

# God Promised A Righteous Lord

Printed Text · Isaiah 9:2-7

## Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: ANALYZE the relationship between Isaiah's prophecy and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ; REFLECT on God's promise of justice to those who are without hope; and IDENTIFY signs of hope in conflict-ridden areas such as inner cities and our government.

## In Focus

Andre sat in the last pew at his former church in disbelief. In the last three months, he's been to funerals for four of the guys he used to run the streets with. The funeral of his friend James was number five. The death of all of his friends was hard to take but this loss seemed to hit the hardest because James was so young. Andre hasn't been out of the game that long so he knows who killed James. Just as thoughts of retaliation began to rise up in his mind, he felt a hand on his shoulder. "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord," his friend Anthony said as he sat next to Andre. "I know how things work in these streets but what I also know is that you want to put that life behind you."

"You know I know who did this and it wouldn't take but a minute to handle it," Andre said, his eyes getting glossy with tears. "I knew I made a mistake when I brought him in."

"God knows Andre," Anthony said. "And if you really want to do right by this young man and stop the cycle of violence, you have to rely on God to handle this, not a gun."

*In this fast-paced, restlessly violent, and insecure world, we can take matters into our own hands like Anthony thought about doing or turn to Jesus. What helps you to trust that God can handle the injustices we see in this world?*

## Keep In Mind

"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" (Isaiah 9:6, KJV).

## Words You Should Know

A. **Shadow of Death** (Isaiah 9:2) tsalmaveth (Heb.) — Distress or extreme danger

B. **Yoke** (v. 4) `ol (Heb.) — Denotes a condition of servitude or slavery

## Say It Correctly

**Gideon.** GID-ee-uhn

**Hezekiah.** Hez'uh-KI-uh

**Jotham.** JOH-thuhm

**Midian.** MID-ee-uhn

**Tiglath-pileser.** Tig'lath-puh-EE-zuhr

## KJV

**Isaiah 9:2** 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 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.

6 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.

7 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.

## NLT

**Isaiah 9:2** The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.

For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.

3 You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder.

4 For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian.

5 The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire.

6 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

## The People, Places, and Times

**Isaiah.** One of the most influential Old Testament prophets, Isaiah lived and ministered in the southern kingdom of Judah for 58 years. Isaiah lived through one of his nation's most turbulent periods during which he witnessed Judah's defeat by the Babylonian Empire and actually saw his fellow citizens taken into captivity. He prophesied during the reign of five kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. His free access to the palace in Jerusalem and his familiarity with court life imply that Isaiah belonged to Judah's wealthy class and may have been related to the ruling family. However, this did not keep Isaiah from verbally attacking the aristocracy in defense of the common people. Scripture refers to his wife as a "prophetess" and identifies him as the father of at least two sons: Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (Isaiah 7:1–3; 8:1–3).

## Background

Much of Isaiah's writings strongly criticize the people of Judah for their sinfulness and unwillingness to be faithful to the one true God. During the reign of King Ahaz, the kings of Israel and Damascus waged war against Judah. Instead of looking to God for support, King Ahaz foolishly allied himself with the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser. Judah soon found itself a vassal state under the Assyrians. In 721 B.C., Israel was invaded and the capital city of Samaria was destroyed. The tribute demanded by the Assyrians from Judah was so great that Ahaz's successor and son, King Hezekiah, formed an alliance with the nations of Egypt, Moab, and Edom, and plotted with them to revolt against the

Assyrians. The revolt was squashed in 711 B.C. Isaiah warned that their continued refusal to be faithful to God would result in disaster for the entire nation. King Hezekiah didn't listen, and in 705 B.C., he participated in another attempted revolt, this time enlisting the aid of the Babylonians. King Hezekiah refused to heed the prophet, and Judah was almost destroyed before the people turned back to God and begged Him to come to their aid. Throughout his ministry, Isaiah repeatedly called on the nation to rely on God, rather than military strength or political alliances. The northern kingdom had refused to listen to their prophets, Amos and Hosea. Instead, Israel had resorted to military might to assert their nationhood, and as a result, had been soundly defeated and no longer existed as a nation. By the grace of God, Judah was for a time spared.

## At-A-Glance

1. End of the Darkness (Isaiah 9:2–5)
2. Gift of Forthcoming Peace (vv. 6–7)

## In Depth

### 1. End of the Darkness (Isaiah 9:2–5)

During the time Isaiah lived, Assyria was a major military force that was defeating many countries. Understandably, the future appeared foreboding and hopeless to the people of Judah. In the previous chapter, the prophet Isaiah describes the bleak spiritual conditions when he writes, “When they say to you, ‘Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness” (Isaiah 8:19, 21–22, NASB). It is reasonable to assume that this text occurs after Assyria invaded Syria and Israel around 734–32 B.C. Judah was in a state of spiritual darkness and political distress as it helplessly watched the scorched earth policy of the invading Assyrians in the northern portion of Palestine.

It is into this scene that the prophet Isaiah introduces a wonderful prophecy of hope. Isaiah makes it clear that he is addressing Judah. They are the people who had walked in “darkness” and dwelled “in the land of the shadow of death” (Isaiah 9:2). It is ironic that the people who dwell in the Promised Land, have been plunged into spiritual darkness. This kind of darkness is a frightening but apt description of sin. The lost person foolishly believes that he “understands” or is in the light, when he actually operates in perpetual darkness. It is this spiritual darkness that contributes to the encompassing sense of hopelessness and helplessness.

Conversely, God's presence is equated with light. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5b, NKJV). The great light that will appear is Jesus, Christ Jesus, the Messiah. Seven hundred years later, Jesus would begin His ministry and bring light into this very land that is now plunged into darkness. It is Jesus who will stand in the Temple and declare, “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12, NKJV). Isaiah insists that because a Messiah is coming, there will be “gladness” and joy instead of the gloom (Isaiah 9:3, NASB). The hope of the people is to be placed in the Lord, not in reliance on military strength or political savvy. Their “joy” would come from the Messiah, not human allies. Only then would they be able to rejoice. Present-day saints should be reminded that we are not bound by our present conditions and circumstances; we can rejoice in our hope in the only One who can remove the gloom from our lives. From his dark and dank Roman prison cell, the apostle Paul rejoiced in his chains: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”

(Philippians 4:4, NASB).

## 2. Gift of Forthcoming Peace (vv. 6–7)

How wonderful it is to Christians to note that the birth of this child, introduced by Isaiah, is a gift to us from God Himself. A child, but not just any child—He will be the Son of God. Here, Isaiah’s prophecy recognizes that the Messiah will be a legitimate heir to the Davidic throne, a point of paramount importance to the people living in the time of this writing. Even though the Messiah would be “born” as human beings are, Isaiah stresses that He will “be given” (Isaiah 9:6). The King of whom Isaiah speaks will be both human and divine, possessing the power of the Creator (God) and the frailties and characteristics of the creation (humankind). However, He was without sin. When we read “the government will rest on his shoulders” (9:6, NLT), we see Isaiah’s poetic description of the Messiah as a capable and sovereign Ruler, not to be confused with a mere human king. Isaiah further identifies the Messiah as “Wonderful, Counsellor” (v. 6). Here, we are assured that the Messiah will rule with infinite wisdom that exceeds human limitations. He will be efficient and effective in the planning and implementation of His divine plans. It is in this role that Jesus invites us, “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30, NIV).

In Isaiah 9:6, the prophet’s description of the Messiah as “mighty God” recognizes the full omnipotence (having all-power) and absolute deity of the Savior. The qualities of eternal tenderness and protection are evoked with the title “The everlasting Father.” Jesus offers us the same compassion and provision that the loving and caring Father shows toward His children who love, fear, and obey Him.

Finally, Isaiah declares that the Messiah is the “Prince of Peace” (v. 6). Not only will He bring peace, but He will rule with peace. Christians have the blessed assurance that at the very moment we place our trust in Jesus, He gives us His perfect peace. This does not mean that all of our problems will go away. Rather, it means that we can have confidence that we will never face our problems alone—He will always be with us, guiding and providing protection through our darkest hours. His promise to us is the same promise He gave to the disciples following His resurrection, “My peace I give unto you” (John 14:27a).

### Search the Scriptures

1. “The people that walked in \_\_\_\_\_ have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of \_\_\_\_\_, upon them hath the \_\_\_\_\_ shined” (Isaiah 9:2).

### Discuss the Meaning

1. “For every \_\_\_\_\_ of the warrior is with confused noise, and \_\_\_\_\_ rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire” (v. 5).
2. “For unto us a \_\_\_\_\_ is born, unto us a Son is given: and the \_\_\_\_\_ shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, \_\_\_\_\_, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The \_\_\_\_\_ of Peace” (v. 6).

### Liberating Lesson

The growing number of global military conflicts and an economic meltdown that has left millions jobless and homeless only add to a growing sense of helplessness throughout the world. The alarming crime rates have also left many frightened and insecure. Few, if any, leave their doors unlocked, and many are afraid to travel. Every day we see examples of people with money, power, and position afforded one form of treatment within the judicial system, and the poor and disadvantaged are treated radically differently. There are some rich people who steal millions and get

away with little more than a slap on the wrist, and often the poor are sentenced to prison for stealing hundreds. What a joy to know that in this fast-paced, restless, and insecure world we live in, we can still turn to Jesus for hope, comfort, and perfect peace.

### **Application For Activation**

The prophet Isaiah lived in a time of political turmoil and spiritual confusion. The people of Judah were understandably anxious as the powerful Assyrian army gathered at the gates of Jerusalem. Their world was very similar to ours in some ways. Many people are stressed out and feel powerless, hopeless, and helpless. Similar to Isaiah, reach out to someone this week and let them know that God is still in control. Speak words of comfort to them and let them know that God knows and He cares.

### **Follow the Spirit**

What God wants me to do:

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### **Remember Your Thoughts**

Special insights I have learned:

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## **More Light on the Text**

### **Isaiah 9:2–7**

#### Introduction

In Isaiah 9:1, God’s initial treatment of Zebulun and Napthali (“he lightly afflicted” them) referred to the first invasion by Assyria’s King Tiglath-pileser in 733 or 732 B.C., during which the king annexed a large part of the kingdom of Samaria (see 2 Kings 15:29). Only a decade later, in 722 B.C., the Assyrians would return to capture the entire northern kingdom. The first captured territory stretched from the Jezreel Valley north to Mount Herman (today’s Huleh Valley). The Jordan River flows through this area before emptying into the Sea of Galilee. It was (and still is) a lush, agricultural area and a main trade route at the time; thus, it was a high-priority conquest. The three areas of Isaiah 9:1 were renamed as Assyrian provinces: the “way of the sea” became Dor, the land “beyond Jordan” became Gilead, and “Galilee of the nations” became Megiddo.

**2 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.**

The Hebrew word for “darkness” here is choshek (kho-SHEK), and it is the same term used at Creation (Genesis 1:2). Isaiah used the term frequently (5:20, 30; 42:7; 60:2); the meaning is clear that this is not just nighttime, as clarified above, but rather dangerous spiritual obscurity at best and the definition of evil at worst. As it is here, the reference to 60:2 (worded even more strongly as

“gross darkness”) is framed in stark contrast, both before and after, with the brightness of God’s glory. In Isaiah 9:2 the Hebrew word for “light” is *owr* (ore), which also is the same word used in Creation (Genesis 1:3–5).

Note how Isaiah 9:2 is cast in what is called prophetic perfect tense; even as the prophecy is penned, it secures future events with certainty.

Although Israel rejected God, directly and through His prophets, He still planned redemption for them—in due time. Matthew did not miss the glorious reality that, in his day, Jesus fulfilled God’s promises delivered through Isaiah, even quoting the prophet’s words (Matthew 4:15–16; see also Luke 1:79; John 8:12).

**3 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.**

In ancient times, the enlarging of a nation and the goods from both crops and spoils of war were considered signs of God’s blessing. Compare this with Isaiah’s messianic reference to Jesus’ “spoils” in 53:12, NIV. The Hebrew word for “spoil” is *shalal* (shaw-LAL) and refers specifically to the booty or plunder of war, sometimes translated as “prey” (Judges 8:24–25; Isaiah 10:2, 6; 33:4, 23).

**4 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.**

Multiple comparisons can be made between Isaiah’s reference to the Messiah and Gideon’s victory over the Midianites. The yoke, staff, and rod are images of oppression (see Isaiah 10:5, 24, 27; 14:25), which in Gideon’s case came from an army of 120,000 (Judges 8:10). God reduced the Israelite army from 32,000 to a mere 300, or one percent of the original force, making them outnumbered 400 to one. The whole purpose, as stated in Judges 7:2, was so there was no way the Israelites would receive the glory. Clearly, the sovereign God secured the victory.

Likewise, Isaiah compares the Assyrian army to a flooding river (Isaiah 8:7–8). In Gideon’s story, he sought the Lord for a sign (Judges 6:17–22; actually, he sought sign after sign!). Isaiah prophesied a sign in the form of a child born of a virgin who would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:11–14). The lesson of Gideon is a lesson of trust and faith in God (Judges 7), and the lesson of Isaiah is one of faith (Isaiah 7:9). God overcame the Midianites and delivered Israel with Gideon’s tiny army—in the same way, He would ultimately break the power of sin and bring redemption to the world through a tiny infant.

God never afflicts (Isaiah 9:1) or humbles (2:11; 10:33) a person or nation without reason; He always has a higher purpose for all people (see 25:6–9). Sadly, not all learn the lessons of humbling oneself in trust and faith (as even Jesus did, Philippians 2:8), in order to avoid being involuntarily humbled.

**5 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.**

Other versions of Isaiah 9:5 refer to the soldier’s trampling boots or sandals, which along with the blood-soaked garments of those slain would be burned when the battle was finished. Along with the epic light versus darkness theme, another major theme of Isaiah is the end of war or end of hostilities—the advent of peace. Indeed, “they shall beat their swords into plowshares” (Isaiah 2:4) and “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb” (11:6) are among the prophet’s best-loved passages. It must be noted that the end of hostilities is a precondition of peace, but peace is not limited to putting down arms (see 32:17). Joseph Blenkinsopp writes, “Peace is what happens when a righteous order prevails” (251).

**6 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.**

The promise of a child named Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 (see also 8:8, 10) is fulfilled by the promised birth in 9:6 of the Son, who was both God and King. It is beyond question that both prophecies foretell Jesus. "Immanuel" in Hebrew is `Immanuw'el (immaw-noo-EL), and it means "God with us" or literally "with us is God." God did not come as an even greater oppressor, but rather as a child. As the son of David, He would reign from David's throne, but as the Son of God, He would be "God with us."

Interestingly, the child who would bear the righteous rule on His shoulders would remove the burden from the shoulders of the oppressed (v. 4; see also Isaiah 22:22–24). The one who was beaten would deliver humankind from the rod of injustice; the one who bore the yoke of the Cross would deliver people from their impossible burdens.

The one named Immanuel received a royal investiture, complete with the conferring of throne-names, which followed the protocol of Egyptians celebrating a new pharaoh's accession. These are the "emblems of sovereignty" in Blenkinsopp's words (250).

In Isaiah 9:6, the phrase "Wonderful, Counsellor" in Hebrew is pele' ya`ats (PEH-leh yaw-ATS), and these are attributes of Yahweh (see Isaiah 5:19; 25:1). There is a supernatural, extraordinary overtone of divine wisdom and power (see Isaiah 11:2).

"Mighty God"—in Hebrew this is gibbowr el (ghib-BORE el), a divine title (see Nehemiah 9:32; Isaiah 10:21; Jeremiah 32:18). This parallels the Isaiah 7:14 passage about Immanuel, meaning "God (el) with us"—or `Immanuw'el, "with us is God" (see also Daniel 11:3).

"Everlasting Father"—in Hebrew this is `ad `ab (ad awb). Yahweh, the divine Father, cares for the orphans and widows (Psalm 68:5) and also loves and cares for all His people (103:13). Isaiah uses similar language in 63:16: "O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting" (see also 2 Thessalonians 2:16).

"Prince of Peace"—in Hebrew this is sar shalom (sar shaw-LOME); the royal Godchild will bring the blessings of peace with righteousness (see Isaiah 11:1–9). Blenkinsopp notes that this phrase is a "messianic designation by both Christians and Jews" (250). Shalom (shaw-LOME), commonly spelled shalom, is a stronger word than the English word "peace," which can simply mean "an absence of war" (see note here on 9:5). Isaiah's classic verse regarding "perfect peace" (26:3) has guided many Christians through troubled times; another classic most have heard in song is Isaiah 55:12. At the same time, there is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 48:22; 57:21). Altogether, Isaiah uses shalom 25 times. Shalom can mean many things: contentment or fulfillment (Genesis 15:15); health and well-being (29:6); confidence and freedom from anxiety (1 Samuel 1:17); goodwill, harmony, or tranquility (Exodus 4:18); and favor or peace with God (see Numbers 6:26; also Isaiah 53:5, prophetically speaking of Jesus creating this peace).

**7 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 stablish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**

As an elaboration of the divine names of the Child, the implications also are nothing short of supernatural. A king might enlarge a kingdom (e.g., David, 2 Samuel 8), but only a divine king can enlarge His kingdom infinitely—this kingdom will be so much greater than the kingdoms of Israel or

David. Not only that, everything will be built on righteousness (see again Isaiah 11:1–9). In Isaiah 9:7, “government” in Hebrew is *misrah* (mis-RAW) and refers to a rule or dominion. Nothing will corrupt this princely administration. The last sentence of verse 7 changes the prior prophetic perfect tense to simple future tense: It will happen—God Himself will make sure it happens (see parallel language in Isaiah 37:32).

Just as the Pharisees in Jesus’ day struggled with Isaiah’s words, unable to make the leap from the human son of David to the divine Son of God named Immanuel, “God with us,” so modern Pharisees are equally confounded and reject what they cannot comprehend.

# Daily Bible Readings

## **Monday**

Romans 15:25-33

## **Tuesday**

Ephesians 6:13-17

## **Wednesday**

Romans 5:1-5

## **Thursday**

John 14:25-31

## **Friday**

Isaiah 9:1-6

## **Saturday**

Matthew 28:16-20

## **Sunday**

Isaiah 9:6,7; 11:1-8