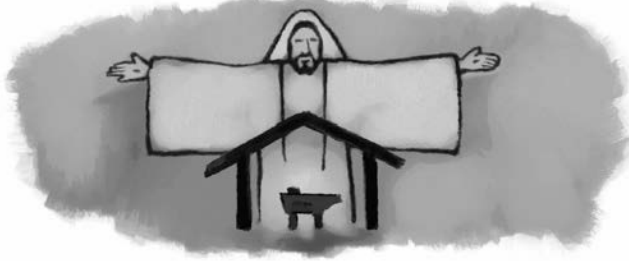


Noble Prince of Peace



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Isa. 9:1–5; Isa. 9:6, 7; Isa. 9:8–10:34; Isaiah 11; Isa. 12:1–6.*

Memory Text: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (*Isaiah 9:6, NKJV*).

Dr. Robert Oppenheimer, who supervised the creation of the first atomic bomb, appeared before a U.S. Congressional Committee. They inquired of him if there were any defense against the weapon. ‘Certainly,’ the great physicist replied.

“‘And that is—’

“Dr. Oppenheimer looked over the . . . audience and said softly: ‘Peace.’ ”—Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1985), p. 989.

Peace is an elusive dream for the human race. It has been estimated that since the beginning of recorded history the world has been entirely at peace only about 8 percent of the time. During these years, at least 8,000 treaties have been broken. During the half century following the end of World War I, which was supposed to be the *war to end all wars*, there were two minutes of peace for every year of war.

In 1895 Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, provided a trust to establish a prize for individuals who make an outstanding contribution to peace. However, even some winners of the Nobel Peace Prize have been involved in violent conflict.

This week, we’ll read about the only One who brings true, everlasting peace.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 30.

End of Gloom for Galilee *(Isa. 9:1–5)*

Why does Isaiah 9:1 begin with a word (*But/Nevertheless*) that indicates a contrast to what precedes it?

Isaiah 8:21, 22 describes the hopeless condition of those who turn to the occult rather than to the true God: wherever they look, they will “see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness” (*Isa. 8:22, NRSV*). By contrast, there will come a time when “there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish” (*Isa. 9:1, NRSV*). The people of the Galilee region are singled out here as receiving the special blessing of “a great light” (*Isa. 9:2, NRSV*). The nation will be multiplied and rejoice because God will have broken “the rod of their oppressor” (*Isa. 9:4, NRSV*).

The region of Lake Galilee is depicted here because it was among the first territories of Israel to be conquered. In response to Ahaz’s request for aid, Tiglath-pileser III took the Galilee and Transjordanian regions of northern Israel, carried some of the people captive, and turned the territories into Assyrian provinces (*2 Kings 15:29*). So, Isaiah’s message is that the first to be conquered would be the first to see deliverance.

Whom does God use to deliver His people? (*Isa. 9:6, 7.*)

When and how was the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1–5 fulfilled? (*Matt. 4:12–25.*)

Not by accident, Jesus’ early ministry was in the Galilee region, where He gave hope by announcing the good news of God’s kingdom and by healing people, including delivering demoniacs from bondage to the occult (*Matt. 4:24*).

Here is where we see a perfect example of how the Bible takes events that happened in Old Testament times and uses them to prefigure things that will happen in New Testament times. The Lord mixed images from one era with those of another, such as in Matthew 24, when Jesus mingled the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 with the destruction at the end of the world.

If someone were to ask you, What has Jesus delivered you from, what would you answer? What personal testimony can you give regarding the power of Christ in your life?

A Child for Us *(Isa. 9:6, 7)*

Here is the third special birth in the book of Isaiah, following mentions of the births of Immanuel and Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

What is special about the Child found in these verses? *(Isaiah 9:6, 7)*

Notice that this Deliverer has several names/epithets that describe Him in various ways. In the ancient Near East, kings and deities had multiple names to show their greatness.

He is “wonderful,” just as the divine Angel of the Lord described His own name to Samson’s father as “ ‘wonderful’ ” (*Judg. 13:18, RSV; the same Hebrew root*) and then ascended toward heaven in the sacrificial flame on Manoah’s altar (*Judg. 13:20*), thereby prefiguring His offering of Himself more than one thousand years later.

He is referred to as divine (“Mighty God”) and the eternal Creator (“*Everlasting Father*”; see *Luke 3:38: “Adam, son of God,” NRSV*).

He is a King of the dynasty of David; His kingdom of peace will be eternal.

Given these attributes, whom alone could this Child be? *(See Luke 2:8–14.)*

Some have attempted to identify Him with King Hezekiah, but the description far surpasses any ordinary human being. Only one person fits: Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God and Creator (*John 1:1–3, 14; Col. 1:5–17; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:2*), who was born to us in order to save us and give us peace. He has received all authority in heaven and on earth, and He is with us always (*Matt. 28:18–20*). While retaining His divinity, He also has become human for all time, ever able to sympathize with our weaknesses (*Heb. 4:15*). “Unto us a child is born” . . . forever!

“When Christ came to our world, Satan was on the ground, and disputed every inch of advance in His path from the manger to Calvary. Satan had accused God of requiring self-denial of the angels, when He knew nothing of what it meant Himself, and when He would not Himself make any self-sacrifice for others. This was the accusation that Satan made against God in heaven; and after the evil one was expelled from heaven, he continually charged the Lord with exacting service which He would not render Himself. Christ came to the world to meet these false accusations, and to reveal the Father.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 406, 407.

What does this quote tell us about the character of God?

The Rod of God's Anger *(Isa. 9:8–10:34)*

This section explains Isaiah 9:1–5, which predicts deliverance for the gloomy, anguished people who had trusted in the occult and fallen prey to military conquest and oppression: “the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian” (*Isa. 9:4, NRSV*).

Read through the sufferings of God's people as shown in the above texts. Compare the curses in Leviticus 26:14–39. Why did God punish His people in stages rather than all at once? What does this indicate about His character and goals?

If God had wanted to destroy His people, He could have given them up to the Assyrians right away. But He is patient, “not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (*2 Pet. 3:9, NRSV*). As in the period of the “judges,” God let the people of Judah and Israel experience some results of their folly so they could understand what they were doing and have a chance to make a better choice. When they persisted in evil and hardened their hearts against Him and the appeals He sent through His messengers, He further withdrew His protection. But they continued to rebel. This cycle was repeated in a downward spiral until there was nothing more God could do.

Read through Isaiah 9:8–10:2. What sins are the people guilty of? Against whom have they committed them? Who is guilty among them?

What we see here, as seen all through the Bible, is the reality of free will. God made humans free (He had to; otherwise, we could never truly love Him), and freedom involves the option to do wrong. And though time and again God seeks to woo us by revealing His love and character, He also will allow us to face the fruit of our wrong decisions; pain, suffering, fear, turmoil, and so forth, all in order to help us realize just what turning away from Him leads to. And yet, even then, how often these things don't make people put away sin and come to the Lord. Free will is wonderful; we couldn't be human without it. Woe to those, however, who use it wrongly.

How has God used suffering in your own life to turn you away from a wrong course?

Root and Branch in One *(Isaiah 11)*

Who is the “shoot” that comes out “from the stump of Jesse” (NRSV) in Isaiah 11:1? (See also Zech. 3:8; Zech. 6:12.)

Isaiah 11:1 picks up on the imagery of a felled tree in 10:33, 34. The “stump of Jesse” represents the idea that the dynasty of David (son of Jesse) would lose its power (*Dan. 4:10–17, 20–26*). But there would arise a “shoot/branch” from the apparently doomed “stump”; that is, a Ruler descended from David.

Why is the new Davidic ruler also called the “root of Jesse”? (*Isa. 11:10*.) What sense does this make? (*Rev. 22:16*.)

The description fits only Jesus Christ, who is both “the root and the descendant of David” (*Rev. 22:16, NRSV*). Christ came from the line of David (*Luke 3:23–31*), who was descended from Adam, who was the “son of God” (*Luke 3:38*) in the sense that Christ created him (see *John 1:1–3, 14*). So, Christ was David’s ancestor, as well as his descendant!

In what ways does the new Davidic Ruler reverse the evil effects of sin and apostasy? (*Isaiah 11*.)

He thinks and acts in harmony with the Lord, judges fairly, punishes the wicked, and brings peace. When He takes over, the Lord will bring back, restore, and unite a faithful remnant of Israel and Judah (*compare Isa. 10:20–22*). There will be a strong, united monarchy as in the days of King David, who defeated the Philistines and other peoples. But the new Ruler will be greater than David in that He will restore peace even to the essence of creation itself: predators will no longer be carnivorous, and they will coexist in tranquility with their former prey (*Isa. 11:6–9*).

Is Isaiah 11 talking about just the first coming of Christ, just the second, or both? Look through the prophecy and mark down which texts talk about which coming.

In Isaiah 11, both comings of Jesus are presented as one picture. They are tied together, because they are two parts of a whole, like the two sides of a flat plane. The plan of salvation, to be completed, requires both Comings: the First, which already has happened; and the Second, which we await as the consummation of all our hopes as Christians.

What did Christ accomplish at the First Coming that gives us such assurance about the Second Coming? What is the purpose of the First Coming if it doesn’t result in the Second?

“You Comforted Me” (*Isa. 12:1–6*)

Isaiah 12 is a short psalm (song) of praise to God for His merciful and powerful comfort. The psalm, put in the mouth of a member of the restored remnant, compares the promised deliverance to that of the Hebrews in the Exodus from Egypt (*see Isa. 11:16*); it is like the song of Moses and the Israelites when they were saved from Pharaoh’s army at the Red Sea (*see Exodus 15*).

Compare this song in Isaiah 12 to Revelation 15:2–4, the song of Moses and of the Lamb. What are they both praising God for?

Isaiah 12:2 comes close to identifying the coming Deliverer as Jesus. It says that “God is my salvation” and “he has become my salvation” (*NRSV*). The name Jesus means “The LORD is Salvation” (*compare Matt. 1:21*).

What is the significance of the idea, contained in the name of Jesus, that the Lord *is* salvation?

Not only does the Lord *bestow* salvation (*Isa. 12:2*) but He Himself also *is* salvation. The Presence of the Holy One of Israel in our midst (*Isa. 12:6*) is everything to us. God is with us! Not only did Jesus *do* miracles but He also “*became* flesh and lived among us” (*John 1:14, NRSV, emphasis supplied*). Not only did He bear our sins on the cross, but He also *became* sin for us (*2 Cor. 5:21*). Not only does He make peace, but He also *is* our peace (*Eph. 2:14*).

No wonder “the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples” (*Isa. 11:10, NRSV*). When He is lifted up on the cross, He draws all people to Himself (*John 12:32, 33*)! A remnant shall return to the “mighty God” (*Isa. 10:21, NRSV*), who is the Child born for us, the “Prince of Peace” (*Isa. 9:6*)!

Dwell more on this idea that Jesus *is* our salvation. Read Romans 3:24. It says that redemption is in Jesus; redemption is something that happened in Him, and it is through God’s grace and mercy that we can have an eternal share in that redemption, as well. In other words, that redemption that was *in Him* can become ours by faith, and not by works, because no works we do are good enough to redeem us. Only the works that Christ did, which He credits to us by faith, can bring redemption. How does this truth give you hope and assurance of salvation, especially when you feel overwhelmed by your own sense of unworthiness?

Further Thought: “The heart of the human father yearns over his son. He looks into the face of his little child, and trembles at the thought of life’s peril. He longs to shield his dear one from Satan’s power, to hold him back from temptation and conflict. To meet a bitterer conflict and a more fearful risk, God gave His only-begotten Son, that the path of life might be made sure for our little ones. ‘Herein is love.’ Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth!”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 49.

“Christ was the one who consented to meet the conditions necessary for man’s salvation. No angel, no man, was sufficient for the great work to be wrought. The Son of man alone must be lifted up; for only an infinite nature could undertake the redemptive process. Christ consented to connect himself with the disloyal and sinful, to partake of the nature of man, to give his own blood, and to make his soul an offering for sin. In the counsels of heaven, the guilt of man was measured, the wrath for sin was estimated, and yet Christ announced his decision that he would take upon himself the responsibility of meeting the conditions whereby hope should be extended to a fallen race.”—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, March 5, 1896.

Discussion Question:

As we saw in Isaiah 11, the Lord presented both comings of Christ in one picture. This can help explain, at least somewhat, why some of the Jews didn’t accept Christ at His first coming, because they expected Him to do the things that will happen only at the Second Coming. What does this tell us about how important it is that we have a proper understanding of the nature of Christ’s advent? How can false views, for instance, of His second coming set people up for Satan’s great end-time deception? (See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, chapter 39.)

Summary: In the days of Isaiah, whose name means “Salvation of the LORD,” God promised His remnant people salvation from the oppression that was coming upon them as a result of national apostasy. This prophecy of hope finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, whose name means “The LORD is Salvation.”

Three Lost Boys

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY, Adventist Mission

Marta Aguirre, a nurse, and her physician husband, Luis Arboine, were enjoying Mexican Independence Day celebrations on the central town square when a former patient interrupted their conversation.

“Marta, I want to talk to you,” said the elderly woman, Grandmother Ana.

She explained that her son-in-law had died seven days earlier at the age of 33 after a heart attack. Her daughter had been in prison for the past eight years. That left her with three grandsons ages 10, 9, and 7. She wasn’t working, and she couldn’t take care of them. Moreover, the boys were sad and crying.

“I don’t know what to do,” she said.

Marta also wasn’t sure, and she spoke with the church pastor. He advised inviting the brothers to a special horse-themed children’s Week of Prayer. The program, called “Jesus, Take the Rope of My Life,” would start in two weeks.

Grandmother Ana readily agreed to send her grandsons to the evening meetings. The eldest grandson, 10-year-old Juan, initially didn’t want to go because he had never been inside a church. The middle grandson, nine-year-old Luis, had not heard about God before, and he wanted to learn more. He cried when he heard about Jesus dying for his sins. He remembered his own father’s death. The youngest boy, seven-year-old Francisco, slept a lot at first.

Soon the boys couldn’t wait to go to the meetings. Grandmother Ana saw the boys wearing new clothes from the church members, and she thought that they wanted to go to receive more gifts. To her surprise, she found out that they didn’t care about the clothes. They wanted to learn about Jesus.

The boys fell in love with Jesus during the Week of Prayer and attended church every Sabbath after it ended. Marta began to give children’s Bible studies to the boys every Sabbath afternoon.

Six months later, the pastor invited the boys to an Adventurer campout. The boys loved the morning and evening worships. At one worship, a nine-year-old disabled boy gave a personal testimony and announced that he wanted to be baptized. Luis was touched by the story and decided that he also wanted to give his heart to Jesus. When he told his brothers, they also declared that they wanted to be baptized. The church was packed for the special day.

Today the boys are 15, 13, and 12 and run the church’s audiovisual system on Sabbaths. Luis has preached six sermons and hopes to become a pastor.



“The boys are totally different children than who they were when I asked for help on Independence Day five years ago,” Grandmother Ana said. “I thank Marta and her husband, Luis.”

Luis, however, said all credit goes to the Holy Spirit.

“It is the Holy Spirit who does the work,” he said.

Study Focus: *Isaiah 9****Part I: Overview***

The tenor of the last section of Isaiah 8 is that Israel is refusing the light (*Isa. 8:19–22*). The people walk in darkness to such an extent that they consult mediums. Isaiah 9 introduces the light motif in contrast to Israel’s spiritual darkness. Israel will see a “great light,” and “the light will shine on them” (*Isa. 9:2, NASB*). The light in this chapter is not only a reference to the glory of God, who will lead His people out of dark circumstances; this expression also may be understood as a reference to, or symbol of, the coming Messiah. The Messiah is described in different features: “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (*Isa. 9:6*). All names or features of the character of the Messiah are amplified in the Bible and in the book of Isaiah in particular.

Three main topics are explored in this study: (1) from darkness to light; (2) the Messiah as the Light of the World; and (3) the character of the Messiah.

Part II: Commentary

From Darkness to Light

The last verses of Isaiah 8 describe the misfortunes and dark adventures of the people of Judah: “If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry. . . . And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness” (*Isa. 8:20–22*). Thus, God’s people walk in darkness mainly because they ignore and reject the prophetic Word of God. They separate themselves from the Light. Ellen G. White states, “In Isaiah’s day the spiritual understanding of mankind was dark through misapprehension of God. Long had Satan sought to lead men to look upon their Creator as the author of sin and suffering and death. Those whom he had thus deceived, imagined that God was hard and exacting. They regarded Him as watching to denounce and condemn, unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there was a legal excuse for not helping him. The law of love by which heaven is ruled had been misrepresented by the archdeceiver as a restriction upon men’s happiness, a burdensome yoke from which they should be glad to escape.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 311.

But the dark days would be turned into a gloriously bright and shining experience. This is precisely what we find in the first part of Isaiah 9 (*verses 1–5*). The Bible indicates the promises and hope that God has given to His people in the midst of oppression. Therefore, the topic here is referring to Judah’s deliverance, which would be carried out by the *great light*. Isaiah 9:2 describes the future scene: “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 act of restoration is announced here, and the liberation of God’s people from their oppressor would be accompanied by the brightness of God’s presence. “They rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest” (*Isa. 9:3, ESV*). It is also the language in Isaiah 60 when God encourages His people who would come back from the exile: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you” (*Isa. 60:1, NASB*). Is it possible that the Lord is going to intervene in favor of His people? Isaiah affirms it: “For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders” (*Isa. 9:4, NASB*).

The Messiah as the Light of the World

The author of Matthew alludes to Isaiah’s prophecy. He says, “He [Jesus] withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet” (*Matt. 4:12–14, NASB*); then Matthew refers to Isaiah 9:1, 2. Here we have a biblical author applying a Messianic fulfillment to Isaiah’s prophecy.

It is great for the reader when the Bible itself provides the interpretation of a previous biblical text; in this case, Matthew is interpreting Isaiah. Thus, it gives the reader assurance and confidence to approach verses 6 and 7 in the prophecy of Isaiah 9. In addition to that, Ellen G. White makes reference to those verses. She explains, “In the later centuries of Israel’s history prior to the first advent it was generally understood that the coming of the Messiah was referred to in the prophecy.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 688.

The luminescent motif in Isaiah 9, as evinced in “a great light” (*Isa. 9:2*), along with the promise that “a child will be born to us” (*Isa. 9:6, NASB*), clearly points to Christ. Matthew records the wise men from the East who arrive in Jerusalem, inquiring, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen *his star* in the east, and are come to worship him. . . . When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him” (*Matt. 2:2, 10, 11; emphasis added*). The Gospel of John offers a rich description of Jesus in relation to the light: “In him was life; and the life was

the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness. . . . That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (*John 1:4, 5, 9*). With this context, clearly, Isaiah 9:6, 7 is a direct reference to the coming of the Messiah, who is “the light of the world” (*John 8:12*) and who brings peace, freedom, justice, and righteousness.

The Character of the Messiah

Isaiah 9:6, 7 is a rich catalog of the Messiah’s character and kingship. The prophet claims, “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (*Isa. 9:6*). What follows is a brief study of this catalog of Messianic features.

The future Messianic king would be “Wonderful.” The word “Wonderful” appears as a noun in Isaiah 25:1 and 29:14, and the Hebrew word from which it derives has the connotation of “one who plans a miracle, the miracle worker.”—Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 3, p. 928. The same term is used in the Song of Moses: “Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders [‘*ōsé pele*’]?” (*Exod. 15:11, NASB*). Later, Isaiah would use the same expression: “O LORD, you are my God; . . . for you have done wonderful things” (*Isa. 25:1, NRSV*). In other words, it is a reference to the wonderful performance and saving acts from the Mighty God.

The other reference to the Messiah in Isaiah 9 is Counselor. The Hebrew term *yō‘eš* reflects the idea of someone “who always knows what to do.”—Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 403. The expression has the connotation of a wise man, an advisor, and/or someone who leads properly. It is the idea in Isaiah 1:26: “Then I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning” (*NASB*).

Finally, we examine the expression “Mighty God” (*‘el gibbôr*). The expression *gibbôr* is associated with power and bravery in the battle. A suggested translation is “God the heroic force,” or “God the hero.”—Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p. 172. We see this idea embodied in Isaiah 42:13: “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.” John Oswalt rightly comments, “Wherever *‘el gibbôr* occurs elsewhere in the Bible there is no doubt that the term refers to God.”—*The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, p. 247.

Part III: Life Application

1. The last verses of Isaiah 8 state that the counsels from God to the people are rejected because they turn to the counsels of mediums, which leads them into spiritual darkness. However, God's mercy promises to deliver His people out of it and give them a brighter future. The Lord is the only One who can turn darkness into light. Share any event in your life in which a dark circumstance, yet through God's providence and intervention, becomes a bright experience.

2. In Isaiah 2:5, God counsels His people: "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD." How do you personally understand Jesus' counsel in John 8:12: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"? What does it mean to have "the light of life"?

3. **Isaiah 9:6 describes many features of the Messiah that are associated with His everlasting kingdom. The prophet pens, “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Which of these features of God is most significant for you, and why?**

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