

## Justice and Righteousness Reign

Today, city hall. Tomorrow, the White House,” said Alonzo, lifting his coffee mug high into the air.

Alonzo was saluting his older brother, “Mayor” Prince Thomas, who had won 76 percent of the vote, with 97 percent of the precincts reporting. Prince ran for mayor of the small town in Missouri, after becoming frustrated with what he and others saw as a “breakdown of decent morals” in the town.

Prince, one of the town’s most respected seniors, decided to “help as much as I can.” The former mayor had reportedly been padding his own pockets, while the needs of the small town had gone wanting.

“Our town stands for righteousness, and our new mayor will see to it,” said Alonzo.

Prince was happy, excited, and eager to get started on a good work for the town. Still, he knew that try as they might, they could not transform their small town, nor the country, into an idyllic one.

“I will do my very best as your mayor,” Prince said behind the makeshift podium in the middle of Fannie’s Coffee and Donuts café as his audience clapped.

“But those of us who love the Lord know that there is evil in this dark world we live in,” he continued.

“However, there is one true and righteous government that we all long for, and that is the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom and Government will reign forever, and no one will be able to vote it out!”

- 1.** *Why is our world described as “dark”?*
- 2.** *What are some of the solutions often given for our dark world?*
- 3.** *How did Jesus’ birth bring Light into our dark world?*

## The Coming King

*Isaiah 9:2-5, KJV*

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.

*Isaiah 9:2-5, NIV*

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

<sup>3</sup>You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

<sup>5</sup>Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

Isaiah prophesied some 700 years before the birth of Jesus to the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. In this chapter, however, he abruptly shifts from prophecies of his time to the future. In verse 1, he turned away from the “gloom” and “humb[ing]” of “the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali”—both part of the doomed northern kingdom of Israel—to predict where the long-awaited Messiah would come from: “Galilee of the nations.” Isaiah’s vision then extended to the coming of the Messiah—and beyond.

Speaking directly of Israel but ultimately of all people, Isaiah said in verse 2, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” Israel’s anguish would not last forever; a Light far brighter than their darkness would come out of their land and reach to the ends of the earth.

The coming reign of the Messiah (Jesus) would bring great joy for Israel, as He “enlarged the nation”; the people would “rejoice [as] at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder” (vs. 3). While many in Israel interpreted this as describing a military victory at Jesus’ first coming, He would choose to enlarge His kingdom in a different way between His first and second comings.

The military comparisons became even more explicit in verses 4 and 5, as Isaiah compared the coming victory of Messiah to Gideon’s conquering of Midian, detailed in Judges 7. No more would Israel’s opponents—physical or spiritual—rule over them or even oppress them. Indeed, just as Gideon and his 300 soldiers had delivered the Israelites from oppression by defeating the much larger Midianite army (Judg. 6—7), so the Messiah would release His people from their burden by shattering and crushing the power of their oppressors.

Furthermore, “Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire” (vs. 5). It was normal to burn all the enemy’s clothes after a victory, to signify the fullness of that victory. Likewise, the Messiah’s victory over all His opponents will be complete, and all Israel will rejoice upon its completion.

**4.** *What did Isaiah predict in verse 2, and what did it mean for Israel—and others?*

**5.** *How would the people respond to the coming reign of the Messiah?*

**6.** *What did Isaiah compare Jesus’ coming victory to in verses 4-5? Why is this significant?*

## A Child Will Be Born

*Isaiah 9:6-7, KJV*

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.

*Isaiah 9:6-7, NIV*

<sup>6</sup>For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on  
his shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty  
God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of  
Peace.

<sup>7</sup>Of the greatness of his  
government and peace  
there will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.

Isaiah's focus then turned from the coming victory to the King Himself—who first would come as a child: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given” (vs. 6). While there is repetition here, there is also clarification: the Messiah would come as a child, but He would also be the Son of God—both Man and Deity, the only One worthy to have “the government . . . on his shoulders.” This may be a reference to the royal robe worn by ancient kings. All people created in God's image would, either willingly or unwillingly, ultimately have to recognize this government.

The names the Messiah was given in the latter half of verse 6 are worth looking at in more detail, especially as they display the all-encompassing nature of Jesus as God. The Messiah Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor—not only through His teachings left through the Gospels

but through the ongoing activity and counsel of the Holy Spirit. He is a personal God, and His people can always turn to Him for wisdom. Nonetheless, He is also Mighty God, who reigns over all—one worthy of all praise, glory, reverence, and obedience. He is the Everlasting Father—not God the Father Himself but one with Him (John 10:30); all things that belong to the Father belong to the Messiah, Jesus. Finally, He is the Prince of Peace. He will not rule through fear and coercion like earthly kings. He will establish everlasting peace on the earth—and more importantly, between God and man.

Isaiah then further described the coming Messiah's government in verse 7. This peaceful kingdom will be without end. The Messiah "will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever." The forever throne promised to David's descendants in 2 Samuel 7 will finally be established. The corrupt kings of Israel's time will be long gone, and the coming King's reign will be perfect and everlasting. And its coming is certain, because "The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this" (Isa. 9:7). All of God's promises will be fulfilled, including this most wonderful promise of all.



Stone mangers at the ruins of ancient Meggido, Israel. Jesus, the "Mighty God" (Isa. 9:6) of the universe, may have been placed in such a manger when He was born.  
Photo: © IAISI/Getty Images.

**7.** *What did Isaiah tell his audience about the Messiah to come?*

**8.** *What is significant about the names of the Messiah given in verse 6?*

**9.** *What will the coming Messiah's kingdom look like?*

## Light Penetrates Darkness

Darkness breeds fear for Nanbyen's village in Nigeria, for it is at night that Fulani herdsman attack villages to kill the people and take their land. The villagers' light in this darkness is their faith in Jesus. They come together to pray and fast that Jesus, the Light of the World, would penetrate into the darkness and protect them from their enemies.

Darkness breeds nightmares for Derrick, even at the age of 30. In Derrick's nightmares, he remembers being that nine-year-old boy hiding under his bed while his parents fought with one another. Derrick recalls his drunken father beating his mother and then coming to beat him. His only relief is when he wakes up and remembers that Jesus brought light into his family members' lives. Derrick's parents recently accepted Christ as their Savior. They no longer fight one another. The Light has penetrated the darkness.

At night, Joanne's worries about her prodigal son increase. She worries if she will get that phone call from the hospital saying that he overdosed or a knock on the door from the police announcing her son's death. Joanne knows that God loves her son more than she does. But she struggles to completely release her son to Jesus, who has brought light into her world and can bring light into her son's dark world.

Often amidst the world's darkness, it's difficult to see the light that Jesus brings. But, once Jesus penetrates into our hearts as our Savior, darkness is overpowered.

**10.** *How can Jesus bring light into a community during persecution?*

**11.** *Describe how Jesus' light can make a difference to someone in bondage to addiction.*

**12.** *How do you receive strength from Jesus when struggling with anxiety?*

## Receive the Wondrous Gift of Light

God has given us the most wondrous gift ever given—the gift of Jesus Christ becoming Light into our world of darkness. But Jesus, the Light, won't force Himself into our lives. We have to open our hearts and receive Him as our Lord and Savior.

► *Have you opened the door of your heart and asked Jesus to come into your life and be the Light that penetrates your darkness? If not, now is the time to do so. If you have, ask God to show you who you can tell about Jesus being the Light this coming week. It's the best Christmas present anyone can receive.*

### KEY VERSE

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.

—Isaiah 9:7, KJV

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

—Isaiah 9:7, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of December 20 through December 26

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

**Mon.** Psalm 33:1-12—God's Chosen Nation.

**Tues.** Isaiah 61:4-9—A People Whom God Has Blessed.

**Wed.** Luke 1:26-37—Mary, the Servant of the Lord.

**Thurs.** Psalm 72:1-8, 11-14—May God's King Rule Justly.

**Fri.** Luke 1:46-55—God Lifts Up the Lowly.

**Sat.** Luke 2:1-7—Jesus Is Born into an Unjust World.

**Sun.** Nahum 1:1-3, 6-8, 12-13, 15—God Avenges God's People.