

The Road to Jesus: The Gospel According to Isaiah
God's Kingdom Will Surpass All Earthly Kingdoms
Isaiah 9:1-12:6
October 14, 2015

INTRODUCTION:

What we know so far... Isaiah is preaching to God's people during a time when they have recently experienced material prosperity but now they are engaged in war or potential war - northern tribes of Israel have allied themselves with Syria (Damascus) against Assyria (Syro-Ephraimite War, 734-32 B. C.). Assyria is going to destroy Israel (Samaria) and come against Jerusalem. It's not going to be pretty.

The *reason* why is because of sin. Jerusalem has revolted against her Father, against her husband. She is sinful, weighed down with iniquity, evildoers, and corrupt (1:4). Forgiveness will be possible; it will be made available (1:18) but Judah was to "consent and obey" (1:19).

Idol worship is their fundamental problem. They do not know God (1:3; that is, they do not have a relationship with Him) because they are worshiping under the terebinth (oaks) false gods (1:28-31).

The new, spiritual temple is going to be established in Jerusalem to which Gentiles will join and from which the law of God will be proclaimed (2:1-3).

In this new, spiritual temple peace will abound (2:4).

Israel needs to repent of pride, abusing the poor, and trusting in man, in his gods, his business, or his military.

Israel's leaders were not guiding men back to God. Subsequently, God would provide His own leader (4:2). To *Him*, the "survivors" would listen!

Israel's problem is that they do not accept and follow the law of the Lord. They despise the word of the Holy One (5:24). That is why they are experiencing a lack of knowledge (5:13). They need a Teacher who will teach them but also give them the right *motivation* to learn and follow the Law of the Lord.

If/when Judah will be holy, it will take the God of heaven to make them holy. Their responsibility will be to open their eyes and ears and understand His expectations for them (6:9-10). We also saw in 6:13 that the "holy seed" from the stump will remain.

God is going to give a *sign* to Judah: a virgin will give birth to God-incarnate (Immanuel; 7:14). The *land* belongs to Him (8:8). *He* will not abandon it (8:10). He will separate the remnant from the unfaithful (8:14). He has the same nature as His children (8:18).

Last week, we saw Isaiah picture Judah sitting in darkness and despair, verse 22: "Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven away into darkness." In chapter 9, Isaiah says that light is coming and that light is coming in the person of a King, the Son of David.

THE RESTORATION OF THE NATION (EVEN THE NORTH) - 9:1-5:

This section concludes a focus on the nation of Judah. Beginning with chapter 13, Isaiah will turn his attention for several chapters to the Gentile nations. Here, Isaiah foresees there will be no more gloom. God had treated Zebulun and Naphtali with contempt, because of their sins

but He will make it glorious, even the way by the sea, the Galilee of the Gentiles, beyond the Jordan.

“The way of the sea” - designated an ancient highway system that ran from the Levant to Egypt, following the Mediterranean coastline. It began north of Caesarea Philippi, past Capernaum, into the Jezreel Valley past Megiddo. Zebulun and Naphtali were the first part of Israel to fall to the Assyrians in 733 B. C.

“The other side of the Jordan” - refers to the area described in the NT as the “Decapolis.” In this area, a large number of Gentiles lived, where Jesus cast out demons (Luke 8:32-33).

“Galilee of the Gentiles” - Isaiah is the only one to use this designation for this area that was composed largely of Gentiles. So, once again, we see the universal nature of Isaiah’s call for repentance unto salvation.

Those who had walked in darkness will see a great light and for those who had lived in a dark land, light will shine. Yes, this promise will be opened to all nations (cf. 2:1-4). We know this picture is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of David because Matthew tells us so (4:13ff).

God will multiply the nation of Judah and increase their gladness. Why? Because God will break the yoke of their burden and the rod of their oppressor. The immediate application of these words will apply to the Assyria nation of Isaiah’s day. But, verses 6ff will show us that they have a long-term and spiritual application. So we are safe to interpret this text in a spiritual way, with sin being the oppressor. The promise of peace here is the same promise of peace we saw back in 2:4 - it is, ultimately, a spiritual peace for all those who submit to the “Prince of peace.” If we understand the “darkness” and “light” from verses 1-2 as spiritual metaphors, then we surely ought to understand these pictures of war and peace under spiritual metaphors.

Some see in verses 4-5 an allusion to the exodus out of Egypt. Some of these words do recall that momentous event. If that is the case, then Isaiah is picturing both the overthrow of Assyria and the overthrow of sin in the same light. Coming out of sin will be the second exodus.

Verses 6-7 are especially relevant in light of what happened in chapter 7 with Ahaz. He was not a good king, not a faithful king in the mold of King David. But, one will come who will even surpass King David in ruling in righteousness and justice...~

THE MEANS OF RESTORATION: THE BIRTH AND RULE OF THE MESSIAH - 9:6-7:

Then, out of nowhere, in the words of Wayne Jackson: “The Christ bursts fully into view” (25). How will we know we have light? How will we know we have gladness and the harvest? How will we know when the yoke and the staff are broken? How will we know when we will have peace? “For” begins verse 6. In these two verses, Isaiah gives us: His birth; His role; His names; His reign of peace; His eternal rule (Smith, 239).

When the child is born. Isaiah has talked about two children and their birth - Immanuel and Maher-Shalal-hash-baz. Yet, the latter has already been born. The former is not yet born - “For unto us will be born a child, a son will be given to us.” Clearly we have pictured here the God of Israel, the God of heaven offering His only unique Son for the world. This is the Son who is “God with us,” yet with the nature of His children - flesh and blood.

This child will have the government of a nation on His shoulders. In verse 7, that nation will also be identified as a kingdom, the throne of David.

This child - "Immanuel" - will also have a series of names, which will indicate His nature. The structures of these designations suggest we take every two terms to convey one idea, as modern translations tend to translate them:

Wonderful Counselor - Isaiah had said back in 1:26 that Israel needed better counselors. Now, they will have a "Wonderful" Counselor! Not only is He "wonderful," but by His very nature, He is a "wonder." How? Well, He will be born, but He is also...

Mighty God - Yes, this child is going to be God-in-the-flesh. The deliverer will be God with us. "God is strong enough to overcome his enemies by becoming vulnerable, transparent, and humble - the only hope, in fact, for turning enmity into friendship" (Oswalt, 245). Young (337) writes that 'elohim (gods) can refer to false gods but 'El (as here) never does.

Eternal Father - That is, the Messiah will have the quality of being like a father - Psalm 103:13.

Prince of peace - We have seen pictured, as late as verse 5, enmity existing between God and Israel. How can that relationship be restored? Reconciled? Through the Prince of Peace.

His reign, His government, will have no end - neither temporally, nor spatially. It will not end at a physical border and it will not end by the overthrow of another nation. Notice the close association between this government and "peace." "Unlike other kingdoms, this one will grow through the means of peace [as opposed to war, p.h.], though the gracious working of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men and through the preaching of the gospel" (343).

Again, the throne of David and the rule of His kingdom will belong to this child, this male child. He will establish the kingdom and uphold it with justice and righteousness. Remember that Jerusalem at one time was a city of justice and righteousness (1:21). In 1:26, Isaiah had promised that Jerusalem would be a city of righteousness and so she is, under the reign of King Jesus.

This work is not accomplished by human beings - not Isaiah or Maher-shalal-hash-baz or even Ahaz's son, King Hezekiah. Isaiah says, "the zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this." "God is eager to establish this kingdom" (Beyer, 85). Because this kingdom will last "from then on and forevermore" (vs 7), we know there will not be another king after Jesus.

What a wonderful prophecy! But wait! There's more!

JUDGMENT BY OTHER NATIONS - 9:8-12:

Despite the message of God (vs 8 - Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah?), despite the mercy of God and the grace He continued to pour out on Judah, and this promise of a Wonderful Counselor, Judah just shrugged their shoulders at God's discipline and simply promised to rebuild - "we will rebuild" (vs 10). Oswalt warns: "the root cause of human problems is arrogance" (251; vs 9). "For the Lord's people everything depends on their reaction to his word" (Motyer, 103).

So, God will bring more punishment on them: Syria (from NE), Assyria (NW), Arameans, Philistines (W). God's anger will not be turned away; His hand will still be stretched out in discipline.

JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL'S LEADERS - 9:13-17:

God is going to strike the leaders, the head and the tail, the elder, honorable man, and the [false] prophet. The prophet is a tail, "they were like tails wagging at popular demand" (Motyer, 106). Why? "For those who guide this people are leading them astray; and those who

are guided by them are brought to confusion” (vs 16). God’s anger will not be turned away; His hand will still be stretched out in discipline.

JUDGMENT BY FAMINE AND NATURAL DISASTERS - 9:18-21:

God will punish Judah as a wildfire burns the prairie. The land and the people will be burned up. The nation itself will turn on itself, Ephraim versus Manasseh and both against Judah but God’s anger will not be turned away; His hand will still be stretched out in discipline.

JUDGMENT AGAINST ALL SOCIETY - 10:1-4:

God is going to punish Israel and Judah because their justice system was unjust; they took actions against the poor, the needy, the widows, and orphans. “If people refuse the rule of the word of God, they end up under unprincipled human rule” (Motyer, 107).

Then, God asks them, “When the day of devastation and destruction comes, to Whom will you flee?” “To Whom will you flee for help?” As far as God is concerned, His anger does not turn away; His hand is still stretched out. This question, writes Smith (252): “gives his listeners the opportunity to respond with sorrow, repentance, and a determination to make things right.”

“Isaiah’s point is that the fate of a people, his own and any other, is determined by their relation to the standards of God” (Oswalt, 259).

Beginning in chapter 13, Isaiah will begin a series of chapters in which he will rebuke the sins of the Gentile nations to show, among other reasons, that Judah should not put their trust in them. God is going to punish them just as much as Judah and Israel. This whole section deals with the issue of *trust!* “Before the wrath of God, status, power, and wealth mean nothing” (Oswalt, 260). When you join hands with the world, even against a common enemy, you take your hand out of the Lord’s hand. That is the issue.

JUDGMENT AGAINST ASSYRIA’S ARROGANCE - 10:5-19:

Although God has already said that Assyria will be the primary instrument of God’s wrath on Israel and Judah (7:17; this is the 6th time Isaiah has mentioned Assyria), this nation will not get by unpunished! Sin will be punished in *whoever* commits it!

Assyria is arrogant (vs 12) and expects to do to Jerusalem what she has done to other nations (vss 10-11). The villages mentioned in verse 9 start in the north and proceed southward, picturing the advancing invasion of the Assyrian army. But Assyria cannot boast against the God of heaven, which wields it as a tool in His arsenal as a woodsman wields his axe (vs 15). In verse 17, we see another reference to the light; this light will devour sin and iniquities as fire devours thorns and briars, in a single day. No, Assyria will not get by unpunished!

ISRAEL’S ULTIMATE VICTORY OVER ASSYRIA - 10:20-34:

Israel will ultimately win, through those who continue to rely on the Lord - the remnant! (1:9; 4:2). Remember, one of Isaiah’s sons, whose name was Shear-Jashub - means “a remnant will return.” Stay faithful to the Lord by relying on Him, trusting in Him, and obeying Him!

So, in verse 24, Isaiah calls on his people not to fear Assyria. God will take care of them. God is going to punish Assyria. The imagery of verses 33-34 is of God cutting Assyria down like a tree, which is ironic since Assyria was pictured as an axe in God’s hand in 10:15, “now feels an axe (cf. 10:12)” (Motyer, 116). Chapters 36-37 will give us the history of God’s work against Assyria.

THE MESSIAH HIMSELF - 11:1-5:

God plans to begin a new kingdom, a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom that would incorporate both halves of Israel as well as the Gentiles. That kingdom will be ruled by the God-made-man, pictured in passages like 7:14 and 9:6-7. Here, in this chapter, Isaiah pictures the Messiah, His person (1-5), His peace (6-10), and His people (11-16).

First, His person... Back in 6:13, God had said that He would preserve a remnant, "the holy seed is its stump." There would be a remnant faithful to God and out of that remnant would come the Savior, the Messiah. This Messiah would come from the "stem of Jesse," the father of King David. He will bear fruit (vs 1), in contrast to the nation of Israel, pictured in chapter 5, which did not bear (good) fruit.

The Hebrew word for "stem" here is *netser* which is related to the word for Nazareth (*natseret*), which may explain Matthew's meaning in 2:23. Why does Isaiah mention David's father, Jesse? It's likely because Isaiah is not picturing the coming of another son of David in the likes of Ahaz. He is picturing the coming of *David* himself. Jeremiah (30:9) and Ezekiel (34:23-24; Hosea 3:5) all use the same imagery. This is a more graphic way of portraying Jesus as the heir to the throne.

God would send His Spirit over the Messiah in a way that would give Him complete and perfect wisdom and knowledge to rule as God desired. He will rule in justice and righteousness, as we saw in 9:7. "Justice" is pictured in verse 3. "Righteousness" is pictured in verse 4. In fact, in verse 5, the Royal Messiah is pictured as being *clothed* with righteousness (as a belt) and with faithfulness.

Second, we have His peace... Just as we saw in 2:4 - "He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war."

Here, we have another picture of the peace that will come to those who submit to the rule, the government, of the Prince of Peace. Death, itself, of course is conquered, in the Messiah (1 Cor. 15:55). This will happen when "the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord," an idea reminiscent of 6:3 where Isaiah saw Jesus on His throne (see John 12:41). Observe, in the words of E. J. Young (392), "Before there can peace there must be knowledge."

In that day, in the day when the shoot from the stem of Jesse comes, the nations will flock to Him (vs 10). He will stand as a "signal" to the peoples. The Jews and Gentiles both will rally around this flag, the Messiah Himself. He gives a "glorious resting place," a rest from the burden of sin and enmity with God. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 15:12 and applies it to the gospel age. If verses 1-5 refer to the Gospel age and verse 10 refers to the Gospel age, it seems natural to apply verses 6-9 also to the Gospel Age.

Third, we have His people - 11:11-16:

Again, in that day - the day of the Messiah - God will gather together His remnant, those who have been scattered throughout the world by various empires - even from the nation of Assyria (vs 16). "...there is no mention of any supposed 'lost tribes of Israel' in Isaiah's teachings" (Smith, 276). This text pictures a unity among the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribes of Judah that had not been seen since the days of King David, and of course, being a spiritual unity, it is deeper than that under King David.

"Unity must be in the truth" (Young, 398).

THE SONG OF THANKSGIVING - 12:1-6:

What do you do when you reflect on the blessings of God? You worship. You sing. You give thanks. That is the substance of chapter 12. "If God is one's salvation [vs 2], there is need only of trusting; no need of fearing" (Young, 403). One you have praised God for His blessings and His goodness, you also turn and share that good news with the peoples and nations of the earth!

CONCLUSION:

Even in the fear of our children leaving the church and getting engulfed in our modern ungodly culture, we cannot turn loose of God's commandments, water down the gospel, loosen God's restrictions, just for the sake of our children. Trust God and obey Him. If only a remnant survives, then so be it. We must stay faithful.

"The earthly Zion may go, but the Zion of the people of God abides forever" (Young, 376).

KEY IDEA:

Israel needs a ruler who will lead them in righteousness and justice according to the ways of God. God will become flesh and reign over His kingdom, which will include all peoples (9:6-7; 11:1-5).