

# SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**ISA. 9:1** Nevertheless 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.

**2** 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.

**3** Thou 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.

**4** For 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.

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

**6** For 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.

**7** Of 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.

## NOTES



# God's Glory in the Coming Christ

(Christmas)

Lesson Text: Isaiah 9:1-7

Related Scriptures: 2 Kings 15:27-30; Luke 1:27-33; 2:1-7;  
Isaiah 49:1-7; Acts 26:12-23

TIME: about 732 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6a).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

Isaiah's original audience likely understood Isaiah 9 to concern Hezekiah, the son of King Ahaz. Hezekiah initiated religious reforms and ruled according to God's commands. In the face of Assyrian forces, the promise of Hezekiah's reign may have sparked hope among despairing people. Within their lifetimes, Isaiah and his audience saw God realize this promise. When Assyria surrounded Jerusalem, Hezekiah appealed to God. In Isaiah 37:36-37, we read the results. God destroyed the enemy army and saved His people. Yet Hezekiah was not the final fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. No king was, until Jesus arrived.

### **GLOOM TO GLORY—Isa. 9:1-5**

**Living in darkness (Isa. 9:1-2).** Although Zebulun and Naphtali had been brought into contempt through invasion, displacement, and resettlement, the Lord would make them glorious. The language of darkness and anguish is a continuation of the preceding verses. Those who rejected God and His Word turned to Assyrian religious prac-

tices. They were in darkness (8:18-22).

Despite the rejection of His people, God would intervene. The darkness of 9:1 was not merely a description of their political oppression but also of their spiritual darkness. Still, God did not abandon His people.

Jesus fulfilled these verses by living in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (that is, Galilee). He declared the coming of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 4:12-17). The great light described by Isaiah is Jesus and the coming of the kingdom.

**Bringing joy (Isa. 9:3-5).** Jesus' work increased the joy of people all over the globe. But Jesus did not bring about a political Jewish state by defeating the Romans. The Lord oversees the nations (Job 12:23), yet the Jewish nation did not increase when Jesus came. We should avoid the mistake many first-century Jews made as they awaited the Messiah. Not all the prophecies about Jesus were fulfilled at His first coming. Some will be fulfilled at His second. Jesus fulfilled many prophecies during His earthly ministry (Luke 4:16-21; Matt. 8:14-17).



Although He has not multiplied the nation yet, He will one day.

Different theologians emphasize different aspects of the nation being multiplied, but these points are not in conflict. Some emphasize that the kingdom of heaven has come to many nations. God promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations (Gen. 17:4-5). One day, people from all nations will praise Jesus (Rev. 7:9-10). Others emphasize that the nation of Israel itself will be blessed (Ezek. 36:8-11). God will keep all His promises!

The people will rejoice because the rod and yoke of the oppressor are broken, as at the day of Midian (Isa. 9:4). This is a reference to Judges 7, when God reduced Gideon's army from twenty-two thousand to three hundred to show that the victory was from Him. Against overwhelming odds, the Lord would deliver His people.

Some believe this was fulfilled in Christ's first coming. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He defeated Satan and freed people from captivity (Heb. 2:14-15). Others maintain this is about His second coming. Just as war has not yet ended (cf. Isa. 9:5), so this verse may remain for the future. Regardless, Christ is this passage's fulfillment. The promises of verses 1-5 are fulfilled through the arrival of the Child described in verses 6-7.

### **A SON IS BORN—Isa. 9:6**

Everything in verses 1-5 is true because the Child was born. His arrival changed everything. He was given to people as a blessing, and He would carry the government on His shoulder. Rulership used to be considered a burden to be carried (22:22), even though many abused this "burden" and did not serve the people. This Child would shoulder the responsibility of the nation and the house of David (Luke 1:32). He would rule the nation well.

Isaiah 9:6 gives an extensive description of this Child and what He would be called. This does not mean that He was literally called any of these titles by people on the street. Rather, these terms all accurately describe Him, and He is rightly called all these things. Let us look at each title in turn.

**Wonderful Counselor.** The chorus from Handel's *Messiah* might lead us to think of this as two titles. However, commas did not exist in the original Hebrew, and many scholars understand this as a single title. He is a counselor of wonders or miracles. This fits with the other terms, which all consist of two elements: "mighty God," "everlasting Father," and "Prince of Peace." Of course, both translations are generally true: He is wonderful, and He is a counselor.

Many people are quick to share their advice with anyone. Finding a counselor is not difficult, but finding a wonderful counselor is much harder. The Lord is wonderful in counsel (Isa. 28:29) and does only wondrous things (Ps. 72:18). He gives His servants wisdom and supernatural insight, which are exclusively from the Lord (Dan. 2:27-30). At a minimum, this Child is favored by the Lord. Jesus, however, is much more than merely favored by God or blessed to have extra wisdom. He *is* wisdom, and in Him are all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:2-3). He is the Wonderful Counselor unlike any other!

**Mighty God.** The last title required careful grammatical examination. This one does not! The meaning of "mighty God" is clear and breathtaking! How could a mere child be God? Isaiah would spend chapters hammering the fact that there is only one God and all others are worthless (Isa. 43:10—45:22). Yet he also said that this Child is God. How could these seemingly opposing truths be reconciled?



Jesus is God with us (Matt. 1:23). He is the eternal God, who has always existed (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-20). He willingly chose to humble Himself and take on humanity (Phil. 2:5-10). But He did not lose His divinity. He has always been and remains God. He is both truly human and truly God.

**Everlasting Father.** The previous title was a clear assertion of the Son's divinity. This title is less straightforward and trips many up. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. Yet the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all distinct. God is not like water, which takes the form of ice, liquid, or vapor. He is not a single person who reveals Himself in different ways at different times. We see the Father speaking to the Son and the Spirit descending at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:16-17). Yet we are to baptize in the name (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (28:19).

In the ancient world, "father" was a common designation for a ruler. Isaiah described a ruler as a father (Isa. 22:21), and Job claimed this title when he provided for the needy (Job 29:16). In Isaiah 53:10, the Suffering Servant sees His offspring after being crushed. These are not physical descendants but those He has delivered. He protects and provides for His offspring through His death. Jesus—the Suffering Servant—delivers us and lovingly guides and provides for us. Nothing can change His fatherly relationship with us.

**Prince of Peace.** In 1938, the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared that he had negotiated "peace for our time." But sadly, Germany invaded Poland within a year. Today, wars have started during virtually every modern presidency. We long for peace, but it seems elusive.

When Jesus was born, a heavenly army declared peace on earth (Luke 2:14). His suffering on the cross

earned us peace with God (Rom. 5:1). This is an inner peace that surpasses understanding (John 14:27; Phil. 4:7). And one day He will bring full and final peace on earth (Isa. 11:6-9; 55:12).

As the Wonderful Counselor, Jesus is wise. As the Mighty God, He is strong. As the Everlasting Father, He is caring. As the Prince of Peace, He brings harmony and order.

### **HIS KINGDOM—Isa. 9:7**

The increase of His government and peace will never end. His kingdom will fill the earth and never be destroyed (cf. Dan. 2:35, 44-45; 7:13-14). This will fulfill the promises made to David (2 Sam. 7:16). Jesus' second coming is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. God will enthrone His Son. His victory is certain!

—Tom Greene

## **QUESTIONS**

1. How did Isaiah's original audience likely understand this prophecy?
2. Who are the people who walked in darkness, and what does walking in darkness mean?
3. What two broad ways have Christians understood the promise that the nation will be multiplied?
4. What is the day of Midian a reference to?
5. How are all the promises of the first five verses fulfilled?
6. Why do many think "Wonderful, Counsellor" is a single title?
7. What seemingly opposing truths did Isaiah affirm?
8. How is Jesus the Everlasting Father?
9. What kind of peace did Jesus bring?
10. How does this passage point toward Jesus' second coming?

—Tom Greene



## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God's discipline does not mean that He has abandoned His people (Isa. 9:1).
2. God can rescue people from even the darkest circumstances (vs. 2).
3. Let us rejoice and give thanks for God's blessings (vs. 3)!
4. We can be confident that one day God will end all warfare and oppression (vss. 4-5).
5. Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament promises, and He brings the victory (vs. 6).
6. It is God who brings His kingdom, but we can seek the justice and righteousness that characterize His kingdom (vs. 7).

—Tom Greene

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Does the background of Isaiah 7:1 and 2 Kings 16 impact the way we should view Isaiah 9:1-7?
2. Imagine waiting seven hundred years for a promise. How would that affect your faith?
3. How patiently are you waiting for God to fulfill His promises?
4. Have you ever felt that your life was full of darkness but then saw God work mightily?
5. What needs do people today have? How do the descriptions of Christ in Isaiah 9:6-7 fulfill those needs?
6. Do you think all the promises of Isaiah 9:1-7 have been fulfilled, or are some still for the future?
7. How can our Christmas celebrations look back to Jesus' first coming *and* forward to His second coming?

—Tom Greene

## Golden Text Illuminated

**"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6a).**

Isaiah's words point to the birth of a child who would become the Savior of humanity. They speak of Jesus' humanity and His humble entrance into the world. He would be born into the human experience, sharing in our joys, sorrows, and struggles. Yet this son will sit upon David's throne (vs. 7). He is the promised King who will reign forever. Jesus is the ultimate display of God's glory. In Jesus, God's love, mercy, and salvation are fully revealed to humanity. To see Jesus is to see God Himself!

The fact that He is born "unto us" denotes a personal, intimate gift from God. It reveals God's deep love for us as He willingly sent His Son to be our Savior. God's glory is seen in His willingness to offer Himself to bridge the gap between humanity and divinity. The birth of Jesus is a proclamation of God's faithfulness, redemption, and restoration. Through Him, God fulfills His promise to bring salvation, joy, and peace to the world.

Jesus entered our world to bring us back into relationship with Him. He bridged the gap between heaven and earth. If Jesus were only human, He would have only been like us. If He were only divine, He would not have experienced all the temptations of life. The sacrifice on the cross had to be a person who could withstand the wrath of God but also be human to provide the sacrifice. Only Jesus could provide the sacrifice! As we celebrate Christmas, may we embrace the truth of Isaiah 9:6 and be filled with gratitude, worship, and a renewed commitment to follow Jesus.

—Page Brooks