

Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace

Isaiah 8:1 - 9:7

Introduction:

- As was mentioned at the beginning of the Isaiah lessons, the book of Isaiah has often been called “the fifth Gospel.” People call Isaiah by this name because of its many prophecies of the Messiah. The book of Isaiah is full of prophecies concerning the miraculous birth, earthly ministry, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (as well as His Second Coming).
- There are three distinct prophecies of Jesus Christ sprinkled throughout **Isaiah 8** and **9**. In order to get the full impact of each of these prophecies, we will be looking at all the verses surrounding them, and putting them in context.
- It is important to realise, as we look at this passage, that the prophecies do not follow an unbending, straight-forward time line. Just as it is in so many other Old Testament books, the “camera lens” of prophecy jumps back and forth from near future events to far future events, and then back again. The Lord undoubtedly gave prophecy in this manner in order to confuse Satan, and keep him guessing as to His plan of redemption for mankind.
- The first and second Comings of Christ, as well other near and far future events, are all mixed together in this passage. The three prophecies of Christ, however, stand out from the other prophecies very clearly. God’s chastening of Israel for her sins is prophesied throughout the passage; yet, in the midst of these gloomy prophecies, the coming Messiah is presented as Israel’s shining Hope.

I. The coming invasions of Israel by Assyria (8:1-8)

Isaiah 8:1-8

- As we saw in the last lesson, God had informed King Ahaz of Judah that even though the kings of Northern Israel and Syria would invade the land of Judah, God would defend Judah, and would not allow her to be destroyed, or Ahaz to be removed from his throne (**Isaiah 7:1-16**). In the midst of this prophecy, God had given the house of David a “sign” concerning the coming Messiah: namely, He would be born of a virgin (**Isaiah 7:14**).
- Now, in **chapter 8**, the Lord is putting the whole land of Israel (the northern kingdom and Judah) on notice concerning *another* invasion that would soon take place. This time, the invader would be Assyria; and both houses of Israel would be afflicted by this enemy. In order to confirm to Israel that His word would come to pass, God instructed Isaiah and his wife (who also had the gift of prophecy) to name their newborn son Maher-shalal-hash-baz (**8:3**). This name means “Haste, haste to the spoil.” This name was intended to be a sign to Israel concerning the coming Assyrian invasion. This was not a *miraculous* sign, as the sign of the virgin birth of the Messiah would be. Rather, it was a teaching

sign. Isaiah was well-known to the people of Israel; so by giving his son this peculiar name, he was teaching the people that “the invasion is coming.” Every time they heard Isaiah’s son’s name mentioned, they were reminded that God was soon going to punish them because of their sin, and that it therefore behoved them to repent.

- This invasion was predicted to have two distinct phases. First, Assyria would invade Syria (“Damascus”) and Northern Israel (“Samaria”) one after the other, and greatly spoil and diminish them (**8:4**). Then, Assyria would invade “this people” (Isaiah’s own land, the nation of Judah) (**8:6-8**).
- The invasion of Syria and Northern Israel was predicted to happen before Isaiah’s son would be old enough to say “my father” or “my mother” (in other words, before he was a year old). The Lord did not say when the invasion of Judah would come; but the Scripture does seem to imply that the invasion of Judah would be only a short time after the invasion of Northern Israel. By comparing the numbers in **2 Kings 17:1, 6** and **2 Kings 18:1, 13**, we know that Assyria invaded Judah 8 years after their invasion of Northern Israel.

2 Kings 17:1-6 (Assyria’s invasion of Northern Israel came in two stages. First, they spoiled Israel, and forced King Hoshea to pay tribute; but when Hoshea was discovered to have been seeking help from Egypt, Assyria took Israel into captivity.)

2 Kings 18:13-25 / 19:14-19, 35-37 (Assyria’s invasion of Judah was terrifying, and annihilation looked certain: but God miraculously intervened, and delivered them!)

- Apparently, Judah’s rejection of their God caused them to cheer for their own enemies, Samaria and Syria (**8:6**). It may seem incomprehensible that the Jewish people would hate their own nation, and cheer for their enemies; but it is not so strange when you consider that Israel is Immanuel’s (the Messiah’s) land (**8:8**). People who hate God and the Messiah, Jesus Christ, usually also hate God’s covenant people, Israel, and despise their right to the land that God gave them. This is true even in modern times. Many secular, atheistic Jews despise Israel’s right to their land, and side with Israel’s enemies, the Palestinians, who desire to annihilate the Jews and the state of Israel!

(There is an application in this: You can’t love God without loving the things of God. If you despise the things that God loves, it is an indication that you despise God!)

II. God’s counsel to Judah: “Do not fear the confederacy between Israel and Syria” (**8:9-13**).

Isaiah 8:9-13

- The LORD had just finished warning Judah that the Assyrian invasion was coming. However, He went on to assure them that the Assyrian invaders would be “broken in pieces,” and that their counsel would not stand (**8:9-10**). In light of this fact, the LORD counsels Judah not to fear the “confederacy” (i.e., the alliance that Northern Israel and Syria were forming against them) (**8:12**). Their land was, after all, “Immanuel’s land”;

and Immanuel Himself would defend it. God’s Temple—the place of God’s special presence—was in Judah. Also, Judah was the land in which Immanuel (“God with us”) would one day be born. Despite Judah’s sin and apostasy, Immanuel would protect Judah for the simple fact that Judah is His own special land, and the tribe of Judah is His own special tribe.

Ezekiel 23:1,2,4 [The name Aholah means “Her tent”; but the name Aholibah means “My tent is in her.” Though the Northern Kingdom of Israel belonged to Jehovah, the southern kingdom of Judah was extra special to Him, because it was the place where Jehovah’s own “tent” (i.e., the Tabernacle of Temple) stood. For the sake of His own House, God allowed Judah not to be destroyed for another 130 years after the destruction of Northern Israel.]

Genesis 49:8-10

Luke 2:1-4

Hebrews 7:14

John 1:14 (The Greek word for “dwelt” literally means “tabernacled,” or “pitched His tent.” Jesus pitched the “tabernacle” of His body in the land of Judah!)

- Of course, God did not withhold His judgment on Judah forever, even though they *were* special to God, for all the reasons stated above. Their continued protection depended upon whether they would fear their God, and not fear man.

Proverbs 29:25

Psalms 20:7-8

- Fortunately for Judah, there was, by the time of Assyria’s invasion, a man on the throne of Judah who feared God. His name was Hezekiah. Though Hezekiah’s faith began to slip when he submitted himself to the king of Assyria and agreed to pay him tribute (**2 Kings 18:13-16**), he did not make the fatal mistake that another righteous king, Josiah, would make—that of seeking an alliance with Egypt (**2 Kings 23:28-30**). Instead, Hezekiah humbled himself before God, and cried out for help when the king of Assyria surrounded Jerusalem’s walls. The king of Assyria even suspected that Hezekiah had tried to make an alliance with Egypt (**2 Kings 18:21**); but Hezekiah had done no such thing. Because Hezekiah feared God instead of man, God delivered Judah.

2 Kings 19:20-22, 32-34

III. Prophecy of the Messiah: Jesus, the “Rock of offence” (8:14-15)

Isaiah 8:14-15

- Having just issued this warning not to fear man, but to fear God instead, the LORD now gives both a wonderful promise, and a fearful warning. To those who would put their trust in Him, He will be a “sanctuary” (a place of refuge and security). To those, on the other hand, who would *not* trust Him, He would be a “stone of stumbling” and a “rock of offence.” Sadly, both houses of Israel (all 12 tribes) chose, on the whole, to reject God and His counsel; and as a result, they stumbled, fell, were broken, snared, and taken. All 12 tribes ended up being taken into captivity at the hands of Assyria and Babylon.
- However, this Scripture looks far beyond the destruction of Northern Israel by Assyria (720 B.C.), and the destruction of Judah by Babylon (586 B.C.). In the New Testament, Christ and the Apostles pointed out that this Scripture is actually a prophecy concerning Israel’s ultimate rejection of their Messiah, Jesus Christ. Israel, for the most part, has chosen to reject Christ; and as a result, they have stumbled and been broken—both nationally, and spiritually.

1 Peter 2:6-8

Matthew 21:42-44

1 Corinthians 1:23

Romans 11:7-12

IV. The spiritual darkness that would descend upon Israel (8:16-9:1)

- Tragically, those of the house of Israel who chose to be Jehovah’s “disciples” were few, and in the minority (8:16-17). Consequently, the LORD was hiding His face from them (8:17). In this apostate environment, true children of God were spectacles to everyone around them. True worshippers of Jehovah were objects of scorn and ridicule. This is why Isaiah says in 8:18: *“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel.”*
- Isaiah’s children, Shear-jashub (Isaiah 7:3) and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, were already “signs” to Israel by virtue of their names. God had chosen these unusual names for them in order to instruct Israel about what lay in their future. We’ve already seen that Maher-shalal-hash-baz means “Haste, haste to the spoil.” This name instructed Israel that the Assyrian invasion was coming. The name Shear-jashub means “a remnant shall return.” This name was given to teach Israel that captivity was coming, and that only a small portion of them would return to the land after the captivity. Undoubtedly, these names, which were meant to instruct Israel, made Isaiah’s sons objects of mockery.
- However, Isaiah says in 8:18 that he himself was also a “sign” to Israel. Isaiah’s name, which means “salvation of Jehovah,” is not particularly unusual: so it was probably not his *name* that was a sign. Isaiah was a “sign” in the sense that every true follower of God is a sign. Isaiah’s walk, talk, action, and very life, were a “sign” to the unbelievers around him, because he lived his life for God. He stood out in the crowd. He drew

attention simply by living for the Lord. The Apostle Paul drives home this truth in the book of **Hebrews**, where he quotes **Isaiah 8:18**.

Hebrews 2:11-13

- Those who are God’s children, and Christ’s brethren, can expect to be “signs” in the same way that Isaiah and his sons were signs, and in the same way that the Lord Himself was a sign (**Luke 2:34**). Like our Lord, we can expect to be a sign that is “spoken against.”

1 Corinthians 4:9

- In **verses 18 and 19**, the LORD points out the folly of those who seek out wizards in order that they might obtain advice from the dead (or, rather, from wicked spirits who claim to be the spirits of the deceased). Rather than seek the living God, most of the people of Israel would rather try to talk with dead people! However, God’s warning is clear: If they would not listen to the “law and to the testimony” (God’s Word), there was “no light in them.”
- The remainder of **chapter 8** and the first verse of **chapter 9** are very sad and gloomy. Because the people of Israel would not hearken to their God, God would leave them to grope around in darkness. This darkness would be manifested in several ways:

1. Material privation (**8:21a**)

As they “passed through” the land (wandered from place to place), they would be “hardly bested” of where to find the necessities of life. They would go hungry.

2. Discontent (**8:21b**)

Because of their unpleasant conditions, they would fret, and would curse the king (the civil authorities), as well as God. This, in itself, is a mark that they did not *know* their God. Those who know God are calm and settled in spite of hardship, and will not curse God, even in the midst of trial.

Psalms 119:165

Isaiah 32:17

Job 1:20-22

3. Spiritual darkness (**8:22-9:1**)

- In **8:22**, we are told that the children of Israel would “look unto the earth” (Hebrew *eretz*, “the land”), but would see only trouble, darkness, dimness, and anguish. The “land” probably refers not to the earth in general, but to the land of Israel. From the time of the Babylonian captivity and onward, there truly was

much darkness and anguish in the land of Israel—even after the Jews had returned to the land from Babylon (starting in 535 B.C.). They were constantly under the oppression of foreign enemies—Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, the Greek-Seleucid empire, and then Rome.

- However, Isaiah is careful to point out that this “dimness” was not the kind of “dimness” that would descend upon the land when God would first begin to lightly afflict the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. (Zebulun and Naphtali were the northern-most tribes of Israel, and were the first tribes to feel the wrath of the Assyrian army as it began to invade from the north in the 730’s B.C.) In other words, the kind of darkness that God is talking about is far more than a political, social, or economic darkness. The most tragic plight of Israel was not their oppression from their enemies: rather, it was the spiritual darkness that they were in because of their rejection of their God.
- This spiritual darkness persisted from Isaiah’s day on into the time of Christ, despite brief times of revival under men like Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Joshua, Zerubbabel, Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi. Because of Israel’s disobedience, God did not even give Israel any new Scripture or oral revelation for the last 400 years before Christ’s birth. The time between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ is often called “The Four Hundred Silent Years.” Even though Israel did experience brief times of material prosperity during these years, most of the people remained spiritually dead to God, and in darkness—even though they had the Scriptures right under their noses!

V. Prophecy of the Messiah: Jesus, the “Great Light” (9:2)

Isaiah 9:1-2

- In the midst of this thick spiritual darkness, a great Light was to arise. We are told that this light would arise in the very region where the “darkness” of the Assyrian invasion had first begun to roll over the land—the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This is a specific prophecy of the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Matthew 4:12-17

- Jesus’ earthly ministry officially began at His baptism in the River Jordan, in Judea (**Matthew 3:13-17**). His baptism was followed by His initial meeting with his first disciples (**John 1:35-51**), and His forty-day fast in the wilderness (**Matthew 4:1-11**). However, it was not until after these events that Jesus’ public preaching ministry began. When His preaching ministry began, He did not begin in Jerusalem or Judea; He began in the northern-most tip of Israel, in the region of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali—the very place where Israel’s “dark days” had begun centuries earlier.
- Everywhere Jesus went, it was as though the light of the mid-day sun had suddenly appeared in its fullness from out of thick darkness. Jesus’ words are pure light, because

they proceed forth from the mouth of the omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, immutable, holy, just, gracious God (**1 John 1:5**). Jesus *is* God—the Light of the World!

Malachi 4:2 (This prophecy is in reference to Christ at His *second* Coming; but it presents Him as the “Sun of Righteousness.” Jesus was the Sun of Righteousness in His first coming; and He will be the Sun of Righteousness at His Second Coming.)

John 8:12

John 12:35-36

VI. Prophecy of the Messiah: Jesus, the “Prince of Peace” (9:3-7)

Isaiah 9:3-7

- In **9:3**, we see a striking contrast between the carnal “joy” that comes with material prosperity, and true, spiritual joy. God had “multiplied” the nation of Israel time and time again—both Northern Israel and Judah. He had increased their numbers at astonishing rates, and had even caused their gestation time in the womb to speed up, in order to protect their children from those who would kill them as soon as they were born (**Exodus 1:15-20**). He had given them great material prosperity, and had expanded their borders, even in times of great apostasy, when God *should* have punished them (**2 Kings 14:23-27**). Yet, despite all this outward prosperity, God had *not* increased their joy. Their “joy” was merely the kind of joy that a conquering nation has when it has taken a spoil. It was not the kind of joy that comes from a relationship with God. This is the kind of Joy that Christ came to earth to offer us.

John 15:10-11

Galatians 5:22

1 Peter 1:7-9

- In **9:4**, the scene suddenly jumps forward in history from Christ’s First Coming to His Second Coming. When Christ returns to earth at the end of the Tribulation, He will break Israel free from the “yoke,” “staff,” and “rod” of their oppressor. At this point, Israel’s “oppressor” will be their largest and most ominous oppressor in history. Literally every nation will be gathered together as one against Jerusalem and Israel, under the leading of the Antichrist, with the intention of annihilating her. Just when it appears that Israel will be utterly destroyed, the Messiah will descend to earth, and will destroy these armies. It will be a supernatural victory, not unlike God’s deliverance of Israel from Midian. (In that battle, God used a mere 300 Israelite men to utterly annihilate the Midianite army, which consisted of tens of thousands of men!)

Judges 7:7, 12, 20-22, 25

Zechariah 14:1-3

Revelation 19:11-16

- When the Messiah returns to earth at the Battle of Armageddon, He will have no need of the conventional human means of warfare. The “confused noise” that comes with conventional weapons of warfare will be unknown in the Kingdom that Christ will set up, because such weapons will no longer be used (**Isaiah 2:4**). The “garments” (uniforms) that governments have always issued to soldiers will also be obsolete in Christ’s Kingdom, and will be used for fuel. In other words, there will be no war in Christ’s 1,000-year Kingdom. Perfect peace will prevail on earth. Any rebellion that may begin to arise will be put down immediately, and without need of weapons of warfare. The “weapon” that Christ will use to put down His enemies will be the “rod” of His mouth (i.e., His bare word)!

Isaiah 11:4

Revelation 19:15

- This brings us to one of the most famous prophecies of the Messiah in the Bible. In **Isaiah 9:6**, the LORD reveals to Israel that their hope of deliverance is all wrapped up in a divine Child. The Messiah would not simply appear from out of nowhere: He would be born into the human family as a Babe. Yet, He would not be any ordinary human son. He will govern the Kingdom that Jehovah promised to Israel.

Side Note: In Scripture, the shoulder is often a symbol of governance. In the Tabernacle, the high priest wore two onyx shoulder plates with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel engraved on them (**Exodus 28:9-12**). This is a picture of Christ, the High Priest of Israel, who will one day carry the governance both of Israel and the entire world upon His mighty shoulder.

- Jesus is called by five powerful names:

1. “Wonderful”

The Hebrew word for “wonderful” (*peleh*) could also be translated as “miracle.” Jesus’ birth was a miracle; and His earthly ministry was filled with more miracles than could possibly be recorded in any book (**John 20:30; John 21:25**). He is full of miracles, because He is the *God* of miracles.

2. “Counsellor”

No one can give counsel like Jesus Christ, because He is God. The full wisdom of the Holy Spirit rests upon Him. Those who are wise will heed His counsel!

Isaiah 11:2

Revelation 3:18

3. “Mighty God”

This name “Mighty God” (Hebrew *El Gibbor*) is a powerful one. It proves, as countless other Scriptures do, that Jesus is none less than Jehovah in human flesh. Incredibly, cults such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses look at this verse and still deny that Jesus is God. Their argument is that Jesus is “a mighty God,” but not Almighty God. They try to make it appear as though “mighty God” is a name for Jesus, but that “Almighty God” is used only for Jehovah (who, according to them, is not equal with Jesus).

This foolish argument is easy to shattered, since Jehovah Himself is clearly called by this same name, Mighty God, in other passages. The Messiah is the Mighty God; and Jehovah is the Mighty God. This means that the Messiah is Jehovah.

Isaiah 10:20-21

Jeremiah 32:17-18

*The Jehovah’s Witness argument that Jesus is some kind of “lesser god” is also easily shattered by verses such as **Isaiah 44:6, 44:8, and 45:5**, in which we are told repeatedly that there is no other God than Jehovah.

4. “The everlasting Father”

At first glance, this name for Jesus may seem confusing. We know from Scripture that the Son is equal with the Father, yet distinct from Him. The name “Son” is used for Jesus more than 200 times in the New Testament; but never is the name “Father” applied to Him.

Why, then, is Jesus called “The Everlasting Father”? Well, the Hebrew word *ab-ad* literally means “Father of eternity.” In the Hebrew and Arabic languages, the idiom “Father of” often means “Possessor of.” It indicates ownership. Someone who possesses something is called the “father” of that thing.

Thus, Jesus is the “Father of Eternity” because He is eternal. He is the owner of eternity!

5. “The Prince of Peace”

When the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, they chanted the words “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (**Luke 2:8-14**). In our present age, political peace, and peace among men, is scarcely known on earth. In fact, Jesus promised that in this present age, He has not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword. His truth divides men, and excites hatred in those who refuse to submit to Him.

Matthew 10:34-36

In 1863 (during the dark days of the American Civil War), an American poet named Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote a poem entitled “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” In one of the stanzas he laments, “Then in despair I bowed my head; ‘There is no peace on earth, I said’: for hate is strong, and mocks the song of ‘peace on earth, good will to men.’”

This is the way the lost world views God’s promise of “peace on earth.” They look around them and see war and hatred; and therefore, they view the promise of **Luke 2:14** as a lie. However, they fail to understand the Scripture. Peace on earth will not prevail until Christ returns to earth for the second time. When Christ returns to earth to set up His Kingdom, there *will* be peace all over the earth.

However, the meaning of “peace” goes far deeper than outward, political peace, or peace between individuals. *Real* peace is peace between the soul and God. On account of our sin nature, our souls are, in their natural condition, cut off from God, and at war with Him. But when Christ saves a man by His grace, the enmity is removed, and that person is now at peace with God. Furthermore, the believer is now able to experience *practical* peace (not merely positional peace) in his heart. Only Christ, through His sacrificial death for our sins, and His resurrection, can accomplish this in a person’s heart.

Romans 5:1

Ephesians 2:11-18

Colossians 1:20

Colossians 3:15

Jesus truly is the Prince of Peace!

- In **9:7**, the ancient promise that the Messiah would be the descendant of David, and would sit upon his throne, is once again stated. (See **2 Samuel 7:13-16**.) Interestingly, we are told that “*of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.*” The thousand-year reign of Christ *will* come to an end; but Christ’s government will *never* come to an end, because the thousand year Kingdom will simply roll over into the Eternal Kingdom, in which the city of heaven will be brought down to a new earth, in which there will be no curse.

Daniel 2:44

Isaiah 66:22-23

Revelation 20:4-6 / 21:1-3

Conclusion: The prophecies of the Messiah in **Isaiah 8:1 - 9:7** are beautiful. At the beginning of the passage, we are told that both houses of Israel will face great oppression from her enemies because of her sin. We are told that the Messiah Himself will be rejected by Israel. We are told that Israel, because of her rebellion, will be in great darkness. Yet, we are told that a Great Light (the Messiah) will arise to illumine those who were in darkness. Then, we are fast-forwarded to the end times, when the Messiah will destroy Israel's enemies. The whole passage is capped off with the presentation of the Divine Man Child, Jesus Christ, as "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace."