

**Exegetical Notes – Isaiah 9:2-7**  
**“The Prophecy Fulfilled: A Great Light was Sent”**  
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(During Advent 2024, we will leave our study of 2 Samuel and do an exegetical study entitled, **The Prophecy Fulfilled**. We will look at four passages from the book of Isaiah which Christians believe prophesy the birth of the Messiah. It is important for those joining this study to remember several things as we begin this study.

The first of these things is that this is a Christian view of these passages. The Jewish community does not believe that these passages speak to the birth of THE Messiah. They believe that these passages speak to specific times in the history of Israel and to particular events in Israel’s history.

The second of these things is that the Jews do not believe in the coming of THE Messiah but in the coming of messiahs. In Hebrew, the word “messiah” is plural. The word means “anointed ones.” The Jews believe that God raises up a messiah, or anointed one, to lead them through the current crisis that they face. These messiahs are many throughout their ancient and modern history. The Jews believe that there have been many messiahs.

Christians believe that the Hebrew word refers to Jesus. They explain the plural nature of the word is an “honorific plural.” The use of the plural to impart honor to the one who bears it is common in our history. (The king of England, for instance, is referred to as “we,” even though he is only one person.) This use of the plural has fallen into disfavor in our time. None-the-less, Christians believe that this is why the Hebrew plural is used in passages in the Old Testament which refer to THE Messiah.

The third of these things is that the Old Testament gives a very specific test for determining if a prophet is a “TRUE” prophet. Deuteronomy 18:22 says, *“If what a prophet proclaims in the name of YHWH does not take place or come true, that is a message YHWH has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do*

*not be afraid of him.*” The prophet whose words do not come true is to be put to death (see Deuteronomy 13:2). This would be an ineffective test of the prophet’s veracity if the words the prophet spoke were about events far in the future. How could this test be applied to Isaiah if Isaiah was speaking about events which would not happen for a thousand years after his death?

Christians believe that the prophecy of Isaiah is a dual prophecy. It talks about two things. One of these things happens during the life of Isaiah and affects the immediate future and the other speaks of the coming of THE MESSIAH, Jesus.

These problems prevented the Jews from understanding who Jesus was in the first century, too. Jesus and Paul spoke of Jesus as THE Messiah, the savior of the world. But the Jews of their day were looking for A messiah; one who would come to free them from Roman rule.)

### **The Historical Meaning:**

The historical setting for Isaiah chapter 9 is difficult to establish specifically. Israel, the northern kingdom, has fallen to Assyria. Ahaz, Isaiah’s cousin and the king of Judah, the southern kingdom’s king, has placed his hopes for saving Israel in an alliance with Assyria which Isaiah does not trust. Isaiah believes that the only hope for Israel is YHWH, but Ahaz is not a man who trusts YHWH at all. He is a non-believer. The Kingdom of Judah is nervous. Will Assyria invade them next? Isaiah’s message is that God will be with them and will protect them. In Isaiah 9, Isaiah predicts that a child will be born who will be God’s deliverer. Most likely these words were spoken at the time Ahaz’s son, Hezekiah, was born. Isaiah apparently saw this prince to be God’s hope for Judah. Thus, the new prince is the sign that Judah’s hope should be in God and not an alliance with Assyria.

### **The Greater Meaning**

#### **Isaiah 9:2-7**

##### **Verse 2**

**<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;**

**on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.**

- Note that the passage is set as a poem or a song. This makes it distinct from the text which surrounds it. It is a stand-alone piece.
- The Hebrew word “darkness” is used to describe the occult. It suggests that Israel may have been resorting to the occult to determine God’s will at this time of crisis. It certainly suggests that they were not trusting God.
- A great light has dawned on them. Light drives out darkness. It exposes what has been hidden. Such a light has shone on the people who are walking in darkness and it has exposed what is going on and in whom they have placed their trust.

**Verses 3-5**

**<sup>3</sup>You have enlarged the nation  
and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice  
when dividing the plunder.**

**<sup>4</sup>For as in the day of Midian’s defeat,  
you have shattered  
the yoke that burdens them,  
the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor.**

**<sup>5</sup>Every warrior’s boot used in battle  
and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning,  
will be fuel for the fire.**

- The people who were frightened by what they have feared are no longer afraid. Instead, they rejoice like people do following a good harvest or after a war has ended. They are happy.
- Verse 4 refers to Gideon’s defeat of Midian. This story is told in Judges 7:1-8:35. It is a story of how God raised up a Judge, Gideon, who miraculously defeated Israel’s enemy, Midian. The point is that, at that time, God acted to save the nation. Isaiah is predicting that God will deal with Assyria, Israel’s current threat, as He dealt with Israel’s enemies in the past.

However, the fall of Assyria did not occur until 701 BC (see Isaiah 37:36-37), during the reign of Hezekiah, the child who was born to King Ahaz.

- Israel's expectation was that God would send a military leader who would save Israel from her enemies.

### **Verse 6a**

**<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.**

- Isaiah predicts the birth of a child on whose shoulders the government will rest. Israel understood that this child was Hezekiah, the son of Ahas.

### **Verses 6b**

**And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

- The titles which Isaiah ascribes to this child are wonderful and grand. The child will be called "Wonderful Counselor." A human king might be called a great or wise counselor. The child will be called "Mighty God." This title describes divinity to the child. It literally means that the child IS God. Figuratively, this title might be applied to a human being; that he is godlike. However, this title could not be literally true of any human. The child will be called "Everlasting Father." Again, this title ascribes divinity to the child. This is impossible for a human being. The child shall be called "Prince of Peace." Hezekiah brought peace but lost the war. The four titles do not fit Hezekiah.
- For Christians these are known as the throne titles of THE Messiah. They are the titles given to Jesus as the Messiah. As "WONDERFUL COUNSELOR" Jesus will bring to the world a program which will end the rule of Satan. As "MIGHTY GOD" Jesus will have the power to impose His program on the nations. As "EVERLASTING FATHER" Jesus will impose His program upon the earth forever. As "PRINCE OF PEACE" Jesus' program will bring peace to earth forever. Isaiah's titles do not fit Hezekiah. He speaks of THE MESSIAH, Jesus, but He cannot see the great person his words describe.
- Structurally, there are only four throne titles not five as the King James translation suggests. Remember that this passage is a poem, and the structure of the poem requires for dyads of words.

- Notice that Isaiah and Israel expected a military deliverer, not the kind of Messiah that Jesus is.

### **Verse 7**

**<sup>7</sup>Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.**

**He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.**

**The zeal of the Lord Almighty  
will accomplish this.**

- The government of this child, and the peace he brings, will not end. His will be an everlasting kingdom. This was not true of Hezekiah's kingdom.
- This child will sit on the throne of David forever. Hezekiah sat on David's throne for only a few years.
- The point is that Hezekiah was not the child of whom Isaiah spoke, but Isaiah thought he was. These words find fulfilment in Jesus, THE MESSIAH!
- All of this will be accomplished by the will and the power of God. Therefore Isaiah's message to Judah, to trust God, is still God's message to us. God has it all in control. His plan will be accomplished. We can rejoice because God's Son, Jesus, has been given. God's Messiah has come.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on Isaiah 9:2-7. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)