

ISAIAH 9

To Us a Child Is Born

The Great Light in Galilee

1 But there will be no gloom for her [the remnant of Israel in Galilee] who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time [when Messiah comes] he [Yahweh] has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the [Gentile] nations (גּוֹיִם).¹ 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.² 3 You have multiplied³ the nation [Israel]. You have increased its joy. They rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. 4 For the yoke⁴ of his [Israel's] burden and the staff⁵ for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For every boot⁶ of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire [the enemies of the remnant of Israel will be defeated].

¹ In 733 bc, Tiglath-pileser conquered Galilee. **2 Ki 15:29** 29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and he carried the people captive to Assyria.

² **Mt 4:15-16** 15 The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.

³ **Is 26:15** 15 You have increased the nation, O Yahweh, you have increased the nation. You are glorified. You have enlarged all the borders of the land.

⁴ **Is 10:27** 27 In that day his burden will depart from your shoulder and his yoke from your neck. And the yoke will be broken because of the fat. **Is 14:25** 25 I will break the Assyrian in my land and on my mountains trample him underfoot. And his yoke shall depart from them, and his burden from their shoulder. **Nah 1:13** 13 I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart. **Mt 11:29** 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

⁵ **Is 10:5** 5 Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger. The staff in their hands is my fury! **Is 10:24** 24 O my people who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. **Is 14:5** 5 Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers.

⁶ **Eze 39:9** 9 Those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bow and arrows, clubs and spears. And they will make fires of them for seven years.

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6 For to us a child (יָלֵד) is born,⁷ to us a son (בֵּן) is given,⁸ and the government (מְשָׁרָה)⁹ shall be on his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor (פְּלֵא יוֹעֵץ),¹⁰ Mighty God (אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר),¹¹ Everlasting Father (אָבִי עֶד), Prince of Peace (שֵׁרֵשֶׁת שָׁלוֹם). 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,¹² on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness¹³ from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal (קִנְיָה)¹⁴ of Yahweh of hosts will do this.

God's Four-Phase Discipline of Israel

8 The Lord (אֲדֹנָי) has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel. 9 And all the people will know, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride (גִּבּוֹר) and in arrogance (גָּדֹל) of heart:

10 The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones. The sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place.

11 But Yahweh raises the adversaries of Rezin against him and stirs up his enemies. 12 The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand [of discipline] is stretched out still.¹⁵

13 The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of Yahweh of hosts. 14 So Yahweh cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day. 15 The elder and

⁷ **Lk 2:11** 11 Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord.

⁸ **Is 7:14** 14 The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

⁹ **Mt 28:18** 18 Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁰ **Is 28:29** 29 This also comes from Yahweh of hosts. He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.

¹¹ **Dt 10:17** 17 Yahweh your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God. **Is 10:21** 21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.

¹² **Ps 89:4** 4 I will establish your seed forever and build your throne for all generations. **Lk 1:32-33** 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David. 33 And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

¹³ **Jer 23:5** 5 I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

¹⁴ **Is 37:32** 32 Out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this. **Zech 1:14** 14 Thus says Yahweh of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion.

¹⁵ **Is 5:25** 25 The anger of Yahweh was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

honored man is the head,¹⁶ and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail. 16 For those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up. 17 Therefore Yahweh does not rejoice over their young men and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows. For everyone is godless (גֵּוֹיִם) and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand [of discipline] is stretched out still.

18 For wickedness burns like a fire. It consumes briars and thorns. It kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke. 19 Through the wrath of Yahweh of hosts the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire.¹⁷ No one spares another.¹⁸ 20 They slice meat on the right but are still hungry, and they devour on the left but are not satisfied. Each devours the flesh of his own arm. 21 Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim devours Manasseh. Together they are against Judah. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand [of discipline] is stretched out still.

10:1 Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, 2 to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil and that they may make the fatherless their prey! 3 What will you do on the day of punishment,¹⁹ in the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth? 4 Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand [of discipline] is stretched out still.

¹⁶ **Is 3:1-3** 1 Lord Yahweh of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah... 2 the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, 3 the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor, the skillful magician, and the expert in charms.

¹⁷ **Is 24:6** 6 A curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.

¹⁸ **Mic 7:2** 2 The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind. They all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net.

¹⁹ **Hos 9:7** 7 The days of punishment have come. The days of recompense have come. Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool. The man of the spirit is mad, because of your great iniquity and great hatred.

Biblical Worldview

1. *Isaiah at a Glance.*

- a. The title of Is 9 is “To Us a Child Is Born.”
- b. The segments of Is 9 are:
 - (1) The Great Light in Galilee (9:1-3).
 - (2) Israel’s Yoke Broken (9:4-5).
 - (3) To Us a Child Is Born (9:6-7).
 - (4) God’s Four-Phase Discipline of Israel (9:8-10:4).

2. **The Great Light in Galilee (9:1-3).**

- a. **Is 9:1-3** 1 But there will be no gloom for her [the remnant of Israel] who was in anguish. In the former time he treated with contempt (לִלְקָד) the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he [Yahweh] has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the [Gentile] nations (גּוֹיִם). 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of death-darkness, on them has light shone. 3 You have multiplied the nation [Israel]. You have increased its joy. They rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.
- b. Spiritual Darkness. Israel is in spiritual darkness because she has turned from God.
 - (1) **Is 8:19-22** 19 When they say to you, Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. 21 They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. 22 And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.
- c. The Prophetic Perfect.
 - (1) Using the (prophetic) perfect tense, Isaiah views the future as something that is so certain, it has already happened.
- d. The Insignificance of Galilee.
 - (1) In 733 bc, Galilee became an Assyrian province. It was the first area of Israel to fall under permanent Gentile domination. Thus it was called “Galilee of the Gentiles” (J. A. Martin, *BKC*, 1:1052).
 - (a) **2 Ki 15:29** 29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and he carried the people captive to Assyria.
 - (b) The “way of the sea” was a major international highway running through the Jezreel valley.
- e. Jesus of Nazareth.
 - (1) **Mt 4:13-25** 13 Leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15 The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the

way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. . . .23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

- (2) **Mt 21:11** 11 The crowds said, This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.
 - (3) **Mt 28:16** 16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.
 - (4) **Mk 1:24** 24 What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.
 - (5) **Jn 7:41-42** 41 Others said, This is the Messiah. But some said, Is the Messiah to come from Galilee? 42 Has not the Scripture said that the Messiah comes from the seed of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?
 - (6) **Jn 7:52** 52 They replied, Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.
 - (7) Seven time in Acts Jesus is called “Jesus of Nazareth.”
- f. Jesus as Light for the Nations.
- (1) **Is 42:6** 6 I am the Lord. I have called you in righteousness. I will take you by the hand and keep you. I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations.
 - (2) **Is 60:1-3** 1 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. 2 For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples. But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. 3 And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.
- g. Joy at Jesus’ Coming.

3. Israel’s Yoke Broken (9:4-5).

- a. **Is 9:4-5** 4 For the yoke of his [Israel’s] burden [Assyria] and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire [the enemies of the remnant of Israel will be defeated].
- b. **Jesus as the Yoke-Breaker.** Jesus came to break both physical and spiritual yokes.
 - (1) **Is 10:27** 27 In that day his burden will depart from your shoulder and his yoke from your neck. And the yoke will be broken because of the fat.
 - (2) **Is 14:25** 25 I will break the Assyrian in my land and on my mountains trample him underfoot. And his yoke shall depart from them, and his burden from their shoulder.
 - (3) **Mt 11:29** 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

- c. Gideon. Gideon is an appropriate reference because he was a deliverer of Galilee.
 - (1) **Jdg 6:35** 35 [Gideon] sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them.
- d. Jesus as Israel's Defender.
 - (1) **Eze 39:9** 9 Those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bow and arrows, clubs and spears. And they will make fires of them for seven years.
 - (2) **Zec 9:10** 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem. And the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations. His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

4. To Us a Child Is Born (9:6-7).

- a. **Is 9:6-7** 6 For to us a child (יְלִיד) is born, to us a son (בֶּן) is given, and the government (מְשָׁרָה) shall be on his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor (פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ), Mighty God (אֵל גִּבּוֹר), Everlasting Father (אָבִי עֶד), Prince of Peace (שֶׁר־שָׁלוֹם). 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal (קִנְיָה) of Yahweh of hosts will do this.
- b. The Humanity of Jesus.
 - (1) The child-son of v. 6 is the same individual as the son of Is 7:14 and the sanctuary-stone of offense of Is 8:14. All these verses refer to the coming Messiah.
 - (a) **Is 7:14** 14 The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
 - (2) Since the Fall, the Messianic child-son has been needed and expected.
 - (a) **Ge 3:16** 16 To the woman [Eve] [God] said, I will surely multiply your sorrow in conception. In sadness you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your man [your seed], and he shall rule over you.
- c. Jesus as the God-Man King. The Messiah's fourfold name emphasizes his:
 - (1) Wisdom (Wonderful Counselor).
 - (a) Jdg 13:19, 22; Ps 139:6; Is 25:1
 - (b) **Is 28:29** 29 This also comes from Yahweh of hosts. He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.
 - (2) Power (Mighty God).
 - (a) **Mt 28:18** 18 Jesus came and said to [the eleven], All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
 - (3) Eternal Fatherhood (Everlasting Father).
 - (a) Jesus is not God the Father; he is a "fatherly" Ruler (Martin, BKC, 1:1053). His fatherliness emphasizes his concern for the helpless, his care and discipline of the people, and their loyal, reverential respect for him (Motyer, 102).
 - (b) **2 Sa 7:16** 16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

- (4) Ability to Bring Shalom (Prince of Peace).
 - (a) **Is 32:17** 17 The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.
- d. Jesus as the Son of David.
 - (1) **Ps 89:4** 4 I will establish your seed forever and build your throne for all generations.
 - (2) **Lk 1:32-33** 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David. 33 And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.
- e. Righteousness and Justice in the Messianic Kingdom.
 - (1) **Jer 23:5** 5 I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.
- f. The Zeal of God. God is the one who corrects the situation. We do nothing.

5. God's Four-Phase Discipline of Israel—Phase One: Collective Arrogance.

- a. **Is 9:8-12** 8 The Lord (יְהוָה) has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel [the ten northern tribes]. 9 And all the people will know, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride (גִּבּוֹרָה) and in arrogance (לִבְדָּג) of heart: 10 The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones. The sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place. 11 But Yahweh raises the adversaries of Rezin against him and stirs up his enemies. 12 The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand [of discipline] is stretched out still.
- b. Isaiah's Literary Style.
 - (1) Isaiah continues to alternate between a message of judgment and hope.
 - (2) These verses are a four stanza poem. All stanzas end with the same refrain.
 - (a) **Is 5:25** 25 The anger of Yahweh was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.
 - (3) Isaiah delivers these words around 733 bc. Assyria will conquer Samaria in 722 bc.
- c. Divine Discipline. God's discipline is designed to humble us, not make us more arrogant.
- d. Pride. Pride lies at the heart of all evils.
- e. The Wrath of God. God's wrath upon man's arrogant pride is justified.

6. Phase Two: Lying Leadership.

- a. **Is 9:13-17** 13 The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of Yahweh of hosts. 14 So Yahweh cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day. 15 The elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail. 16 For those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up. 17 Therefore Yahweh does not rejoice over their young men and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows. For everyone is godless (הִנְיָר) and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand [of discipline] is stretched out still.

- b. Divine Discipline. Refusal to accept discipline welcomes heightened discipline.
- c. Lying Leadership.
 - (1) **Is 3:1-3** 1 Lord Yahweh of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah... 2 the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, 3 the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor, the skillful magician, and the expert in charms.
 - (2) “A people who will not respond to the initial judgment which falls upon them (cf. 1:5; Hos. 6:5; Amos 4:6–11) and seek from God both the diagnosis and the cure (cf. 8:19; Hos. 5:15–6:3) will shortly find their foolish rulers leading them into a situation where they will have no leadership at all” (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:254).
- d. The Sinfulness of Humanity.
 - (1) **Mic 7:2** 2 The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind. They all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net.
 - (2) **Ro 3:10-12** 10 As it is written: None is righteous, no, not one. 11 No one understands. No one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one.

7. Phase Three: Social Breakdown.

- a. **Is 9:18-21** 18 For wickedness burns like a fire. It consumes briars and thorns. It kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke. 19 Through the wrath of Yahweh of hosts the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire. No one spares another. 20 They slice meat on the right but are still hungry, and they devour on the left but are not satisfied. Each devours the flesh of his own arm. 21 Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim devours Manasseh. Together they are against Judah. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand [of discipline] is stretched out still.

8. Phase Four: Governmental Injustice

- a. **Is 10:1-4** 10:1 Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, 2 to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil and that they may make the fatherless their prey! 3 What will you do on the day of punishment, in the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth? 4 Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand [of discipline] is stretched out still.
- b. Injustice to the Vulnerable.
 - (1) **Ex 22:22** 22 You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.
 - (2) **Ex 23:6** 6 You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit.
 - (3) **Dt 24:17-18** 17 You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge, 18 but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

- (4) **Is 1:17** 17 Learn to do good. Seek justice. Correct oppression. Bring justice to the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause.
- c. Day of Accountability.
 - (1) **Hos 9:7** 7 The days of punishment have come. The days of recompense have come. Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool. The man of the spirit is mad, because of your great iniquity and great hatred.
 - (2) **Lk 19:44** 44 They will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.
- d. "So for all these offenses against God—pride, false leadership, devouring one's brothers, oppression of the poor—the divine hand is outstretched" (Oswalt, NICOT, 1:260).

Notes