

Isaiah 9:1-10:4 Handout

Where Isaiah 8 was about darkness and rejection, chapter 9 is about light and hope. It takes us from instant circumstances to a bigger, more lasting perspective. In the last chapter, we saw the immediate threat of Assyria and how spiritually blind God's people were. This week we are going to read a more hopeful vision of God's ultimate victory and the coming Messiah. The judgment of chapter 8 provides the background for the glorious promises of chapter 9.

Verse 1

Verse 1 acts as a bridge between the end of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9.

Chapter 8 ended with, **“21 Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. 22 Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.”**

We see in verse 1 that the darkness won't last forever.

Many understand this verse as a prophecy anticipating the coming of the Messiah, who will bring hope and salvation to those in darkness.

A couple of specific geographical locations are mentioned. Zebulun and Naphtali were located to the north and suffered the most from Assyria.

The phrase 'Galilee of the nations' could also be read something like 'the circuit or region or district of the Gentiles'. This name came about because this northeastern part of Israel was the gateway through which the Gentiles entered the land. They came either as traders or invaders. This same region that was covered in darkness would one day be honored, hinting at the restoration to come.

Verse 2

What have the people walking in darkness seen? _____

Matthew 4:12-17 quotes this passage and sees it fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus.

Most of Jesus' ministry took place in this northern area of Israel.

“12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— 14 to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

**15 “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—**

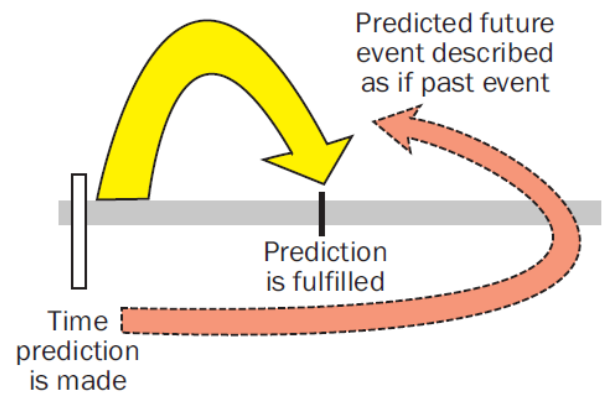
**16 the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”**

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Going back to verse 2, notice the tenses in this verse with 'have seen' and has dawned'. In the Hebrew text these are both in the perfect tense and here in this verse is referred to as "prophetic perfect".

What this means is that Isaiah is describing future events, but the fulfillment of those events is so certain that they are written as though they have already happened. That is how certain God's promises are!

II Corinthians 4:6 says, *"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ."*



This light was the glory of God in the face of Christ. Jesus started His ministry in the dark region of Galilee. In John 8:12 Jesus calls Himself the 'light of the world'. He performed His first miracle in Cana of Galilee by changing water into wine. From there Jesus performed many miracles in the region of Galilee (Matthew 4:23-25) where He radiated light in Satan's dark domain.

Verse 3-5

What will God do to the nation? _____

What will He do to their joy? _____

Jesus' ministry would bring gladness and joy to Israel. They will rejoice like people rejoicing at a harvest or warriors enjoying their plunder.

It will be like the day of Midian's defeat when God gave Gideon and his army of 300 men victory over the massive Midianite army. They ended up turning on themselves and imploding, destroying each other. This comparison shows that what Isaiah sees will be God ordained and against all odds.

In the same way, the death and resurrection of Jesus has defeated Satan's yoke of sin and death. Satan turned his weapon of death onto Jesus. By killing Him, he destroyed his own kingdom.

Verse 6

We see here that the one who is going to bring victory is revealed to be a child. Then we see a mingling of this child's humanity and divinity in perfect balance. The humanity of the Savior is seen in the first two sentences: *"for to us a child is born, to us a son is given"*. He is coming for us, to benefit us. He will be the answer to the pursuit of the perfect and lasting government. His shoulders unlike any other will not buckle under the weight. They will be able to bear it.

We get four pairs of two words linked together mixing both the supernatural and natural, God and man.

- Wonderful Counselor
 - The word wonderful speaks to the ability to work supernatural signs.
 - Counselor means to advise, give counsel, guide.
 - The name then can mean either 'a supernatural counselor' or 'one giving supernatural counsel'.
 - This ruler's counsel would transcend mere human wisdom. He will perfectly guide His people.
- Mighty God
 - Mighty is to be strong, accomplished, excel, prevail; it comes from the root word that is most often associated with warfare and has the vitality of a successful warrior.
 - It could be said, 'God is a warrior' or 'God is mighty' - it speaks of God's military might that no enemy will be able to prevail against.
 - He is not just a man, but is divine.
 - This name shows the infinite power of Jesus. He has complete, unlimited power and authority.
- Everlasting Father
 - The 'Father of eternity' - forever, always, continual, without end (or beginning)
 - He will care for His people with compassion and protection. He will forever guard them and supply all their needs.
- Prince of Peace
 - Prince means a leader, commander, captain, chief, ruler
 - Peace (shalom) means to be safe, sound, healthy, perfect, complete. It signifies a sense of well-being and harmony inside and out.
 - He will be the one to establish true, lasting peace.
 - Jesus gives eternal peace with God through His death on the cross.

Verse 7

This verse shows us the nature of His perfect kingdom. There will be no end to the greatness (increase) of his government and of peace.

The Hebrew word translated 'increase' used in some translations here gives the picture of ever-growing abundance or of multiplication. In other words, Christ's kingdom will be characterized by its never-ending multiplying of its prosperity. Some see this as meaning that we will never stop increasing in our love for God and our passionate worship of Him.

Think about that for a minute - when the Messiah's rule spreads, so does peace. No one will be able to oppose His authority or undermine His government or destroy His peace.

Whose throne will He reign on? _____

This is a direct fulfillment of the promise made to David long ago.

Jesus will establish and sustain His kingdom with justice and righteousness, making it a perfect reflection of His own character.

Hebrews 1:8-9 says, *"But about the Son he says,*

"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

Verse 8 starts a new section that is addressing the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This will continue on into chapter 10 and is divided into four subsections. Each section ends with the same refrain.

The Pride of Ephraim

Verses 8-12

The names used here: Jacob, Israel, Ephraim and Samaria all signify the northern kingdom. God had been warning Israel repeatedly through the prophets to turn back to Him, but they would not listen. They continued in their pride and self-security. Now consequences will be coming and no one will have an excuse. When judgment comes, and it will, everyone will understand that it is coming from the Lord.

Verse 10 says, 'the bricks have fallen down'. **But what do they say they will do? _____** even better. It's as if they are saying 'who cares if God judges us, because we will just rebuild with something better!' The people are so deceived by their sinful pride that they think they can come against the hand of God being stretched out against them. How wrong they will be!

In verses 11-12 we see that judgment has already started with Aram from the east and the Philistines from the west devastating Israel. Instead of turning to God and repenting, they are saying that they can rebuild whatever has been destroyed even better than it was before.

What does verse 12 say about God's anger? _____

His hand is still upraised. There is still more to come. In verse 11 when it says the Lord has strengthened Rezin's foes, He is talking about the Assyrians. God's hand is still poised to strike and it will come with the evasion of the Assyrians.

The Corruption of Ephraim's Leaders

Verses 13-17

Each episode of judgment was followed by Israel's refusal to return to the Lord. Because of this, the Lord will cut off the head and the tail of Israel.

Who is the head? _____

Who is the tail? _____

These leaders were leading the people astray.

Does anything strike you as off about the first part of verse 17?

This is the opposite of what the Lord usually says, isn't it? Scripture repeatedly describes the orphans and widows as the object of God's care. Here we see that God doesn't take pleasure in or have pity on even these people in their society. The decay has spread so far that it has infected the entire society from top to bottom.

Verse 17 ends with the same refrain as verse 12: *"Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised."* God is not done with His judgment.

The Selfishness of Everyone

Verses 18-21

What is their wickedness compared to? _____

The fire of their wickedness would inevitably bring the fire of God's wrath.

What will be the fuel for this fire? _____

Everyone was so consumed with themselves that they had no compassion for one another. When conditions deteriorate to this level, survival of self becomes all that one can think about.

Some interpret the part that says, "each will feed on the flesh of their own offspring" as being figurative while others suggest a literal meaning.

Deuteronomy 28:54-55 (warned about curses for disobedience)

54 "Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, 55 and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating. It will be all he has left because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of all your cities."

The beginning of verse 21 describes civil war between the two main tribes of the Northern Kingdom. This section again ends with the same refrain we've heard two times already: *"Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised."* Judgment is not done yet.

The Oppression of the Helpless

10:1-4

Isaiah directed this last section against the unjust authorities and judges of Israel whose sin was oppression and injustice. Israel's leaders were abusing their positions to deprive those in need of their rights and to take what little they had.

Verse 3 gives some rhetorical questions. What will they do? Who will you run to for help? Where will you leave your riches? The point in this verse is that they will have nowhere to go and no one to protect them from the coming judgment of God.

Verse 4 tells us the people of Israel will basically have two choices: be taken captive by foreign invaders or be killed by them. The verse ends again with the same refrain that we have heard three times before: *"Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised."*

Isaiah 9 proclaims that God's answer to darkness, oppression, and war is the birth of a divine King—Jesus Christ—whose eternal kingdom brings light, joy, freedom, peace, justice, and hope.

Some takeaways from this chapter:

- ❖ Darkness will not have the final word (vs.1-2)
 - Even when it seems like all is lost, God's light breaks through the deepest darkness. Hope is never lost when God is at work.
- ❖ God turns mourning into joy (vs.3-5)
 - God not only takes away our burdens, but replaces them with joy and freedom.
- ❖ The promise of the coming king (vs.6-7)
 - God's ultimate answer to the darkness is a person and His name is Jesus.
- ❖ Judgment on pride and injustice (vs.8-21)
 - When people don't take God's correction, but instead respond with stubborn pride, they bring ruin upon themselves.
 - God holds nations accountable for injustice and arrogance.

Four times in this study (9:12, 9:17, 9:21 and 10:4) Isaiah repeats the phrase, *"Yet for all this, His anger has not turned away. His hand is still stretched out."*

What does this teach about the seriousness of ongoing sin?

How can we live humbly and dependently on God instead of confidently in ourselves?

Prayer:

"Lord, thank You for sending the true Light into our darkness—Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Forgive us for the times we've trusted in our own strength or walked in pride.

Fill our hearts with Your peace and help us to reflect Your light in our homes, our community, and our world.

May Your kingdom come and Your will be done through us.

In Jesus' name, Amen."