

Justice and Righteousness

Isaiah 9:2-7

SS Lesson for 12/19/2021

Devotional Scripture: 2 Sam 7:12-16

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Isaiah 9:7

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

JUSTICE THROUGH THE COMING KING (ISA 9:2-5)

Justice through the light (2)

The light that came to make God known (John 1:18)

The light that reveals God to those He chooses (Luke 10:22)

The light that came to make known eternal life (John 17:3)

The light that came down from heaven (Luke 1:78-79)

The light that came for revelation (Luke 2:29-32)

The light that came for the Gentiles (Acts 26:22-23)

Justice through joy (3)

Joy expressed in praise and song (Ps 33:1-3)

Joy expressed in our soul (Isa 61:10)

Joy expressed in spite of circumstances (Hab 3:17-19)

Joy expressed because the Bible tells us to do so (Phil 4:4)

Joy expressed because we believe and love God (1 Peter 1:8)

Justice through deliverance (4-5)

Deliverance from Satan (Matt 6:13)

Deliverance from deadly perils (2 Cor 1:10)

Deliverance from troubles (Ps 34:19)

Deliverance from trials (2 Peter 2:9)

Deliverance from temptations by providing a way out (1 Cor 10:13)

RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH THE COMING CHILD (ISA 9:6-7)

Righteousness through the Child's name (6)

Blessed is the person who comes in the name of the Lord (Matt 21:9)

It is belief in Jesus' Name that cancels condemnation (John 3:18)

There is power present when gathered in the Name of Jesus (1 Cor 5:4)

Justification comes through the Name of Jesus (1 Cor 6:11)

There should always be thanksgiving in the Name of Jesus (Eph 5:20)

Do all things in the Name of Jesus (Col 3:17)

We are commanded to believe in the Name of Jesus (1 John 3:23)

Righteousness through the Child's government (7)

A government where Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18)

A government that was prophesied (Rom 15:12)

A government that was given sovereign power (Dan 7:14)

A government that God appointed Jesus Lord (Acts 2:36)

A government that can never be destroyed (Dan 2:44)

A government that is an inheritance (Col 1:11-14)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM ALLEN ROSS

I. Peace will come with the dawn of the Messianic Age (9:1-5).

A. The change in circumstances will end the despair (1,2).

B. The Messiah brings joy and prosperity (3).

C. Joy comes through the cessation of war (4, 5).

II. Peace will finally come with the righteous reign of the Messiah (9:6,7).

A. The LORD will bring about the advent of the Messiah (6a).

B. The Messiah will be a Wonder King (6b).

C. Messiah will reign in righteousness (7).

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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.

Key Verse: Isaiah 9:7

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

In these verses Isaiah spoke of the coming Deliverer who will effect the changes in the nation of which the prophet had been speaking. The Messiah’s coming will lead the nation into joy and prosperity, which had been lacking for years. His coming will fulfill the promises to Abraham and David about the prosperous kingdom. The “child” motif again is evident (v. 6; cf. 7:14-16; 8:1-4, 18). The Child will grow up to be the Deliverer (9:7), not a *sign* (8:18) of deliverance but the Deliverer Himself. He will effect the changes necessary for prosperity and spirituality to come to the nation.

9:1. A time will come when **gloom** and darkness (8:22) will be a thing of **the past**. The gloom on the northern section of Israel came because of discipline. God **humbled... Zebulun and... Naphtali** for a while. Though Isaiah was probably using these two tribal names to represent the Northern Kingdom, it is striking that Jesus’ upbringing and early ministry was mostly in that very area near the Sea of Galilee. His presence certainly “honored” that area. In 732 B.C. this northern portion of Israel became an Assyrian province under Tiglath-Pileser III, thus humbling the people there and putting them in gloom. Under Gentile domination, that area was called **Galilee of the Gentiles**. **The way of the sea** describes a major international highway running through this region. This is the only place where the Bible used this phrase, but it appears often in Assyrian and Egyptian records. The invading Assyrian soldiers took that route when they invaded the Northern Kingdom. From that area the Messiah will arise and will wipe away the gloom and darkness brought on by Gentile domination.

9:2. With typical Hebrew parallelism the prophet described the effect of the Messiah on this northern part of Israel. **The people** were **in darkness** (cf. 8:22) and **in the shadow of death**. Then they saw **a great light** and **light... dawned** on them. Matthew applied this passage to Jesus, who began His preaching and healing ministry in that region (Matt. 4:15-16).

9:3-5. **You** probably refers to God the Father, who will lead the people from spiritual darkness into light (v. 2) by sending the Child (v. 6), the Messiah. The light will increase **their joy** like the joy at harvesttime or the joy of winning a battle and **dividing the plunder**. “Joy” is another emphasis of Isaiah’s, mentioned more than two dozen times in the book. This will be a supernatural work of God much like the nation’s deliverance when Gideon defeated Midian (Judges 7:1-24; Isa. 10:26). It will be like taking a burden off one’s back (9:4). At that time, after the Child-Messiah will come, the implements of warfare will be destroyed (v. 5) because in His reign of universal peace implements of war will not be needed (cf. 2:4).

9:6-7. Here Isaiah recorded five things about the coming Messiah.

1. He was to be born **a Child**. The implication, given in parallel style, is that this Child, **a Son**, was to be born into the nation of Israel (**to us**) as one of the covenant people.

2. He will rule over God’s people (cf. Micah 5:2) and the world (Zech. 14:9). **The government will be on His shoulders** figuratively refers to the kingly robe to be worn by the Messiah. As King, He will be responsible to govern the nation. In Isaiah’s day Judah’s leaders were incompetent in governing the people. But the Messiah will govern properly.

3. He will have four descriptive names that will reveal His character. He will be the nation’s **Wonderful** (this could be trans. “exceptional” or “distinguished”) **Counselor**, and the people will gladly listen to Him as the authoritative One. In the kingdom many people will be anxious to hear the Messiah teach God’s ways (2:3). He is also the **Mighty God** (cf. 10:21). Some have suggested that this simply means “a godlike person” or hero. But Isaiah meant more than that, for he had already spoken of the Messiah doing what no other person had been able to do (e.g., 9:2-5). Isaiah understood that the Messiah was to be God in some sense of the term. This Deliverer will also be called the **Everlasting Father**. Many people are puzzled by this title because the Messiah, God’s Son, is distinguished in the Trinity from God the Father. How can the Son be the Father? Several things must be noted in this regard. First, the Messiah, being the second Person of the Trinity, is in His essence, God. Therefore He has all the attributes of God including eternity. Since God is One (even though He exists in three Persons), the Messiah is God. Second, the title “Everlasting Father” is an idiom used to describe the Messiah’s relationship to time, not His relationship to the other Members of the Trinity. He is said to be everlasting, just as God (the Father) is called “the Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:9). The Messiah will be a “fatherly” Ruler. Third, perhaps Isaiah had in mind the promise to David (2 Sam. 7:16) about the “foreverness” of the kingdom which God promised would come through David’s line. The Messiah, a Descendant of David, will fulfill this promise for which the nation had been waiting. The Messiah is also called the **Prince of Peace**, the One who will bring in and maintain the time of millennial peace when the nation will be properly related to the Lord. Together, these four titles give a beautiful picture of the coming Messiah’s character (Isa. 9:6 includes the first of Isaiah’s 25 references to peace.)

4. The Messiah, seated **on David’s throne** (Luke 1:32-33), will have an eternal rule of **peace and justice**. His rule will have **no end**; it will go on **forever** (cf. Dan. 7:14, 27; Micah 4:7; Luke 1:33; Rev. 11:15). Following the kingdom on earth, He will rule for eternity. He will maintain **righteousness** (cf. Jer. 23:5), as His rule will conform to God’s holy character and demands.

5. This will all be accomplished by **the zeal of the LORD Almighty**. The coming of the millennial **kingdom** depends on God, not Israel. The Messiah will rule because God promised it and will zealously see that the kingdom comes. Without His sovereign intervention there would be no kingdom for Israel. Apparently Isaiah assumed that the messianic Child, Jesus Christ, would establish His reign in one Advent, that when the Child grew up He would rule in triumph. Like the other prophets, Isaiah was not aware of the great time gap between Messiah’s *two* Advents (cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12; and see Isa. 61:1-2).

After giving a glorious description of the coming Messiah, who will usher in the kingdom for the nation and whose reign will last forever, Isaiah focused on the nation in his day. Some have questioned why Isaiah placed these verses here. But, characteristic of this great prophetic writer, he alternated the message of judgment with the message of blessing. In contrast with the Messiah’s future reign of justice and righteousness (9:6-7; 11:4; 16:5; 28:6, 17; 32:16; 33:5; 42:1, 3-4; 51:5), the nation in Isaiah’s day was ruled by leaders who did not care about the people under them (cf. 5:7).

9:8. Though Isaiah was writing to the nation of Judah he often used the Northern Kingdom of **Israel** (also called **Jacob**) as an example of the fact that God judges His sinful people. The **message** was one of coming judgment on the North. When these words were written, the Northern Kingdom was already in some disrepair (v. 10a). The coming **fall** of Israel (in 722 B.C.) should have warned Judah that God is active in

the affairs of His people. Judah should have realized that she too would be destroyed if she persisted in the activities that characterized the North.

9:9-12. The coming judgment on Israel would be widely known, but it would not be enough to turn her back to God. **Ephraim**, one of Israel's largest tribes, often represented the entire Northern Kingdom (cf. 7:2, 17). **Samaria** was the Northern Kingdom's capital city. Apparently Israel's inhabitants felt that they would experience only a temporary setback (**the bricks have fallen**) and in proud confidence thought they could **rebuild**. In fact they felt that they would be able to make their nation better than ever. But this was not to be the case. They were going to be squeezed by **Rezin's foes** (Rezin was the king of Aram, 7:1, an ally of Israel). Those foes were **from the east** (other **Arameans**; Rezin was king of part of Aram) **and Philistines from the west** (cf. 2:6). This was the Lord's doing. But even this judgment did not appease God's wrath because the people continued to refuse to deal with their sin. So God would continue to chasten them. This section (9:8-12) ends with a refrain which is repeated three more times in the following verses: **Yet for all this His anger is not turned away, His hand is still upraised** (vv. 12, 17, 21; 10:4). This repetition heightens the effect of God's intense anger and underscores the certainty of continued judgment.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Justice through the Coming King (Isa 9:2-5)

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

3 You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; They rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

4 For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

5 For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning and fuel of fire.

Justice through the light (2)

The light that came to make God known (John 1:18)

18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

The light that reveals God to those He chooses (Luke 10:22)

22 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

The light that came to make known eternal life (John 17:3)

3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

The light that came down from heaven (Luke 1:78-79)

78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.

The light that came for revelation (Luke 2:29-32)

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

The light that came for the Gentiles (Acts 26:22-23)

22 But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— 23 that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

Justice through joy (3)

Joy expressed in praise and song (Ps 33:1-3)

1 Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. 2 Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. 3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

Joy expressed in our soul (Isa 61:10)

10 I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Joy expressed in spite of circumstances (Hab 3:17-19)

17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. 19 The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

Joy expressed because the Bible tells us to do so (Phil 4:4)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Joy expressed because we believe and love God (1 Peter 1:8)

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

Justice through deliverance (4-5)

Deliverance from Satan (Matt 6:13)

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Deliverance from deadly perils (2 Cor 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

Deliverance from troubles (Ps 34:19)

19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

Deliverance from trials (2 Peter 2:9)

9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Deliverance from temptations by providing a way out (1 Cor 10:13)

13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Righteousness through the Coming Child (Isa 9:6-7)

6 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Righteousness through the Child's name (6)

Blessed is the person who comes in the name of the Lord (Matt 21:9)

9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

It is belief in Jesus' Name that cancels condemnation (John 3:18)

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

There is power present when gathered in the Name of Jesus (1 Cor 5:4)

4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,

Justification comes through the Name of Jesus (1 Cor 6:11)

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

There should always be thanksgiving in the Name of Jesus (Eph 5:20)

20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Do all things in the Name of Jesus (Col 3:17)

17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

We are commanded to believe in the Name of Jesus (1 John 3:23)

23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

Righteousness through the Child's government (7)

A government where Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

A government that was prophesied (Rom 15:12)

12 And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."

A government that was given sovereign power (Dan 7:14)

14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

A government that God appointed Jesus Lord (Acts 2:36)

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

A government that can never be destroyed (Dan 2:44)

44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

A government that is an inheritance (Col 1:11-14)

11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Allen Ross

I. Peace will come with the dawn of the Messianic Age (9:1-5).

Isaiah declares that in contrast to his present age of war, gloom, and despair, there is coming an age when peace will reign universally. It will begin with the coming of the Messiah, the promised future king. So we call that period the Messianic Age. The prophet here shows how it will unfold.

A. The change in circumstances will end the despair (1,2).

The passage begins with the announcement of the change: there will be no more gloom for those in anguish; in the past the LORD humbled²⁶ the northern lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, but in the future he will honor²⁷ Galilee. Why? That is where the Messiah will first appear—Galilee of the Gentiles,²⁸ a place looked down on for so long as less spiritual, less pure than Judea.

The explanation of this exaltation is found in verse 2. Those who walk in darkness have seen a great light, on those in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. The language is poetic: darkness signifies adversity, despair, gloom and evil, and the light signifies prosperity, peace, and joy.²⁹ The language is used elsewhere of the Messianic Age—Malachi says that the “sun of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings” (4:2). So the people in the north who have suffered so much have the prospect of a wonderful new beginning.

We should note in passing that Isaiah’s verbs are in the past tense—he writes as if it has already happened. That is prophetic language. The prophet was a “seer” or visionary. He received divine revelation and recorded what he saw. As far as he was concerned, if it had been shown to him from God, it was as good as done. It was certain, even though it had not yet worked out in history.

So “light” will shine on people who were walking in “darkness.” The initial fulfillment of this prophecy is beyond doubt. Matthew quotes this text in conjunction with the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. He is the true light of the world that lights every person.³⁰ He brings to a darkened world grace and truth, and the sure promise of peace. When He began to minister in Galilee with His teachings and His miracles, He demonstrated that He was indeed this Messiah. His proclamation of the kingdom through salvation is what ends the despair, for believers in Him are not lost in gloom and despair, for they know that what He promised will come to pass at His second coming.³¹

B. The Messiah brings joy and prosperity (3).

The prophet turns to address the LORD directly. His words explain what it means that light will dispel the darkness—joy and prosperity will follow. The prophet gives no clue as to how soon this would happen.³² But we who have the full revelation of God know that Jesus made it clear that he was the Messiah, and that the age of peace and righteousness was yet future.

The joy described here is extravagant. It is the kind of joy that comes at the harvest, or at the dividing of the plunder.³³ Harvest was a regular time of joy in Israel; after a long time of labor in the fields the people would gather to eat and drink and celebrate. The Bible often uses the analogy of the harvest to describe the coming of the LORD (see Matthew 3:12 for the harvest and winnowing imagery). It is a thanksgiving celebration for the completion of the harvest.

Dividing the plunder, the other image here, is a bit more poignant since wars will lead up to the end of the age. The image is about the victors after the battle is over, dividing up the booty. Such would be an almost delirious celebration of triumph that would usher in an age of peace.

C. Joy comes through the cessation of war (4, 5).

The imagery of joy at the division of the plunder leads directly into the explanation: the prophet foresees the time when the LORD will break the oppression of the enemies. He draws the analogy with the time of Israel's victory over Midian through Gideon by the power of the LORD.³⁴ So shall it again be.

But this victory will be greater. Verse 5 says that the implements of war will be burnt up.³⁵ This will be no lull in the action, no temporary peace treaty. War will end. Elsewhere Isaiah has says, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares," that is, military weapons will not be needed in a time of lasting peace.

How can these things be, given the world situation as we know it? The answer to this question is found in the second half of the oracle which describes the nature of the Messiah who will bring in the reign of peace and righteousness. If such peace is to come, someone must have the ability to produce and maintain it.

II. Peace will finally come with the righteous reign of the Messiah (9:6,7).

Isaiah now turns to introduce the One who will transform the gloom and despair of war into the joy and peace of a time of righteousness—the Messiah.

A. The LORD will bring about the advent of the Messiah (6a).

The first part of the prophecy is very familiar to Christians: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders." Isaiah is very precise here, as we now know. A child will be born into the family of David, and that there was a birth in Bethlehem is beyond question; but the Messiah will also be a Son that is given, and that Jesus did not come into existence in Bethlehem is clear from the Bible.

According to the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:14), the term "son" is a title for the king.³⁶ The same is true in the vision of Daniel where the expression "Son of Man" is used (7:9-14). Daniel's vision shows this glorious king in the presence of the Almighty, the Ancient of Days, and that he would be given the kingdom of peace. Isaiah announces that the child to be born will be this Son given. This idea is then clarified by Paul: "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman . . ." (Gal. 4:4).

The New Testament bears witness that Jesus is this Son who came into the world. In fact, Jesus Himself set about to prove His origin was in heaven, not in Bethlehem. When He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, he prayed and included these words in His prayer: "that they might know that You sent Me" (John 11:42). By this He meant that He was from above, and they were from below. Or, in debating with the religious leaders Jesus asked how David could call his descendant his "Lord," clearly showing that the "Son of David," the Messiah, was greater than David (Mark 12:35,36, regarding Psalm 110). And of course, to the woman at the well Jesus clearly revealed Himself: she said, "When the Messiah comes, He will declare all things to us." Jesus said, "I that speak to you am He" (John 4:25,26).

It is clear, then, that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Christ, the child born into the house of David, the Son given by God to be the long expected King. The first advent of Jesus established His identity; it did not begin His reign, however, for He has yet to put down all enemies.

The prophecy that "the government will be upon His shoulder" will come to complete reality at His second coming—an aspect of the Messianic prophecies that the prophets did not see (see 1 Peter 1:10,11). The reference to the shoulder is probably a reference to the wearing of an insignia of office on the shoulder (see Isa. 22:22).³⁷ There will be a time when this Son will rule as king.

We may say that Jesus now reigns above, and that is certainly true. But Isaiah envisions a time of universal peace and righteousness in this world. That has not happened yet. Hebrews 1 states that this exaltation will be complete when the Father again brings His firstborn into the world. So Isaiah does not know when all these things will take place; only that they will happen because the Word of the LORD has declared it.

B. The Messiah will be a Wonder King (6b).

The nature of the Messiah is now portrayed in the listing of His throne names. It must be noted that these are not names in the sense that we have names. These are character descriptions. They are intended to give the nature or the significance of the person named. We use the word "name" at times in this way. We may say, "She made a name for herself," that is, a reputation. The names in this section describe the nature of the glorious king.

Moreover, in the ancient Near East kings were in the habit of taking throne names when they ascended the throne. They took titles and added epithets to their names. Usually the epithets they chose were too generous for mere mortals. For example, in the Middle Kingdom of Egypt the rulers took *five* titles when crowned—each name referring to some god, some land, some aspiration they had for their administration. One king who was crowned heard the priest say, “Let the great names of the good god and his titles be made like those of [the god] Re: *Mighty Bull, One Capable of Planning, Great in Wonders, Filled with Truth, Son of Re to whom life is given.*” So in these epithets the King would be extolled as the repository of might, wisdom, wonders, truth, and all life. These are, to be sure, rather ambitious.

There is evidence of such titling in Israel, especially in cases where God bestowed names on new kings. Psalm 2, the coronation psalm, says, “You are my Son, this day I have begotten you.” So on the day the king ascended the throne he was declared to be the Son, that is, God’s anointed King. So too in 2 Samuel 23:1 do we find a proliferation of names for David: “David, the son of Jesse, the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel’s singer of songs.” And then we have the LORD’s sending prophets to rename kings, such as calling Solomon Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:25).

But there is nothing to compare with the type of names found in Isaiah 9. The only names comparable are those honorific titles of Egyptian kings. They all had grandiose, ambitious throne names. Each name had a permanent title and then a variable description. So too in Isaiah: Counsellor, God, Father, and Prince are the permanent titles; wonderful, mighty, everlasting, and peace are the variables. But Isaiah is affirming that the one who is coming will not merely have great titles, but will in reality be what those titles claim. What had been a hope, a wild dream, or monarchs for ages will surely become a reality some day. With a king such as this, peace is assured. There is no hope in some pagan Egyptian king who made great claims; the only hope is in the Word of the LORD that promised Immanuel.³⁸

1. Wonderful Counselor. The first words used to describe this Son have usually been separated in the English Bibles to form two epithets. But Isaiah himself joins these two terms together in Isaiah 28:29. So probably, as with the other titles, the one word serves to qualify the other—he is a wonder of a counselor.³⁹

“Wonderful” is a word that primarily describes the LORD or extraordinary or supernatural things in the Scriptures; it means “extraordinary, surpassing, marvelous, wonderful.” It was not used in a trivial sense, as we often use the English word “wonderful.” For example, in Genesis 18 the LORD announced the birth of Isaac to the aging Abraham and Sarah. When Sarah laughed in her heart, the LORD, knowing she laughed, said, “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” “Hard” is our word—Is anything too marvelous, wonderful, extraordinary, for the LORD? Or again, David, meditating on the knowledge of the LORD, came to realize that the LORD knows everything about him, his thoughts, his intentions, even the words he is trying to say, all of it (Ps. 139:1-6). He marvels, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me!” Or again, when the Angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah, Manoah inquired, “What is your name?” To this the visitor responded, “Why do you ask my name, seeing that it is Wonderful?” Then, when the flame on the altar blazed up, the Wonderful Angel ascended to heaven.

To describe the king with this Hebrew word “wonderful” is to ascribe to him extraordinary, normally supernatural abilities. Jesus, by His mighty words, showed Himself to be wonderful in this sense. In John 11:25 he said, “I am the resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies.” Then, to authenticate His claims He raised Lazarus from the dead. That is extraordinary. It is marvelously surpassing. It is wonderful. We would have to say with Nicodemus that no man can do these things apart from God. Jesus has the words of life because He has power over life and death. What a King He shall be!

The second word in the title is “Counselor.” The word means “one who plans.” It means he has the wisdom to rule. Isaiah 11:2 will explain that this king, this Immanuel, has the Spirit of Counsel, that is, his wisdom to rule is God-given (compare Solomon’s wisdom). The word “king” as well as other related terms are related to the idea of decision-making. Kings make decisions; they give counsel. At times they must surround themselves with counselors to make the right decisions. But this king will be a wonder of a counselor.

Jesus’ teachings and judgments showed that He was a great counsellor. His insight was supernatural—He knew what was in people. In John 1:48-51 He rightly analyzed Nathanael; He said, “I saw you while you were under the fig tree before Philip called you.” To which Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel.” He recognized the Wonderful Counselor when He appeared. So too did the woman at the well in John 4. She said, “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Is not this the Christ?” Or again, when the Jews sent men to bring Jesus bound hand and foot to them, they returned empty-handed. Their reason? “No man ever spoke like this man” (John 7:26). This work of our Lord continues today, for when He went away

He promised to send another counselor (John 14:16), the Holy Spirit, who would continue to counsel by His Word, to convict, to teach, and to transform people.

What made Jesus such a wonderful counselor? He knew what was in man (John 2:25). He had that wonderful knowledge of which David spoke. And it continues. What is it in the seven letters to the churches in Revelation that is His constant theme? Jesus says, "I know your works." That needs very little explanation; it is painfully clear.

2. *The Mighty God.* Not only was Messiah to be wonderful in counsel, he was to be the image of God as no other was. The term "God" can be used of kings and judges in the Old Testament.⁴⁰ But Isaiah does not use it that way, unless that is the sole meaning here. Every other time Isaiah uses the term "God" ('*el*) he means deity. In fact, he has just announced in chapters 7 and 8 that this king would be known as '*Immanu-'el*, "God with us." To say "a king is with us" would be of little effect. But to say that a king is coming whose power will display that God is with the people—that is a sign.

There is another passage that uses "mighty" and "God" together to describe Messiah. Psalm 45:3 says, "Gird your sword, *O Mighty One* ... Your throne, *O God*, is forever and ever."⁴¹ So the King would be known as the powerful one, the mighty God.⁴²

This epithet, no matter how translated, would be too generous for a mere mortal. It actually brings the ideology of divine kingship into Jerusalem and applies it to some future king. But Jesus claimed such for Himself as well. He claimed to be divine. According to John 8:58 He identified Himself as the great I AM of the Old Testament, the sovereign Lord God of Israel. In Matthew 24:30 he announced, "All power is given to me." "I AM"—"all power." In sum, Jesus is the Mighty God.

The apostles bear witness to this. John declares He is God in the flesh, the agent of creation (John 1:1-3). And Paul reminds us of His deity and His power in Ephesians 1:18-21. What might have seemed to Isaiah's audience to be an honorific title, or a description of one who would rule as God's vice-regent, became historically true and literal in Jesus Christ, for the mighty God came in the flesh.

3. *The Everlasting Father.* The third title in many ways is the most striking. It is literally "father of perpetuity," that is, one who will be perpetually the father. In Canaanite religion the high god is called "father of years," and this title in Hebrew seems to carry a similar force.⁴³ It describes one who produces, directs, and is lord over the ages.⁴⁴

The title might be taken to mean that this wonder king has the durability to rule. But the use of the terms in the Old Testament suggests another view. The Messiah—the King—was to be known as the "Son," not the Father, according to the Davidic Covenant. The covenant said that God would be to the king a father, and the king would be to Him a son (2 Sam. 7:14). But here in Isaiah the Son is called the Father. The point in Isaiah is that the sovereign LORD who had always enthroned the Davidic kings would come and rule as the Messiah.

This seeming confusion of "persons" shows up in a couple of other prophecies. In Isaiah 48:15-16 the LORD God Almighty is speaking and says, "I, even I, have spoken; Yes, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way will prosper. Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the LORD God and His Spirit have sent Me." The same phenomenon of the LORD being both the sovereign who sends Messiah and Messiah who is sent is found in Malachi 3:1-5.

Now all this seems a bit confusing, but the statements of Jesus confirm the fact that the "Son" who is given is also known as the Father. Jesus said, "I am not of this world" (John 8:23), "I came in My Father's name" (John 5:43), and finally, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).⁴⁵ So Jesus is the expressed image of the Father, the Sovereign king-maker. By taking this title, Everlasting Father, the Messiah is to be known as the One who is the sovereign Lord over the ever changing years—he produces and directs eternity.⁴⁶ Such a name belongs to a god, not just any divine creature or spiritual being, but to the God.

4. *The Prince of Peace.* This last title means that the Messiah will be one who ensures for his people the blessings of peace. He will be a prince who brings peace.⁴⁷ The word "peace" is used as an epithet for the LORD as well as the King. In Judges 6:24 because of the greeting of "peace" from the Angel of the LORD the place was called "The LORD is peace." Whenever the LORD visited his people, whether by the Angel of the LORD or by His promised Messiah, it was to announce or promise peace to the world (Isa. 11:6-9; Ps. 72:3,7).

But the Hebrew concept of "peace" is more than the absence of war. To Isaiah, *peace is a condition in which all things follow their destiny undisturbed.* Elsewhere the prophet will talk of the lion lying down with the lamb, and children playing at the viper's nest. This can only occur, of course, when major changes in nature are made.

Therefore Isaiah's vision of the Messianic Age will culminate in the prophecy of a new heaven and a new earth—there will be a whole new creation!

It is at this point that we find a little difficulty in the New Testament. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, no doubt; but His teachings on peace seem to be contradictory. He said, "Come unto me all you who labor ... and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). He also said, "Peace I give you"—not as the world gives (John 14:27; 16:33). The peace that Jesus brings is a peace that passes all understanding.

But Jesus also said, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34); "In this life you shall have trouble and persecution" (John 16:33). So Jesus did not hold out the immediate prospect of Isaianic peace to His disciples. He said that He was sending them among wolves, that brother would rise against brother, and that people would hate them and drag them before magistrates.

The simple and obvious conclusion is that Jesus brought peace with God through redemption by His death and resurrection, and will eventually bring total peace through His exalted reign over all the earth. Jesus said that the kingdom was within us, and that it would also come with lightning flashes in the heavens (Luke 17:20-25). So we yet await the fulfillment of the Isaianic vision of peace in this trouble-torn world.

C. Messiah will reign in righteousness (7).

The prophet declares that peace and righteousness will characterize the reign of Messiah. Such is not the case now, but is to come. That is why Christians pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That reign will then issue into the eternal state (1 Cor. 15:23-25).

All of this will be accomplished by the "zeal of the LORD."⁴⁸ On the one hand "zeal" here indicates the divine resentment for honor so long abused; and on the other hand it means that His love flares up to fulfill His promises to His own people.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/6-glorious-messiah-and-messianic-age-isaiah-91-7>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

There's hide-and-seek, and then there's Hide-and-Seek: Dark Edition. Imagine a warm house on a cold winter night, all the lights off. Two parents go searching for their whispering and shushing children. Their hiding places would be laughable in daylight, but in the dark they are effectively invisible behind a pillow or wrapped in a curtain. Perhaps the mother can sense her child's presence, but it's not until he jumps out or giggles that she can place him. Darkness certainly adds drama to hide-and-seek. The people living before Jesus lived in a state of darkness. Spiritually, they walked around with hands outstretched, hoping not to run into something dangerous. Fear and anxiety lurked in that state of unpredictability and loss in a deadly game of hiding from God, trying to keep sins in darkness. We no longer live in the darkness, hands outstretched, hoping to avoid danger. We live in the light of Jesus' sacrifice, which has illuminated our paths! What then will you do? Will you continue to live as though you have not seen the light? Will you leave little children in the dark, never trying to find them? The game only ends in victory when the light comes on and everyone is safe in God's home.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

God's Promise - God spoke through the prophet Isaiah to the Israelites who walked in spiritual darkness and idolatry. Although the people practiced religious rituals, when God looked at their hearts, He heard empty words, not heartfelt worship. In addition, they suffered the deep despair which accompanies constant war. Into this dark, tragic season, Isaiah delivered messages of warning, but also messages of hope.

The Messiah - Isaiah's prophecies pointed to a Messiah. The promise of a Savior created rejoicing like the elation that comes from reaping a good harvest or winning a long bloody war. Isaiah promised that the light would come into a dark world. We know that Light to be Jesus. The responsibility of ruling the universe rests on Him. His name is Wonderful Counselor (a wonder, something extraordinary, incomprehensible advisor), the Mighty God (God in the flesh), the Everlasting Father (His reign knows no end), and the Prince of Peace (He brings lasting peace to the world). Messiah's ultimate reign is forever.

Darkness to Light - Before people follow Christ and His light, they walk in darkness. Sin is their master; they are filled with doubt, disbelief, and ignorance prevails. Then, Christ comes into the heart, bringing salvation. He is the Light; He brings illumination to those who are depressed, gloomy, lonely, and afraid. We can see nothing in the dark. It's impossible to walk a path with no light. But Jesus shines, giving insight to our struggles, showing which way to turn, and when to stop. Like the brightness of the sun, we cannot, and should not, ignore Him and His guidance.