⁵³

For the people do not turn to Him who strikes them, nor do they seek the LORD of hosts. Therefore the LORD will cut off head and tail from Israel, palm branch and bulrush in one day. The elder and honorable, he is the head; the prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed. Therefore the LORD will have no joy in their young men, nor have mercy on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

For the people do not turn to Him who strikes them: Each episode of judgment was followed by Israel's refusal to turn to the LORD. They were like dumb animals that resist even more when they are beaten.

Therefore the LORD will cut off the head and tail from Israel: Those who lead in Israel (the elder and honorable . . . the prophet who teaches lies . . . the leaders of this people) will be cut off, which often means to be killed.

"The expression branch and rush indicates the same thing as head and tail. A branch grows upward and hence refers to the high and important people of the population; the rush grows in muddy marshes and refers to the lowest element of the population, the scum." (Bultema)

⁵¹ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

⁵² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0908.php>

⁵³ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The chorus is said: For all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still. The judgment against Israel's impenitence was not enough. There was still sin to judge, and God wasn't ready to stop His work of judgment.⁵⁴

Since the Lord's discipline of the nation would not cause her to repent, He would cut off her leadership abruptly and suddenly. This would make her see her need of Him more clearly. Isaiah described the totality of leadership as the head and tail of this national animal. Some leaders were eminent, as the erect palm branch, while others were lowly, like the bowing bulrush.

14^{Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day.}

14-17 Israel's refusal to turn to God would result in the most severe judgment imaginable. The whole nation, from rich to poor and from old to young, would be cast aside. Both head and tail (v. 14, explained in v. 15) is a merism, a figure which gives opposite extremes to include the whole spectrum. Elders (the head) and false prophets (the tail), guides and those who are guided, and young men... the fatherless... widows—these were all ungodly and wicked and therefore would be judged by God. On the refrain in verse 17b see comments on verse 12.⁵⁵

The Head And Tail Cut Off

Even with the extra difficulties from God's judgment, Israel still refuses to turn to God. And so more judgment takes place. The Lord says that He "cuts off the head and tail from Israel." This means that from the highest position to the lowest one, God is bringing death.

The highest position was that of the elders, those perceived as honorable men. The lowest position is that of the false prophet. But both of them - and everyone in between - were totally corrupt. The most "honorable" man in Israel was ripe for judgment, as was the young men, and even the orphans and widows.

Why? He says, "Because..."

Is. 9:17 "...every one of them is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth is speaking foolishness..."

And once again, God says, "All this judgment, but still there is more to come."⁵⁶

15^{The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.}

By the "head," Isaiah meant the leading person, and by the "tail," the false prophet. The leaders were leading the people astray by strengthening their self-confidence rather than urging them to trust Yahweh. Typically this results in leaders saying and doing things only to lengthen their own tenure in positions of power.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

⁵⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁵⁶ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0908.php>

⁵⁷ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹⁶For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err; and *they that are* led of them are destroyed.

The leaders of Israel, consisting of the ancients and honorable men and prophets, were to be destroyed in one day, because of leading the people astray (Isa. 9:14-15). The people themselves who permitted error were likewise to be destroyed.⁵⁸

¹⁷Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one *is* an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

Three classes that will receive no mercy:

1. The young men
2. The orphans
3. Widows

These classes usually received the protection of God, but now the nation was so far apostate that even they were past mercy.⁵⁹

Three sins for which no mercy was shown:

1. Living hypocritical lives
2. Living as confirmed evildoers
3. Speaking folly

The word “hypocrite” (*haneph*, Heb.) primarily means a “flatterer.”

¹⁸For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke.

This verse clearly states that sin and wickedness are the cause of Israel's destruction. Like a fire out of control it devours all things in the brier and thorn patches and in the thickets of the forest. They will send up great columns of smoke when they are burned.⁶⁰

18-21 The people's wickedness (cf. v. 17) is pictured as burning them up like a huge fire with a large column of smoke. The judgment would come not only from God (v. 11) and from enemies of the nation (v. 12), but also from within. The nation would destroy itself by its own wicked deeds. People would oppose each other (v. 19), devour each other (v. 20), and even entire tribes will be in conflict (v. 21). On the refrain in verse 21b see comments on verse 12.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

18-21 Fire And Famine

Wickedness had spread like a wildfire throughout the people of Israel, which it tends to do when unchecked. As Paul the apostle said,

1Cor. 15:33 ...“Bad company corrupts good morals.”

The column of smoke spoken of here figuratively makes me think of how this must have smelled to God. It is the direct opposite of the smoke which was pleasing to Him as it ascended from the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 1:9). Dozens of times in Scripture, this smell is described as a "soothing aroma" (nee-KHO-akh RAY-akh) to the Lord. Literally, that means "a restful, quieting, tranquilizing smell."

But as the smoke of their wickedness ascended to God, it brought Him to fury. And His fury burned like a fire far hotter than their wickedness.

What exactly was this wickedness of theirs? They didn't care about one another. There was no compassion for others. They devoured one another, which is just devouring yourself. They fought with each other, and they fought against their brothers in the southern kingdom of Judah. Centuries later, Paul saw this trend starting to rear its ugly head in the Christian church, and warned,

Gal. 5:13-16 ...you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

This behavior caused God's fury to incinerate them.

And once again, God says, "All this judgment, but still there is more to come."⁶²

For wickedness burns as the fire; it shall devour the briars and thorns, and kindle in the thickets of the forest; they shall mount up like rising smoke. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up, and the people shall be as fuel for the fire; no man shall spare his brother. And he shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry; he shall devour on the left hand and not be satisfied; every man shall eat the flesh of his own arm. Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh; together they shall be against Judah. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

For wickedness burns as the fire: The prophet sees the wickedness of Israel as a raging wildfire, unstoppable, swift, uncontrolled, and devouring everything it touches.

And the people shall be fuel for the fire: This wildfire of God's judgment is fueled by the people, in two senses. First, their wickedness gives supplies fuel to the fire of God's judgment. If the wickedness was taken away, the fire would have no more fuel. Second, they are burnt up and destroyed by the fire.

No man shall spare his brother: In gruesome detail, the prophet speaks of the carnage that one Israelite will inflict on another. The wildfire of God's judgment burns, but God merely let the evil, hateful passions of men burn wild among themselves. God did not need to start the fire, or fan the flames; He simply took away the “fire retardant” that had held the evil, hate-filled passions of men in check.

⁶² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah0908.php>

The chorus is said: For all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still. The judgment against Israel's wickedness was not enough. There was still sin to judge, and God wasn't ready to stop His work of judgment.⁶³

19Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.

The wrath of God is like the fire that burns the thickets of Isa. 9:18. It shall cause the land to be darkened. The people will be as fuel. No man shall spare his own brother in the terrible famine that shall sweep the land, and men will eat their own flesh, or offspring (Isa. 9:19-20).⁶⁴

20And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:

They even consume themselves to satisfy themselves. The tribes of Israel were consuming each other for the same purpose, even brother tribes like Ephraim and Manasseh that had come from one father, Joseph (cf. Judg. 12:1-6). The Hebrews described the members of their own tribe or family as their "arm" because they supported and sustained them. Whereas Judah had defended his brothers in the days of the patriarchs (Gen. 44:18-34), now the descendants of Joseph were trying to destroy the descendants of Judah. For this reason God's hand of judgment was still extended against Ephraim.⁶⁵

21Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Ephraim and Manasseh were tribes in the northern kingdom descended from Joseph's two sons. They fought a civil war because of their selfishness and wickedness (see Judges 12:4).

[Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah] Manasseh and Ephraim devour each other (Isa. 9:19); that is, brothers of kindred tribes destroy each other; and they both shall invade Judah. This was fulfilled when Pekah, king of Ephraim, defeated Ahaz and slew 120,000 Judahites in one day and carried 200,000 captive (2Chr. 28:6-15).⁶⁶

[For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still] For all this, or in spite of all this judgment on Judah and Ephraim, the anger of God is not yet turned away and His hand is stretched out still, for sin continues to abound and chastening has failed to bring the people to repentance.⁶⁷

⁶³ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-9.html>

⁶⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶⁵ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁶⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible