

Isaiah 9:1-6

1 But there will be no gloom for those who were 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 will make 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 lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. 3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. 4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The Scripture is both prophetic and applicable. There is a pattern to prophecy. There is a reminder of the covenant and the agreement that comes with it. There is a warning of what will happen if there is a failure to keep the covenant. There is a call for repentance and enough time given to the people to have a chance to repent. There is the disastrous consequence of failing to keep covenant and failure to repent. There is also redemption for the people when they do finally repent. Prophecies frequently fit into two eras of history; the present time of the prophecy and the distant future. The prophecy of Isaiah shows that the events of world history are connected with God as God speaks to the people through the prophet.

The time is a time of war when the Assyrian Empire threatens the area. Israel, the Northern Jewish nation had aligned with Syria against Assyria and they wanted Judah to join them in their defense against Assyria. But King Ahaz of Judah refuses and the two opposing nations plan a preemptive attack on Judah so that they can replace Ahaz with someone that will support their coalition. Isaiah cautions king Ahaz to trust fully in God and not to put trust in other nations, but instead of listening to God's prophet, Ahaz turns to Assyria for help. Isaiah insists that the only way to prevail is to trust in the Lord fully and completely but Ahaz refuses to listen to prophet. Instead of putting faith in God, Ahaz trusts in the power of foreign nations. The result is total failure.

The problem is the same repeated problem all along; the failure of people to believe in God, trust in God, and rely on God. The Bible reveals repeatedly the expectations of the covenant and the consequences of disobedience. The Bible shows that the historic events are connected between God and the people. God has had enough of hypocrisy as people go through motions of religion but are not religious. God is not concerned with rituals. God is concerned with justice, helping the oppressed and the poor. However, people continued to do as they please and God rebuked them and revealed to them their fate.

The book of Isaiah is quoted often in the New Testament. There are several references to a suffering servant that will suffer and die to save many people from their sins, who will be buried in a rich man's tomb and will be a light to the Gentiles. The Gospel of Matthew picks up the prophecy of Isaiah and connects it to Jesus. For a child

has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6 NRSV). Matthew's interpretation is that this can only apply to Jesus. For a person to be called *Mighty God* would be blasphemy if it is not correct. So, this can only apply to the Son of God and that, of course, is Jesus.

The ultimate lesson is to understand how the Scripture applies in your daily life. We all need to trust fully in God. Advent is a time to prepare for the arrival of the Son of God. As you go through life, put your faith and trust in God first and foremost in your daily living. Whenever you have to deal with one of the many setbacks of life and you feel frustrated or overwhelmed, take a moment and think about the Son that is given. We can't help but marvel at this great gift and admire it with great appreciation.