

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 6: Unto Us a Child Is Born -- Isaiah 9:1–10:34

The last chapter ended in thick darkness, with distressed and hungry people wandering in gloom, cursing and looking upward and finding no light. And then, like the sun cresting a black horizon, the next words break in: “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” (9:2). Isaiah does not slowly fade the lights up. He throws open the shutters all at once. The darkness has not won. A great light is dawning.

Where does this light dawn first? “In the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations” (9:1). Galilee, the despised northern region overrun by Assyria, the place good people did not expect anything good to come from. Centuries later Matthew stood in that very region, watched Jesus begin His ministry there, and wrote: this is what Isaiah meant; here is the great light (Matthew 4:14–16). The light dawned exactly where the prophet said it would.

Then comes the reason for all the joy, in words the church has sung for two thousand years: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6). A child carries a government on His shoulder. And the names are not the names of any mere child. “Mighty God.” “Everlasting Father.” This is the promise of a divine King, and the New Testament tells us plainly who He is: Jesus, the Son of David, now reigning at God’s right hand (Luke 1:32–33; Acts 2:29–36).

Of His kingdom “there will be no end,” Isaiah says, established “on the throne of David” forever. We will see that this is not a promise of a future earthly political kingdom in a rebuilt Jerusalem, but the present, unending reign of Christ from heaven over His spiritual kingdom, the church. The same chapters also bring sober judgment, on proud Assyria, the rod God used and then broke, and a word of hope that a remnant will return. But it all begins with a child, and a light, and a government of peace that will never end. Let us go to the manger and the throne together.

Group Discussion: Isaiah said the great light would dawn first in Galilee (9:1–2), the despised, overrun, last-place-anyone-would-look region, and Matthew 4:14–16 says it did, in Jesus. Why do you think God so often begins His greatest works in the places and people the world has written off? Where have you seen Him do that?

Personal Reflection: One of the child’s names is “Prince of Peace” (9:6), and of His government and peace “there will be no end.” Where in your own heart is there a lack of peace right now, and what would it look like this week to let the reigning Prince of Peace actually rule that part of your life?

Read Isaiah 9:1–10:34

Study Questions

1. Isaiah 9:1–2 promises that “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” and that it would dawn in Galilee. Matthew 4:14–16 says this was fulfilled when Jesus began His ministry in Galilee. What does this teach us about Jesus as the light that breaks into spiritual darkness, and about how carefully God fulfills His word? Support your answer from both passages.
2. Isaiah describes people “who walked in darkness” before the light came. Think about your own life before you truly knew Christ, or an area still in shadow now. What does it look like, practically, to walk in His light rather than in darkness (cf. 1 John 1:7)?
3. Isaiah 9:6 gives the promised child four names: “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” What does each title reveal about the deity and the saving reign of Jesus Christ, and why is it significant that a child to be born is called “Mighty God”? Support your answer from the verse.
4. Of the four names, “Wonderful Counselor,” “Mighty God,” “Everlasting Father,” “Prince of Peace,” which one do you most need to lean on in your current season, and why? How would trusting Jesus as that to you change how you are living right now?
5. Isaiah 9:7 says of this child, “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David... from this time forth and forevermore.” Luke 1:32–33 and Acts 2:29–36 tell us Jesus now reigns on David’s throne at God’s right hand. Explain how this is fulfilled in Christ’s present reign over His spiritual kingdom, the church, and why it is NOT a promise of a future earthly political kingdom or a thousand-year reign in a rebuilt Jerusalem. Support your answer from these texts.

6. Isaiah says the zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this everlasting kingdom; it does not depend on us. How does it steady you to know that Christ is already reigning now, today, over all things for His church (Ephesians 1:20–22)? Name one worry it should shrink.
7. In Isaiah 10:5–19 the LORD calls Assyria “the rod of my anger,” using a proud pagan empire to discipline His people, yet He promises to punish Assyria’s arrogance because it boasted as though its power were its own. What does this teach us about God’s sovereignty over the nations and about the sin of pride that takes credit for what God alone enables? Support your answer from the text.
8. Assyria’s downfall was its pride: “Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it?” (10:15). Where are you tempted to take credit for, or boast in, abilities, successes, or blessings that are actually gifts from God? What would genuine humility look like there?
9. Isaiah 10:20–23 promises that “a remnant will return,” and Paul quotes this in Romans 9:27–28 to describe those of Israel who would be saved through faith in Christ. Taken together with 9:6–7, explain how the everlasting kingdom of the promised child and the saving of a faithful remnant are fulfilled in Christ and His church, the true spiritual Israel (Romans 9:6–8; Galatians 6:16), rather than in national, political Israel. Why does this matter for how we read these promises?
10. The child of Isaiah 9:6 is called “Prince of Peace,” and He reigns now. Having seen the light that dawned, the names of the King, and His unending kingdom, name one specific way you will let King Jesus, the reigning Prince of Peace, form and rule your life this week.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 4:12–17, Matthew declares Isaiah 9:1–2 fulfilled as Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee, the great light dawning; Luke 1:30–33, Gabriel tells Mary her son will reign on the throne of David over a kingdom with no end; Acts 2:29–36, Peter declares the risen Christ now enthroned on David’s throne at God’s right hand; Romans 9:27–33, Paul applies Isaiah’s remnant and stumbling-stone promises to those saved by faith in Christ; Ephesians 1:20–23, Christ is seated far above all rule and authority, head over all things for the church

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