

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

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ISAIAH CHAPTER NINE

THE PROMISED DELIVERER

AS WE STUDY this ninth chapter it is well to note how definitely it links with the promise given to Ahaz in chapter seven, for here we read once more of the One who is the fulfillment of all God's ways with men, the Man of His counsel who came in grace to reveal the Father, to bring in everlasting righteousness.

“Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire” (verses 1-5).

The opening verses of the chapter form a continuation of what has just gone before in chapter eight. When darkness had spread over the land of Palestine and men were groping for the light, Christ came in infinite grace, the Light of the World, by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the Gentiles. Prophetically, Isaiah seemed to behold Him moving about among men declaring the counsel of God and manifesting His grace toward those that walked in darkness, so that they beheld a great light dwelling in the shadow of death; upon them the light shone.

It is as though Isaiah could look down through the ages and see the Lord Jesus full of grace and truth making known the wonders of God's redeeming love to those who heard Him gladly and found Him the Light of Life. This is the passage quoted by Matthew (4:15, 16), the differences in rendering arising from the fact that in the New Testament the quotation is taken from the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew.

But for the moment the prophet passes over His rejection and the long years that followed during which the people of Israel, themselves, are rejected.

In verse 3 he looks on to the day when once more the nation will be recognized by God as in covenant relation with Himself. The passage looks forward to the future blessing of the favored nation when they shall be restored to the Lord and to their land, and will have learned to know Jesus as their Messiah - the one whom their fathers rejected but in whom all blessing is to be found.

Verses 4 and 5 contemplate the conditions that were to prevail in the world through the long centuries of the dispersion of Israel. While they had a local application to the destruction of the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, there will be a complete fulfillment when Christ returns to deliver the people from all their enemies. **“Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood.”**

Undoubtedly, the prophet describes the sad conditions destined to be the portion of the nations until Christ comes again to bring peace. This agrees with the words of our Lord Jesus as recorded in Matthew 24:6, 7, **“Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”** Such are the conditions that have prevailed during all the centuries since Christ was rejected. He who was once offered to the world as the Prince of Peace was rejected by both Israel and the nations, and therefore, He said ere He left this scene, **“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.”**

In the next two verses we have one of the most complete prophecies concerning our Lord that is to be found in the Old Testament.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (verses 6, 7).

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” In these two expressions we see the humanity and the deity of our Saviour. The child born refers to His humanity. As we have already seen, He was to come into the world as the virgin’s Son. He was a true Man, spirit, soul, and body, as born of Mary, but without a human father. He was also the eternal Son of the Father who had come from the glory that He had with the Father from all the past eternity, given in grace for our redemption, who linked His deity with our humanity apart from its sin, and, thus was God and Man in one blessed adorable Person.

“The government shall be upon his shoulder.” He is destined to exercise supreme rule over all the universe. It has often been noticed that when the Good Shepherd finds the lost sheep He puts it upon His shoulders, but here the government of the entire world is said to rest upon His shoulder. There is surely a beautiful suggestion in this plural in Luke 15 of the security of those who have put their trust in Him.

“**His name shall be called Wonderful.**” It may be that we should link together the two words *Wonderful* and *Counsellor*, but if we separate them we may see in this first word a suggestion of the mystery of His Sonship, which no man can apprehend, as He tells us in Matthew 11:27, and as we also learn from Revelation 19:12. Under this name *Wonderful* He appeared of old to the parents of Samson [**secret**] (Judges 13:18).

Only the Father understands this mystery of godliness (I Timothy 3:16). It is beyond human comprehension. Nevertheless, as we read the divinely inspired records of His lowly birth, His sinless life, His vicarious death and His glorious resurrection, we find our hearts exclaiming again and again, Is He not wonderful! He stands supreme, above all the sons of men, the blessed, adorable Son of God, His heart touched with the feeling of our infirmities; His grace manifested in a thousand WHYS; His loving kindness reaching down to the utterly lost and depraved. His name is Wonderful because He Himself is wonderful and also because of the work which He accomplished.

He is called Counsellor because He comes to us as the Revealer of the Father’s will. That is what is implied in His divine title, “**The Word.**” It is by the Word that God makes known His mind; and the Lord Jesus, who was with the Father from the beginning - that is, when everything that ever had beginning, began - came into this scene to make God known, and so in Him the Father has spoken out all that is in His heart.

His words make known to us the path of life and show us the only safe way for a pilgrim people to travel through a world of sin. As the eternal Word He is the Revealer of the mind and heart of God, come to earth not only to show us the way to the Father, but also to empower us that we may walk in a manner well pleasing to the One who has redeemed us.

Notice that also He is called the “**mighty God.**” Some would seek to tone this down in order to make Him less than the words imply, but He is so called in Romans 9:5 and in I John 5:20. Even when here on earth He was just as truly God as He was Man, and as truly Man as He was God. He could not have made atonement for sin otherwise. He had to be who He was in order to do what He did.

“**The everlasting Father.**” He is the “*Father of Eternity,*” or, “*The Father of the Coming Age.*” The Son is not to be confounded with the Father, though He and the Father are one (John 10:30). But He is the One in whom all the ages meet (Hebrews 1:2, margin), therefore, He is rightfully designated, “*The Father of the Ages,*” or “*The Father of Eternity.*”

“**The Prince of Peace.**” As such He was presented to the world and heralded by angels (Luke 2:14); but because of His rejection there can be no lasting peace for Israel or the nations until He comes again. Then He will be manifested as the One who will speak peace to all peoples (Isaiah 32:1-18). Meantime, having made peace by the blood of His Cross, all who put their trust in Him have peace with God; and as we learn to commit all that would naturally trouble or distress to God in prayer, peace fills our hearts and controls our lives.

In verse 7 we are told that

“Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

God made a covenant with David that his Son should sit upon his throne and reign in righteousness forever. This has not yet been fulfilled. When the forerunner of our Lord was born, his father, Zacharias, declared that God had raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David (Luke 1:69).

These prophetic declarations make clear that David’s throne was to be established forever, and that he should never be without a man to sit upon that throne. Our Lord, on His mother’s side, was from the line of David, as we know, and because of her marriage to Joseph, who was heir to the throne, the throne-rights passed to Jesus. But He has never taken His seat upon the throne of David: this awaits His Second Coming. Even as He declared through His servant, John, **“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne”** (Revelation 3:21).

He is sitting now At the right hand of the Majesty on high, on the throne of Deity. Soon He will return in glory and will take His own throne, which is really the throne of David, and will reign in righteousness over all the earth. This seventh verse will have its fulfillment literally, for the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it.

“The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against Him, and join his enemies together; the Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still” (verses 8-12).

The prophet now turns back to local conditions. Those of the north kingdom were vaunting themselves. In spite of the calamities that were befalling them, they would rise above them and become once more a strong and secure people, but the Lord declared that He would raise up adversaries from among the Syrians who had been their allies, and the Philistines, the ancient enemies of His people who should devour Israel with open mouth; this because His anger was toward them only on account of their sins, and His hand stretched out in judgment. There had been no return to Him even when affliction came, as we see from the prophet’s next words:

“For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still” (verses 13-17).

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are told, **“No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”** (12:11,12). On Israel’s part there had been no exercise because of the chastening hand of God upon them; rather, was there resentful pride. They dared to boast themselves even against God and against His servants who came to instruct them in His truth. The leaders of the sheep were terribly guilty in that they misled those who were subject to them, causing them to err, and so lead them to destruction because of their unrepentant condition. The Lord could not find His joy in them; nor were His compassions free to flow out toward them. Their continual waywardness called for further judgment. This is next emphasized:

“For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh; and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still” (verses 18-21).

“Wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns.” Men may think lightly of sin and pay little or no attention to the solemn warnings that God gives concerning its evil effects, but if they persist in rebellion against God they will find that wickedness does indeed burn as a fire and that those who refuse to turn to God in repentance will have to endure the judgment that they have brought upon themselves. God’s holy nature will not permit Him to condone iniquity. So, **“Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire.”**

Famine and pestilence added to their wretchedness and misery. Yet, instead of turning to Him and confessing their sin and seeking forgiveness, they blamed one another for the troubles that had come upon them. Manasseh turned upon Ephraim and Ephraim upon Manasseh, and both together turned upon Judah. All this was the sad result of forsaking the way of the Lord.

The chapter closes with the solemn refrain repeated for the third time: **“For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.”**

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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