

# ISAIAH

## Chapter 9

*For to Us a Child Is Born*

**But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. 3 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. 4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.**

**9:1 no gloom** – Verse 1 looks back to the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom, which included two of the northern-most tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali in 722-721 B.C. In 701 B.C., the southern kingdom and Jerusalem itself were threatened by the Assyrian king, Sennacherib. Although spared at this time, Judah would eventually fall to the Babylonians almost a century and half later as Isaiah warns. With the north in captivity, Jerusalem threatened, and eventual exile certain, a cloud of darkness hung over Jerusalem and Judah, because their sins, especially their apostasy from Yahweh. In that context Isaiah’s words of hope, “There will be no more gloom for those who are in distress,” were greatly needed and should have been welcome.

*her.* The people of God who turn to Him. (TLSB)

*former time.* When the Assyrians attacked the Northern Kingdom of Israel. (TLSB)

*Naphtali.* This tribe in northern Israel suffered greatly when the Assyrian Tiglath-Pileser III attacked in 734 and 732 B.C. (2Ki 15:29). (CSB)

Hereditary lands of these two tribes constituted Israel’s northern border west of the Jordan. (TLSB)

*latter time.* Still in the future for Isaiah. This was fulfilled by Christ’s ministry in Galilee. (TLSB)

*made glorious...Galilee.* Fulfilled when Jesus ministered in Capernaum—near the major highway from Egypt to Damascus, called the “way of the sea” (Mt 4:13–15). (CSB)

The area identified by the prophet was the tribal territories of Zebulun and Naphtali – the area of the NT Galilee. This area was an invasion corridor often used by armies throughout Israel’s history. Syria and Israel fought over the territory. Invading armies from the north, including the

armies of Assyria and Babylon, trampled the area. It was often humbled by the struggle of nations. (PBC)

Here again we see a contrast. The same territory where the feet of invading soldiers trampled every hope and left nothing but gloom and distress would be the scene of a bright future. God had chosen this area for special honor. Through the centuries, believers hoped God would honor the northern portions of Palestine. Interestingly, Jewish rabbis taught that redemption would appear in Galilee. And it came. The feet of the Messiah walked there and brought hope, joy and peace. When Jesus returned from His temptations in the wilderness, He began His ministry in Galilee. After Matthew identifies the place, “by the lake in the area of Xeublun and Naphtali” (Matthew 4:13), he cites this passage. (PBC)

That land to the north, the district of the heathen was regarded with disdain by the proud Judeans. Already at that time Judah was viewing the kingdom of Samaria, the kingdom of the ten tribes, as being inferior, totally, except for the outer portions of that kingdom, where the boundary between Israel and the heathen had been eliminated. And now a grievous judgment from God had overtaken that land of Galilee, while Judah had been spared. In consequence it was now possible for proud Judah to look with disdain upon those Galileans as being rejected by God and to brag about itself as being God’s true people, as though it were lacking nothing. But Judah should be aware of what God was going to do in the final era. Judah, at the time so self-assured, will, because it scorned the prophetic Word and testimony, be driven into outer darkness. It will be swallowed by a darkness so intense that no light of day will ever touch it. (8:19, 22) On the other hand, that despised and so deeply demoralized Galilee will in that day once more acquire a position of honor. It is now night there, but after this night the dawning of salvation will brighten things up. (see maps of tribes and Jesus’ ministry. (Stoeckhardt)

*way of the sea* – This was where there was intercourse and trade with the Jews. This is called *Galilee of the nations*. Moreover, Isaiah speaks of the light of happiness and peace. Matthew, however, speaks of Christ (Matt. 4:14 ff.); he quotes the text from the Septuagint, not according to the Hebrew, and he turns the specific prophecy into a general one, as he often does elsewhere. (Luther)

East-west road through Zebulun, Naphtali, and Galilee, which then runs southward along the Great Sea. (TLSB)

*land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations*. Region east of the Jordan, occupied by various peoples. Because the invading enemy came from the north, these outlying districts would be the first to fall victim to the conqueror’s might and the last to be freed from his domination. (TLSB)

**9:2** *people ... darkness*. All people walking in darkness without God’s salvation. (TLSB)

*great light*. Jesus and his salvation would be a “light for the Gentiles” (42:6; 49:6). ((CSB)

The light that will appear is the presence of the Lord (cf 10:17; Jn 8:12). (TLSB)

Isaiah 42:6 “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.”

Isaiah 49:6 “he says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

This prophecy has been literally fulfilled, just as the evangelist Matthew authenticates in 4:12, `7. When the time had come that Christ should be revealed to Israel, He came into Galilee, in the district of Zebulun and Naphtali. There, in the region around Capernaum, on the populated strip of coastline on the Sea of Galilee, He began to preach about the kingdom of heaven and confirmed this preaching through great signs and wonders. He then preached the Gospel also in the other cities and areas of Galilee and in mercy visited also the land beyond the sea, beyond the Jordan. (Luke 15) Not in Judah-Jerusalem but in despised Galilee of the Gentiles Jesus initially manifested His glory. (Stoekhardt)

**9:3** *multiplied the nation* – Here is pictured the fruit and power of this light which is propagated from day to day, not satisfied with the corner where the Jews live but spread abroad among the nations throughout the world, a thing that irks the Jews. In Deut. 32:21 we read: “I will provoke them with a foolish nation.” The Jews, who think that they alone should be God’s people, interpret this passage in a distorted way, as if the Gentiles, however numerous, would not come to enjoy God nor rejoice in Him. But this is the true meaning: Many nations are received into the kingdom of God; this makes the Jews sick, by this they are provoked to anger, envy, zeal, and a spirit of stupor (cf. Rom. 11:8). This is what it means to lessen their joy. (Luther)

In spirit the prophet sees how the great light that dawns upon heathen Galilee sends its rays out farther and farther and brightens the entire area of the heathen, which is shrouded in darkness. God first gathers for Himself a people in Galilee, a people that is His people, and this people then increases by the addition of the heathen. Upon Galilee dawned the day of the NT. In Galilee was the beginning of the NT church. And this beginning of God’s kingdom in the district of the heathen indicated just in heathen lands the kingdom of God was to continue its course. Similarly in 26:15 Isaiah speaks about the wonderful enlargement of the nation and about an expansion that wins the people from the ends of the earth. The fulfillment corresponds exactly to the prophecy. The Galilean circle of disciples was the beginning of the NT church. These disciples then went out into all the world and preached to all nations the Gospel of Christ, the Light and Salvation of the world, and by this preaching a great people has in the course of time been gathered from the heathen. (Stoekhardt)

*joy at the harvest* – Harvest is a time of rejoicing. A bountiful harvest ensures survival and prosperity. (TLSB)

*divide the spoil* – As the victors in battle. (TLSB)

The metaphors are taken from agricultural and military life. Christ, too, uses the former in John 4:35. There are many dangers before the harvest, there are many before the war is over. Therefore farmers rejoice in the harvest, and soldiers rejoice when they divide the spoil taken in the war. Read Judges 7, about the Midianites cut down through Gideon. They slaughtered each other with their own swords. In such a manner, says Isaiah, will the nations be redeemed. (Luther)

The two comparisons above also emphasize the grace of God. While the workers sweat to bring in the harvest, they have done nothing to cause the crop to grow and mature. That only God can do. He sends rain and sunshine. In the other comparison, Isaiah cites the day of Midian’s defeat. With three hundred men, Gideon defeated an army of Midianites and their allies, which the writer of Judges describes as “thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on

the seashore” (7:12). God had sifted the Israelite army from 32,000 to 300 so that the victory could clearly be one that God gave to His people. It was a gift of His grace, not the result of their own strength and strategy. (PBC)

**9:4** *broken as on the day of Midian*. Gideon defeated the hordes of Midian and broke their domination over Israel (Jdg 7:22–25). (CSB)

This relates to when Gideon defeated the Midianites with only 300 men. This was a battle and victory without the use of the sword, without man being involved. The situation in the final period will be similar. Then God will again, without sword and might, without humans having anything to do with it, in a miraculous way, break the enemy’s oppressive dominion and free His people from the hand of its enemy. In this context the prophet is describing in general terms the salvation of the NT. (Stoeckhardt)

The people of whom the prophet is speaking here, who according to V. 3 are enjoying the treasures of salvation, according to V. 7 the blessings of Christ’s reign of peace, are called God’s people of the NT. Redemption is indeed universal, yet it is the believers who share in the fruit and effect of the same. Thus is read in 1:27 that Jerusalem, and it is those who are converted, should be redeemed with justice and righteousness. Thus it reads in Acts 20:28 that God has purchased the church with His own blood. (Stoeckhardt)

The torch of Gideon is the light of the Gospel, so is the sound of the trumpet, and the clash of jars is Christ’s crucifixion (cf. Judges 7:16). These are the things that overcome those enemies: the Word and the Holy Spirit in the Word preaching Christ as having died for us, etc. We draw no sword, but we only shout, hear, believe, confess: Christ died for us, etc. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory, etc.” (1 Cor. 15:57). (Luther)

*yoke*. In 10:26–27 Isaiah predicts that God will destroy the Assyrian army and their oppressive yoke. This was fulfilled in 701 B.C. (see 37:36–38). (CSB)

Tools of enslavement. Yokes controlled animals and prisoners. A staff and rod brought discipline. (TLSB)

This is what the people bore as load and burden. (Stoeckhardt)

*staff* – The staff of his shoulder. This is the staff that struck the shoulder, the neck of the people. (Stoeckhardt)

*rod* – This is actually the rod of the one who oppressed or enslaved the people. (Stoeckhardt)

The most oppressive tyrant is the Law, which the prophet here calls our judge and king. It dictates: “You shall love God,” etc. But no one is without evil desire. By nature all hate God and the things that are of God. This is not felt except in temptation. The whipped son is angry with his parent. No one likes discipline, not even God’s. Natural man would prefer that there be no law, because he is not able to perform what it demands. The sin that has been committed is the second tyrant, and it brings forth the third, namely, death and damnation. Who could be happy when he is answerable to these three? But now they have been vanquished, the Law is fulfilled by Christ and then also by us who have been endowed by the Holy Spirit. He adds the courage so that we may glory even in our sufferings (Rom. 5:3), and thus the Law is no longer outrageous in its dictates but an agreeable companion. The Law itself indeed is not changed, but we are. Obviously this is Christian liberty, when the Law is voluntarily fulfilled, so that it cannot accuse, demand, and

render guilty. Where the conscience is not guilty, where there is no sin because it is forgiven, there is no power of death but peace of conscience, the certainty of eternal life. (Luther)

Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to me, all you 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 of in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Notes for Matthew 11:28-30 follow below:

11:28 WEARY AND BURDENED – This means the anxiety and terrors of sin and death. We tire ourselves out trying to save ourselves by our own doing.

The people were burdened by the “yoke of the law” of which the rabbis spoke. They could not meet its demands with its many regulations and restrictions. Jesus invites everyone struggling with sin and the burden of the Law to come to him for rest and refreshment. He was keeping the Law in their stead and would bear their sins in his own body on the tree of the cross.

Those who acknowledge their sinfulness and realize that it is a burden too heavy for them to bear, that this load will drag them down to hell if they must bear it by themselves – they are ones to whom Jesus promises rest. It is his gift.

11:29 TAKE MY YOKE – Jesus does not promise us immunity from family, social, academic, economic and political problems. He does not promise us a Utopia. He does promise rest for the soul, freedom from the guilt and power of sin, freedom from the threat of death, freedom from the power of the devil. His yoke of discipleship is easy to wear and his burden of service to others is light.

The yoke Jesus asks us to take upon ourselves might be defined as the whole Christian life and hope. Once we have assumed that yoke, God’s commandments are no longer a heavy burden that weighs us down and destroys us. Instead, they are expressions of God’s will in which we delight, for we look for ways to express our thanks to God for the blessings of his grace.

11:29 WILL FIND REST – It is not easy to be a consistent believer in Christ Jesus, finding one’s rest only in that Gospel because the people of the world are constantly accusing Christians of stressing the wrong thing.

How comforting these words are to us! Weighed down by unrealistic expectations, heavy responsibilities, and nagging guilt of sins committed and imagined, we cannot bear life’s demands. Admitting our false sense of wisdom and our failure to shoulder our own burdens, we hear the voice of the Savior.

11:30 MY BURDEN IS LIGHT – Jesus is not saying that life is easy, but afflictions, the cross and suffering simple drive Christian closer to Jesus.

Crosses we are called upon to bear on account of our loyalty to our Savior are faith-strengthening experiences, for they help us to understand what Christ endured for us, and we have our Lord’s promise that he will give us the strength to endure them and that he will make them channels for all kinds of blessings. The more faithfully we follow Christ, the easier his yoke and the lighter his burden becomes.

We take his yoke upon us joyfully, seeking ways to serve him in home, neighborhood, church, and vocation. We receive his rest that refreshes us for daily service and await the rest which belongs to the people of God.

Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:10 is doable because it follows Ephesians 2:8-9.

Ephesians 2:8-9, “<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.”

*day of Midian.* God’s coming deliverance is compared to the victory of Gideon, who freed the northern tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali (Jgs 6:35) also by means of a “great light.” Their defeat by a handful of Israelites is cited as evidence that mighty foes must fail when they oppose the kingdom God promises to establish. (TLSB)

**9:5** *boot ... garment.* Military equipment will no longer be needed. (CSB)

Clothes that had been bloodstained in battle were unclean. (TLSB)

*garment rolled in blood* – That is, fallen corpses lying in their blood. That is: There will be no war and human carnage, but love, peace, concord. The Holy Spirit will swallow up those evils with the fire of love, so that they will not be called back, because what fire consumes is reduced to nothing. And often in the Scriptures the final destruction is symbolized by fire. (Luther)

*fuel for the fire.* All traces of bloody conflict will vanish. (TLSB)

**9:6** *for unto us* – His people.

*A child is born* – The reason for joy. This was the child prophesied in 7:14, the sign scorned by Ahaz but fulfilled by Christ. (TLSB)

Here you see the prophet speaking about the kingdom of peace, because he boasts about a Child born and a Son given, who will be the Head and King of this kingdom. And therefore it will be a kingdom of peace, not of strife. All these words are strong and intense. Above he spoke of the greatest affliction, of darkness and the shadow of death. Likewise of the Law, of sin, and of death, the most oppressive tyrants. Against them he now places the King born and given to us, who is to set us free from them and implant us into His peaceful and happy reign. He now proceeds to explain what kind of reign that is. (Luther)

*son.* A royal son, a son of David (see v. 7; see also 2Sa 7:14; Ps 2:7; Mt 1:1; 3:17; Lk 1:32). (CSB)

Signifies the accession of a new king (cf Ps 2:7). (TLSB)

*government shall be upon his shoulder* – His strength upholds the nation. (TLSB)

Verbs of the past tense are to be interpreted in the present tense. Instead of “was made” we shall have “is.” Some explain this as meaning that Christ has conquered the world through the cross. Others set this passage over against those above by way of antithesis: On this Child no yoke and

rod will be imposed, because He is without sin, but government and freedom will be His. We explain it in this way: The government of Christ are we, whom He carries on His shoulders. Other kings are carried like rods by their subjects. All kingdoms of the world are carried and are burdens on our neck, and they reduce bodies and possessions to slavery. Therefore in the manner of ruling in the kingdom of the world and in that of Christ there is a difference. In the kingdom of the world the prince or king alone is free, all others are servants. But in Christ's kingdom Christ alone is a servant, and we are free. Moses says in Deut. 32:11: "Like an eagle, etc.," and it bore them "on its pinions." So to the present day it is with Christ, once for all, however, in His cross and death. He commanded His ministers and all His members to bear one another. He Himself is the Cornerstone and the Foundation. Thus in the kingdom of Christ those who serve rule, and those who rule serve. (Luther)

He will have all power in heaven and earth in order to govern, protect, sustain, and control all things. Jesus claims such authority and power (Matthew 28:18), and the NT repeatedly asserts the Savior's claim. (PBC)

*Wonderful Counselor.* † Each of the four throne names of the Messiah consists of two elements. Unlike Immanuel (see note on 7:14), these titles were not like normal OT personal names. "Counselor" points to the Messiah as a king (see Mic 4:9) who determines upon and carries out a program of action (see 14:27, "purposed"; Ps 20:4, "plans"). As Wonderful Counselor, the coming Son of David will carry out a royal program that will cause all the world to marvel and to benefit from it. What that program will be is spelled out in ch. 11. (CSB)

The kingdom of Christ is beyond grasp, reason, and experience. Here the flesh must be put to death with all its wisdom and judgment, and it must be grasped only by faith. We must believe that Christ's righteousness is ours. Reason wants to lean only on its own righteousness, not on someone else's. (Luther)

The child will be a wonder. He will be extraordinary, a marvel, a miracle beyond what any human might think or imagine. He will exceed what is possible for any human child. This child is God and man in one special extraordinary person – a wonder, a miracle! We cannot fathom the mystery of the child who is almighty God and the same time a little child born of a virgin. We can only stand in awe of the miracle of God in human flesh with us and among us. (PBC)

לְרַצְוֵנוּ. Lest we come short in the matter of faith He gives us counsel, that is, the Word, so that we may abide in so wonderful a government of His kingdom. This is truly not a simple word, but it is a word that is able to save in dangers. (Luther)

The child is a counselor. He does not need to surround Himself with advisors as every human ruler does. He already knows all things. His counsel, or advice, is the grace of God, the plan by which God would rescue all the world from sin, death, and the devil. Luther rightly says that His counsel is His Word. By the counsel of His Word, the Messiah has directed believers throughout the centuries. (PBC)

*Mighty God.* † See 10:21. His divine power is stressed. (CSB)

*Mighty.* גִּבּוֹר or גִּבּוֹרָה, that is, powerful. He gives the strength to triumph through the Word and the Holy Spirit. It also signifies the strength and substance by which we support ourselves. גִּבּוֹר, however, is an active and working force whereby we withstand the enemies and proceed against them and put them to flight through the Word. So Christ both preserves His own and overthrows the enemies, even though the opposite may seem to be the case. (Luther)

God. לַחַיִּים, that is, strong, Power. Here it is not the Person or nature of this king that is depicted but only His wonderful government of the kingdom. Therefore He has counsel, He has full power, He can come to the aid of the weary and those spent by trials. (Luther)

This title is attributed only to the Lord, the true God. That leaves us no excuse for denying that the Messiah would be not only man, a child, but also God, Almighty God. (PBC)

*Everlasting Father.* He will be an enduring, compassionate provider and protector (cf. 40:9–11). (CSB)

This, then, indicates the work and business of this King, not His Person. This name fits no one else. He always increases His reign, He always begets children and rules over them, He always remains the Father, He does not assume the role of tyrant, His children are always His beloved. This is beyond question the most delightful kingdom. (Luther)

This refers to the work and business of this king, not His person. He continues to beget children as He leads more and more people to believe in Him. Faith makes people God's children, as Paul wrote to both gentile and Jewish Christians in Rome (Romans 4:16). And what's more, this child always had the heart of a father toward His own people. He cares for His followers tenderly, faithfully, and wisely. (PBC)

*Prince of Peace.*† He provides healing of the fatal dissension between God and mankind and ends the "hostility" through the cross (Eph 2:16). (CSB)

Throne names describe the power and authority of the new king. Ps 72 defines what these characteristics mean for the Davidic king. Jesus, from David's kingly line (Lk 2:4), fulfills all of these promises and with the Kingdom brings all of these gifts for people (cf Mk 1:15). While these titles might apply, in part, to an earthly king, in their fullness they belong only to God. Luther: "In the kingdom of Christ there is grace, comfort, forgiveness of sins, joy, peace. He does not deal with the transgressor in sternness, but as a father. The forgiveness of sins is justification, and peace follows justification. This peace is not only peace of mind but also plenty and soundness of mind and good health of the body. Such is the reign of Christ: It is extended by killing; it is fertilized by the blood of the believers; and the more distress there is, the more peace grows in the heart" (AE 16:101). Athanasius: "His Only-begotten Son might ... be called 'Father' by His Father.... [He] is at once Father of the coming age, and mighty God, and Ruler. And it is shown clearly all things whatsoever the Father has are His" (NPNF 2 4:89). (TLSB)

In the kingdom of Christ there is grace, comfort, forgiveness of sins, joy, peace. He does not deal with the transgressor in sternness, but as a father. The forgiveness of sins is justification, and peace follows justification. This peace is not only peace of mind but also plenty and soundness of mind and good health of the body. Such is the reign of Christ: It is extended by killing; it is fertilized by the blood of the believers; and the more distress there is, the more peace grows in the heart. (Luther)

Peace, in human terms, will always be elusive. As long as the world endures, there will be, war, rumors of wars, discord, and strife (Matthew 24:4-7). The Messiah came to give a different kind of peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). His peace is tied to His work of redemption. He satisfied the justice of God, which demanded payment for sin. He offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin. (PBC)



We are at peace with God through Jesus. That peace “transcends all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). We long for the wrong peace if we only desire the death and destruction of war to cease. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, has r restored peace with God. He has removed what caused all discord, strife, and war – sin. His peace is greater than anything we might imagine. And it is beyond anything that anyone else could ever achieve. His peace became reality when He appeared, but perfect peace does not exist where sin is present. We must wait until He returns and purges our sinful nature for perfect peace. Nevertheless, that does not diminish the truth that He is the Prince of Peace now. (PBC)

**9:7** *increase of his government...peace...will be no end* – Christ extends ever farther the limits of His dominion. He leads more and more Gentile into His kingdom. (Stoeckhardt)

The Messiah alone can have an eternal Kingdom. (TLSB)

Four things are said about the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. It is a kingdom that extends over all the world. It is a kingdom of peace and blessing. It rests upon an immovable foundation. It is an everlasting kingdom. (Stoeckhardt)

*throne of David... righteousness ... forever.* In spite of the sins of kings like Ahaz, Christ will be a descendant of David who will rule in righteousness forever (see 11:3–5; 2Sa 7:12–13, 16; Jer 33:15, 20–22). (CSB)

The Messiah must come from David’s line, yet Scripture teaches that He is also David’s Lord (Mt 22:42–45). (TLSB)

There will be that abundance of peace and eternity of reign which denotes the resurrection of the dead. David ruled on earth, and his kingdom was no different from others except that it was divinely established over the people of God, and yet the people were mortal men. Therefore David’s reign over the Jews was physical, but at length Christ has begun the spiritual reign over the people which will last forever. Hence there will be a resurrection of the dead. Christ is indeed a King different from David, and the government of His kingdom is different, and yet it is a reign over the same people. To believe in life everlasting is the last article<sup>6</sup> and the greatest. However, Christ prepares, establishes, and strengthens this kingdom in the world through the Word and faith, and He does this in a hidden way. (Luther)

*with justice and righteousness* – Justice is that part of Law which condemns. Righteousness is that part which absolves. In the kingdom of Christ the ungodly are condemned, the godly are justified, saved, and set free from sin and death. A happy reign in which mercy flourishes. (Luther)

*forevermore* – Christ established and upholds His kingdom so that it will never perish but will continue into eternity. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. (Stoeckhardt)

*The zeal ... this.* God is like a jealous lover who will not abandon his people. (CSB)

No opposition can thwart His ardent desire to establish and to uphold His kingdom forevermore (63:15). (TLSB)

*Zeal* is love mixed with hatred, or angry love, or the anger of love. Therefore, while God loves us, He is angry with our enemies, sin, death, Satan, so that He can more abundantly practice His love toward us. Here is nothing but mercy, yet surprising to no one. (Luther)

**9:1–7** The Lord promises a future, everlasting Kingdom, fulfilling His promises to David and to Isaiah (7:14). The typically joyous birth announcement takes on even greater significance. Even the expectation of a prince’s birth is surpassed here, for this child will deliver the oppressed and govern “with justice and with righteousness” as the Lord declares us just and sets us right through forgiveness and new life. • “Savior of the nations, come, Virgin’s Son, make here Your home! Marvel now, O heav’n and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth. For You are the Father’s Son Who in flesh the vict’ry won. By Your mighty pow’r make whole All our ills of flesh and soul.” Amen. (LSB 332:1, 6). (TLSB)

*Judgment on Arrogance and Oppression*

**8 The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel; 9 and all the people will know, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart: 10 “The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place.” 11 But the LORD raises the adversaries of Rezin against him, and stirs up his enemies. 12 The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still. 13 The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of the LORD of hosts. 14 So the LORD cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day—15 the elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail; 16 for those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up. 17 Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men, and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still. 18 For wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briars and thorns; it kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke. 19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire; no one spares another. 20 They slice meat on the right, but are still hungry, and they devour on the left, but are not satisfied; each devours the flesh of his own arm, 21 Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim devours Manasseh; together they are against Judah. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.**

**9:8** *sent word* – This is the most important task in the prophets, correctly to connect the preceding with what follows. Until now Isaiah prophesied concerning Christ’s kingdom, now he turns back to the kingdom of Israel. So he usually links the physical and the spiritual realms, he prophesies concerning the future good and he reproves the present evil kingdom. So any preacher should stress the Last Day and the life to come and at the same time rebuke current sins. The prophet, then, is saying: “These people have outstanding sermons and very great prophecies concerning the future and the present kingdom, but they despise them in a flagrant way and do not stop their iniquity until their lice are exterminated. In Scripture the arrogance of the kings of Israel is notorious. The people of Ephraim were puffed up against Gideon from the tribe of Manasseh because they had a prophecy that Ephraim would be greater than Manasseh. Pride follows privilege in spiritual as well as in bodily matters. Yet pride in bodily things can be more quickly controlled than in spiritual things, as when one is presumptuous about God. But God does not appear to any but those who fear Him and humble themselves. God is the God of none but the

lowly, the oppressed, the groaning, and the sighing. These He commands to be proud, to hope, to be confident, but these are not proud. (Luther)

Everyone in Ephraim (Northern Kingdom) should know about this event's origins: the Lord. (TLSB)

Isaiah's beautiful promise fell on rebellious and deaf ears. Isaiah had the difficult task of announcing the grace of God so clearly and then watching most of the people of his day resist the gospel and never understand what he wrote and said. In response to their refusal to turn to the Lord and accept His promised grace, God sent Isaiah to deliver His message of judgment. As comforting as the prophecy of the child was, the announcement of God's judgment was just as frightening. When people despise the gospel and its gracious blessings, the only thing left is the law and its terrible punishments. So it was for Isaiah's generation, and so it is for every generation. Those who refuse the message of God's love bring God's wrath upon themselves. (PBC)

This message was not the frustrated cry of a scorned prophet; God sent this message. It would happen as surely as the promise of the Messiah. (PBC)

*Jacob* – That is, against the kingdom of Ephraim, that is to say: Much has been preached to this people, and the Word has fallen on them like a cloud. This is a denunciation of unbelief and praise of divine goodness, which flows with promises and encouragements. (Luther)

**9:9** *all the people will know* – That is, they do not want to find out, they do not want to learn and believe. For even though they would know, they would nevertheless not be reformed. (Luther)

*Ephraim*. One of the tribes in the Northern Kingdom; here it is a synonym for the nation. *Samaria*. Capital of the Northern Kingdom. (TLSB)

The kingdom of Ephraim and Samaria, therefore, the kingdom of the ten tribes, is threatened first. But all the people, therefore also Judah, should experience something similar to what Ephraim is experiencing. (Stoeckhardt)

**9:10** *bricks have fallen*. Bricks made of clay and dried by the sun crumbled easily. (CSB)

Proverb people quoted to express their perverse determination to pursue their wicked course despite the reverses by which God was calling them to repentance. They intended to rebuild and replant with nicer materials. (TLSB)

This is symbolic language, as if to say, "God has flogged the ten tribes. Some cities have been destroyed, etc., but now we shall be better off; it is just as if we had lost a brick. We are God's people, hence we must be a kingdom. Where the king of Syria has destroyed our house, we will erect three others, and these we will build with squared stones, and what was built of sycamore before we will now build with cedar." And so they turn God's blow into glorious martyrdom. Augustine says: "It is the cause of the punishment that makes a martyr, not the punishment itself." Christ says in Matt. 5:11: "On My account, etc." All the preconceived plans of men do not succeed, but on the contrary, since you do not want bricks, you will not have the opportunity to build with dressed stones. But if that chastisement was a comfort, the torment will now follow. (Luther)

*dressed stones*. Amos denounces the stone mansions of the wicked (Am 5:11). (CSB)

*sycamores*. The cedars of Lebanon provided the most valuable wood in the ancient Near East (see 1Ki 7:2–3). (CSB)

The mulberry tree or the sycamore was inferior lumber. The princes and the wealthy built their homes of cedar. (Stoekhardt)

Although God would send judgment to call them to repentance, the people would refuse. They would refuse to acknowledge that God had sent the difficulties, and they would remain arrogant and self-confident. Their words reveal their refusal to humbly turn to the Lord. They could be paraphrased like this: “Well, if the bricks are gone, that’s okay. We’ll just build better. We’ll improve things by building with stone. If the fig tree are gone, let’s forget about it and go on. They were only fig trees and not very valuable anyway. We’ll do better by planting beautiful cedar. It’s not a problem for us. We can do this.” Not a word about the Lord. Not a syllable of prayer asking for the Lord’s help. (PBC)

**9:11** *Rezin*. The Assyrians. (CSB)

The Assyrians, who overran Syria and its king, Rezin, before attacking the Northern Kingdom. Before Rezin and Pekah, king of Israel, united forces against Judah (the Southern Kingdom), several Syrian kings had made serious inroads into Israelite territory (2Ki 10:32–33; 13:22). (TLSB)

*stirs up his enemies* – The Lord musters Rezin’s oppressors, the Assyrians to whom Ahaz had called for help. To them He gives victory and success so that they subdue the Syrians and incites them against Ephraim and Samaria, so that they ravage Israel as well. (Stoekhardt)

**9:12** *Philistines on the west* – They lived southwest of Judah and never invaded the northern kingdom. As the Syrians were the disciplining rod for Israel, so were the Philistines for Judah. Mention of the Philistines shows that the word the Lord sent forth also affected Judah, therefore, had to do with the entire people of Jacob. (Stoekhardt)

Israel’s neighbors sought her destruction. (TLSB)

*devour Israel with open mouth* – That is, with open and insatiable mouth, as if to say: “I will let you be so despoiled, that neither hide nor hair is left over, so that you may know what you have done in despising the Word.” (Luther)

*anger has not turned away* – A hard complaint against the hardness of the people. Hardened by spiritual pride, they do not hear but convince themselves that they are blameless, and whatever they do suffer they draw into the glory of martyrdom. God would gladly stop afflicting them, but they refuse to desist from sin and to turn His anger aside by humiliation and prayer. They prefer simply to die and be destroyed. They do not understand the reason for His promise, which is a mother’s rod recalling to repentance, not to destroy but to show forth mercy. God afflicts in order to heal, if we only recognize that. But if we will continue in ungodliness, He, too, will continue with the punishment. (Luther)

**9:13** *people did not turn to him* – Obstinate unbelief and rebellion persisted, in spite of the punishment God inflicted. The Lord always afflicts in order to heal, but these people will not repent and seek the Lord. (PBC)

To believe and trust in the Lord. (TLSB)

Israel did not allow itself to be led to repentance by God's earnestness. Rather it harden itself in sin and apostasy. (Stoeckhardt)

*struck*. God's discipline through Assyrian attacks. (TLSB)

**9:14** *cut off* – “Since you will not be reformed, all of you shall perish at once. I will chop off both head and tail, branch and twig.” (Luther)

This brings to an end the existence of the entire nation. When God punishes sinners, in such punishment it expressed the wrath of the Holy One of Israel. He is severely grieved by the godless life and doings of the rebellious. Nevertheless, in the beginning anger is still mingled with love. It is impelled and borne by the love that seeks to better and save sinners. But when the sinner will not turn and humble himself under God's mighty hand, then this punishment, intended to improve, becomes the pure punishment of wrath. Then God's anger over hardened sinners results in destruction and damnation. (Stoeckhardt)

*head and tail ... palm branch and reed*. The leaders of Israel (see also 3:1–3). These two pairs refer to Egyptian leaders in 19:15. (CSB)

Judah's leaders. The head and tail of the nation are the elders and prophets (v 15). Because of the people's blind acceptance of these leaders (cf 3:6–8), all are punished, from the young men to the widow and the orphan. (TLSB)

**9:15** *elder* – These are princes, senators, consuls. (Luther)

*honored man* – Those who excel by reason of some worth and who are looked up to by the people. (Luther)

*prophet – Tail* he explains as being a lying prophet, because among the Jews the kingdom was above the priesthood. Therefore, he says, the mighty and the princes of the kingdom and the priesthood, the governors and the teachers, will be carried off. It would truly be proper for the prophets or priests to be the head, that is, the leaders of the people, but now they are the lowest and the last; they do not lead, but are led. This is an expression of the perversity in them, not of guidance. (Luther)

Instead of guiding the rulers, the prophets do what the officials want. (TLSB)

They do not lead but follow and wag approval at the leadership of others. They not longer listen to the will of God but instead respond to the opinion of men. They become heralds of popular public opinion rather than trumpets of God's truth. (PBC)

**9:16** *those who guide* – Those who lead the people lead astray, and those who are led are swallowed up; that is, the opposite happens here: Those who ought to be leading others go astray themselves. Ps. 125:5 tells us: “Those who turn aside upon their crooked ways the Lord will lead away with evildoers.” Christ asks in Luke 6:39: “Can a blind man lead a blind man?” (Luther)

**9:17** *does not rejoice over young men* – God is not pleased by their lives. (TLSB)

The All-powerful One, who prior to this gave young men going out to battle might, courage, victory, henceforth has no more delight in the youth among the people. He does not go out with them. He delivers them up to the enemy's sword. (Stoekhardt)

*fatherless and widows.* They often suffered at the hands of the powerful, but now even they are wicked. (CSB)

Traditionally, God would have pity on the widows and orphans, that is, the helpless, but unbelief of these people had reached such a stage that He had no pity on them either. (PBC)

*godless and an evildoer* – The entire nation, even those typically downtrodden, is corrupt. (TLSB)

פִּזְרֵן is a hypocrite. According to appearance they brought many sacrifices; nevertheless, they were worthless and deceitful, stupid and godless. No one is more injurious than a hypocrite. Christ calls them “brood of vipers” (Matt. 23:33). For because the hypocrite convinces himself that he is righteous, he wants to be so regarded, and all must believe him. If they refuse, the hypocrites rage and make a show of zeal for God in their tyranny. (Luther)

*mouth speaks folly* – That is, every man practices folly, that is, consummate injustice, of which one could both sing and speak. Above all, the priests and prophets both say and do such things and deserve extraordinary punishment. He is, however, speaking of ungodly teaching, not of their conversing with each other. (Luther)

*anger has not turned away* – The people do not put an end to their injustice, and neither does God put an end to inflicting punishment. (Luther)

So it is with the judgment of God. When men and women persist in unbelief and will not turn to the Lord in repentance, God has no pity. The final judgment will not be tempered by pleas for mercy or by pathetic stories of helplessness. (PBC)

**9:18** *wickedness burns like a fire* – The Lord's wrath is revealed as the wicked destroy one another. (TLSB)

2 Peter 2:3 says they are such because they cannot refrain from sin and therefore their error and their preaching cannot be counteracted. Ungodliness gained the upper hand, it burst forth like a flood. This is the tragic description of error. (Luther)

*briers and thorns.* See note on 5:6. (CSB)

It consumes and penetrates not only thorns or stubble, that is, not only the lowest, but also the highest, that is to say, the whole nation. Ungodliness, however, embraces both doctrine and life. The thorn bush has a smoother bark than others, but it pricks. Such are the hypocrites. Ungodly teaching inflames, and with great pain do we remove it. But when it is opposed, it burns all the more. (Luther)

Sin drives forth punishment, as it were, out of itself as ripe fruit. And this fire of judgment, into which depravity breaks out, consumes thorns and thistles, the wild undergrowth, and then reaches into the forest. (Stoekhardt)

*thickets of the forest* – A forest fire cannot be put out. Therefore all the prophet's preaching is against this ungodliness, and it is just as if he were scattering a spoonful of water on the great fire. (Luther)

*column of smoke* – That is high smoke. A great and high column of smoke is a sign of a large conflagration. Smoke rises. So the hypocrite is haughty, he tries to fly to heaven without wings; he wants to be a light, but he is only smoke and sham. The Holy Spirit comes down with the true light, etc. (Luther)

**9:19** God uses sinful people to bring punishment on themselves and others. (TLSB)

*wrath of the Lord of hosts* – “Disordered,” better: “hardened.” The Word of God is the light, and when it is taken away, men become blind, then they are hardened, they dry up and are destroyed by the fire of ungodliness. Then follows insurrection. For the Word of God is a Word of the Spirit and of charity. A chaos of sects and factions follows departure from Christ. Dissension is the cause of alliances. But where there are alliances, there is not a good reign, but a fragmented and vile one, an allied insurrection. (Luther)

*fuel for the fire.* Contrast v. 5. (CSB)

Men's wickedness calls forth God's wrath and God's punishment. These three, human wickedness, divine wrath, and judgment and damnation are inseparably joined to one another. (Stoeckhardt)

**9:20** *They slice ... still hungry.* They are “consuming” as much as they can take from one another, but it is not enough. They keep destroying themselves and others. (TLSB)

*on the right* – More correctly, “they will separate,” so that it may be a reference to the alliance. They therefore allied themselves on the right, he says, with the king of Judah or on the left with the king of Syria. Both in vain. Or, strangely, the compact on the right means the side where good luck seems to be. (Luther)

When people act solely out of selfish motives, they injure not only their fellowman but ultimately destroy themselves as they in turn become victims of the law of the jungle. In the feeding frenzy, they think they are taking from others, but they are hurting themselves. Isaiah compares this to cannibalism. (TLSB)

*on the left* – To be hungry and not be satisfied is to be disappointed in trust. Man's help is vain. “It is better to take refuge in the Lord” (Ps. 118:9). To eat on the left hand means to remain without an alliance, and yet this turns out badly, seeing that you have forsaken the Lord and are not returning to Him. (Luther)

*devours the flesh* – That is, the treaties will not be reliable, but there will be strife among the allies themselves. The hand will rise up against the head, the members against the body. (Luther)

No one even spares his brother. They hew their way to the right and to the left, meaning, each one feeds on the flesh of his own arm, on the flesh of his own family and descendants; but they still remain hungry; their bloodthirstiness is not quenched. (Stoeckhardt)

**9:21** *Manasseh ... Ephraim.* These two prominent tribes in the northern kingdom were descended from the two sons of Joseph. They had fought each other centuries earlier (Jdg 12:4). (CSB)

The Northern Kingdom is fighting itself. This is depicted as the two sons of Joseph—Manasseh and Ephraim—fighting against each other. These in turn also fight with the Southern Kingdom, and the fire of the wickedness spreads (v 19). Yet God’s wrath still remains. (TLSB)

These two tribes, so closely found together by brotherly ties, devour each other, and both fall upon Judah. The fraternal strife, which dates back to the splitting of the kingdom, will reach its peak towards the end. (Stoeckhardt)

*anger has not turned away* – As long as ungodliness and guilt do not stop, God’s wrath and punishment abide. God does not become a dumb idol because of their madness. (Luther)

**9:8–10:4** The Lord rebukes the wealthy and the greedy for destroying themselves and the helpless. When the Lord blesses you with abundance, do not forget the suffering and the needy. Prosperity and power are not the truest sign of God’s blessing, but goodness and mercy are. In Jesus’ goodness and mercy is your refuge. • Lord, in prosperity or want our hope is in You. Stretch out Your hand to us in sweet mercy. Amen. (TLSB)