



•Isaiah describes the plight of Judah

Isaiah is describing the plight of Judah. Their king has rejected the way of faith¹ and Judah is faced with destruction², but there is a remnant³ and – as Isaiah now says – there is hope for a salvation yet to come to Judah.

1 7:1-17
2 7:18-8:8
3 8:9-22

•Chapter 9 begins with light appearing in the darkness

Chapter 8 ended with a picture of the darkness facing those who reject and neglect God's word. Chapter 9 opens with a light appearing in the darkness.

¹Surely there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but in the future he has determined to honour the area by the sea, the land over the Jordan, and Galilee of the Gentiles.

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

• Honour will come to three areas of northern Israel

Previously there was darkness and dishonour. Now Isaiah foresees a day when an area in Israel will be greatly honoured. It is surprising that Judah's hope should come not in Judah itself, but in areas to the north. The three areas he mentions, (i) the 'land of Zebulun', also called 'the area by the sea', (ii) the 'land of Naphtali', also called the 'area along the Jordan' and (iii) 'Galilee of the gentiles', were three parts of northern Israel which became Assyrian provinces. There were soon to be large numbers of Assyrians living there. When God's Saviour for Judah came, it would be in these northern areas that he spent much of his time. Jesus lived most of his life in Galilee.

• Jesus lived most of His life in Galilee

³You have multiplied the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

•Coming salvation will involve an increase in numbers and an increase in joy

The coming salvation will involve (i) an increase in numbers. God's people might be a remnant of Israel but their numbers will dramatically increase. There will be (ii) an increase of joy, joy which arises because of their consciousness of God's presence. It will be like harvest-time (reaping after a period of waiting) and like enjoying the rewards of victory after a battle.

But the rejoicing will not come because they did very much themselves. Both the joy of harvest-time and the joy of victory come not so much because of what they did but because of what God did.

•Victory will be like that at Midian – achieved by one person when God acted powerfully on his behalf

Isaiah explains. The victory that is coming to Judah will be like the victory given at Midian in the days of the judges (see Judges 6–8). The victory at that time was achieved by one person, Gideon, when God acted powerfully on his behalf.

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

⁵For every boot that marched into the battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

• Salvation will end the oppression and suffering of the people

• Salvation will bring peace

• Vision stretches into the future

• The birth of a child brings the victory

The people will have been heavily oppressed by pagan domination, suffering burdens and beatings of various kinds. But the day of salvation will bring an end to all of that. Even the boots that were worn and the soldiers' clothing will all be destroyed. A day of peace comes when God's salvation comes. When is the promise fulfilled? It is partly fulfilled in the birth of Jesus (as the next few verses suggest), and yet the promise stretches even further into the future. The days of conflict will surely include the days of evangelism and victory for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. But even that is not the end. The vision stretches out into the future and includes a day of total peace and total victory. The Christian will know (for the vision is now partly fulfilled, and more has been told us) that it takes in the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

But it all begins with the birth of a child. In the day of victory over Midian it was Gideon who was used by God, but in the day of Judah's salvation it will be the birth of a child which introduces the victory.

*⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the authority will be on his shoulders.*

• Four-fold name

The burdened shoulders¹ are given help when Someone else carries the burden on his shoulders.

1 of 9:4

(i) Supernatural advice

*And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*

(ii) Crusade against sin like a mighty warrior

(iii) Everlastingly tender

The fourfold name tells us that the coming Saviour will (i) give supernatural advice or counsel, (ii) crusade against sin and wickedness like a mighty warrior (for 'Mighty God' is more literally 'divine Warrior' or 'Warrior-God'). (iii) He will be everlastingly like a father to us in his tenderness. And (iv) he will administer a kingdom which brings all-round peace and well-being.

(iv) Run a kingdom of peace and wellbeing

*⁷Of the increase of his authority 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 for ever.*

• The Messiah's kingdom will grow steadily until its enemies are gone and justice is upheld

The kingdom of the Messiah will steadily grow from the birth of the miracle-child onward, until all its enemies are put down, and justice and righteousness are completely upheld.

*The zeal of Yahweh Almighty
will accomplish this.*

Behind the birth of the child is the will of God who – in his zeal, his determination to get his will done – will see to it that his promises come to pass.

So the four sections of this part of Isaiah have explained the reason for Judah's domination by paganism; it went back to Ahaz's unbelief¹. Terrible chaos overtook Judah as a result². But a remnant were preserved³ and though long delayed, the Saviour will indeed come⁴.

1 7:1-17
2 7:18-8:8
3 8:9-22
4 9:1-7