

FPFWC Christian Development



God Requires Justice

December 2021

Winter Quarter

December 18, 2021

Lesson #3 – Justice and Righteousness

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Isaiah 9:2-7

ICE BREAKERS-

1. How is God's promise of the coming child an answer to His anger over our sin?
2. Why is important that we pray for those who are "still in darkness?"

Key Verse: 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.—Isaiah 9:7

LESSON BACKGROUND –

Isaiah lived and prophesied in the eighth century BC, with access to the royal court in Judah (see 2 Kings 19:1–20:19; Isaiah 37–39). Some students suggest that the book of Isaiah includes part of the official court records during his service to various kings (see 2 Chronicles 26:22; 32:32). His ministry spanned the reigns of four kings (see Isaiah 1:1; this indicates a date range of approximately 740–680 BC). Isaiah was perhaps martyred in the early years of a fifth king, the wicked Manasseh (compare Hebrews 11:37).

Isaiah 9:2–7, today's text, must be understood in the larger context of Isaiah 7–12. This section is often called The Book of Immanuel because of its focus on the promised blessing of God's presence; "God with us" is the meaning of the word *Immanuel* (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8–10; Matthew 1:23). The immediate need for that divine presence was a war that saw Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel in an alliance against Judah, the southern kingdom of divided Israel (Isaiah 7:1).

In reaction, the prophet Isaiah brought a message of hope to Judah's ungodly King Ahaz. The young and inexperienced king (2 Kings 16:2) was frightened, along with all of Judah, by the political winds (Isaiah 7:2). The prophet encouraged Ahaz to trust the Lord in this matter. Isaiah even offered Ahaz a sign from the Lord (7:11).

For some reason, Ahaz refused to ask for a sign (Isaiah 7:12). Perhaps he already had in mind an alliance with the Assyrians (2 Kings 16:7). But the Lord gave "the house of David" (represented by Ahaz) a sign anyway: a child to be known as Immanuel (Isaiah 7:13–14). Before this child could reach an age of accountability, the two threats in the north would be destroyed (7:7–9, 15). Since Ahaz had refused to ask for a sign, the sign that was nevertheless provided therefore remained a "distant" prophecy for a remnant of God's people, not to be fulfilled until Immanuel truly would come in ultimate victory.

The importance of the prophet Isaiah is seen in the fact that he is mentioned by name over 20 times in the New Testament—more than all other prophets combined.

LESSON COMMENTARY

9:1–5. Though those who refuse to live in accordance with the Word of the Lord will live in continual distress (8:22), those who were once distressed will experience comfort (v. 1). The tribes of **Zebulun** and **Naphtali** refer to the northern region of Galilee in which invading nations would have first come against Israel. These territories were seized by Tiglath-pileser in his campaign against Israel in 733 BC (cf. 2Kg 15:29). Zebulun and Naphtali may be roughly equated to **the way of the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, and Galilee of the Gentiles** (Yohanan Aharoni, *Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967], 374). The humbled lands will be glorified and their fortunes will be reversed.

Verse 2 utilizes the images of **light** and **darkness** common in Isaiah. In several instances light and darkness are used in association with judgment and deliverance or justice. Isaiah 45:7 places light and darkness in parallel with prosperity and disaster. The association of light and salvation is also available in several other passages (cf. 5:20; 13:10–11; 49:6; 51:4; 58:8). Verse 2 makes a similar association between light and darkness. Those walking in **darkness**, or judgment, **will see a great light**, or deliverance. The reference to the nation's growth and increased joy in v. 3 further suggests the connection between darkness and judgment and light and salvation. The joy of the people is compared to that experienced at the time of a great harvest, or when soldiers bring back plunder from war. God's victory over Midian served as a paradigmatic instance of God's deliverance in the past. He will crush the oppressive yoke of Israel's new enemy just as he defeated Midian (v. 4; cf. Jdg 7:19–25 and the comments on it). The blood-covered clothes will be burned in an act of dedication to God (v. 5).

9:6–7. The joys described in vv. 1–5 are grounded in the birth of a child within the Davidic line. The child's birth will bring deliverance, and the titles bestowed upon him are impressive. The first given is that of **Wonderful Counselor**. The word **Wonderful** (extraordinary to the point of being miraculous) is not meant in the colloquial usage of contemporary society. Rather it refers to the supernatural work of God. A good example is its usage in Jdg 13:15–21, wherein the angel of the Lord does a "wonderful" thing (v. 18) and ascends to heaven in the flame of Manoah's sacrifice (v. 20).

The title of **Counselor** does not carry the same sense as the modern English word, which is often associated with a therapist or social worker. Instead, the word means "one who advises, who serves as a consultant to help and lead others." The title here must be construed as denoting this child's capacity to guide the people of the nation, particularly with reference to military endeavors. Though the child's guidance of the nation would not be limited to warfare, it does suggest that his skill in making decisions for the nation exhibits a divine or miraculous character that would not be possible through simply human devices (Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*,

240). The word “wonderful” stands in epexegetical construct to “counselor,” and could be translated “a wonder of a counselor” or “a wonder-counselor.”

The second title, **Mighty God**, is repeated in Is 10:21 and applied to God Himself. Although the Hebrew word for **Mighty** can refer to a valiant warrior, this close usage to 10:21 seems to indicate a reference to deity. The word means “valiant military hero” or “champion.” Similar phrases are also used in Dt 10:17 and Jr 32:18 with reference to God. Oswalt notes, “This king will have God’s true might about him,” being so powerful so as to be able to absorb all evil and defeat it (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, 247).

The child is also called **Eternal Father**. Filial relationships, such as father and son, were emphasized in the ancient Near East. The king was generally the son in such relationships and the deity the father (John H. Walton, et al., *IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 518). Kings, however, also claimed to be the “father” of those they ruled (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 247). The notion of a human king as father of his people is not foreign to the OT. Note, for instance, 1Sm 24:12 in which David calls Saul his father. But this one is not merely the royal father of His people. The adjective **Eternal** speaks to the idea of one who is forever or eternal. He is the “Father of eternity,” indicating that He is the author or creator of time. The child born here is not to be confused with the Father in the triune Godhead. Rather, the Son of God is the creator of time, the author of eternity.

The final title given to the child is **Prince of Peace**. This child will have a reign characterized by peace. There will be no more war under this king. Instead, the child will usher in an era of rest from conflict that is noted in 2Sm 7:10–11.

Some have suggested that these titles are merely a theophoric name, a name that embeds God’s name in a human name. Hence, “Isaiah” (“The Lord saves”) is theophoric, but does not indicate that Isaiah is deity. If this is so here, then the child is not necessarily deity, but rather a royal human figure with a long name, similar to Maher-shalal-hash-baz (“Swift is the booty, fast is the prey,” Is 8:1), containing names of deity. They translate this as “A wonderful counselor is the Mighty God, the eternal Father is the Prince of Peace.”

This explanation is unlikely for three reasons. (1) The name in 8:3 is dependent on 8:1 and is not parallel syntactically to 9:6. All the words in 9:6 are substantives that do not have subjects and predicates. (2) Titles such as this one frequently reflect the nature of the person (cf. 2Sm 12:24–25; Is 1:26; Hs 1:10). (3) Frequently, the verb “call” with a name indicates the nature of the one named, either by a play on words (cf. Gn 5:29) or direct meaning (cf. Is 1:26). Hence, this usage in v. 6 indicates that the names are related to the nature of the child born. Robert Reymond is correct in stating that there is no reason, “except dogmatic prejudice,” to prohibit the conclusion that Isaiah meant nothing other than unabridged deity here (Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The OT Witness* [Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications. 1990], 51).

The child will fulfill the promise of the Davidic covenant (cf. 2Sm 7:12–16), and establish the messianic kingdom through justice and righteousness. This kingdom will not be the outworking of a king with human wisdom and power. The child will rule with the wisdom, power, and peace of God. The final statement in v. 7 notes

that the Lord will accomplish all that has been described. Isaiah again underscores that trust in the Lord is the key to receiving the promised blessing.

LESSON NUGGET – *A Child is Born. A Son is Given* – This glorious prophecy of Jesus Christ is one of the clearest scriptures to indicate the deity of Christ. What child has ever been born who could be called “Mighty God”? The Prince of Peace, who will one day rule and reign, is the Child who was born in Bethlehem of the virgin Mary. He was a Child who was born, but He was also a Son who was given. God gave His Son. He was fully God and fully man. A Child and a Son.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary.