

Isaiah Chapter 9 - John Karmelich

Title: Why we suffer in this lifetime & why God want us to have hope for an eternal future!

As most of us go through life, we realize it never gets easier. There are always problems we must deal with. It's amazing to consider how much of the Bible says in effect, "We're messing up and we'll suffer for that, but God still has great plans for those who trust in Him!" We must admit it's a depressing idea to consider! Having a Biblical message about a wonderful eternal future gives us hope, but how does it help with the problems of the moment? It's the time-honored message to the saved, that whatever we're dealing with will at the most last for this lifetime! Hope for a better tomorrow is good, especially when dealing with big trials. I've been dealing with a long-term trial (2 years and counting) over funds owed to me. I have gotten to a point where I pray, "God strengthen me and give me courage to accept what's Your will, whatever's the outcome of this situation!" It's about realizing His will for our lives is always best!" I'm getting into all of this because Chapter 9 of Isaiah is a message of eternal hope in the coming of THE Messiah with references to both His First and Second Comings! Yes, I'll discuss that and yes, I realize the Old Testament never clearly states that THE Messiah (Jesus) comes twice. It's just a logical conclusion from studying the text!

Remember Isaiah wrote this before much of the land of Israel (Northern Kingdom) got conquered by a foreign empire. The Southern Kingdom got destroyed roughly a 100-years later by a different empire! When Isaiah wrote this, it was a time of great fear (and you thought you had problems!) Despite all of that reality, Isaiah is giving a message of great hope about the eternal future. In effect, God's saying He is aware of trials we're facing. His will, will be done not only to draw us back to Him, but to remind us God isn't to be messed with! Does that mean if I don't sin, I'll never have problems? Not that I've ever seen! It reminds me of the expression, "It's only the people who I don't know very well who don't have any problems!" Anyway, Chapter 9 is about having hope when we are focusing on our problems!

OK then, time for a chapter summary: As I've already stated, the northern part of Israel (The Kingdom of Israel) was soon to be conquered by the Assyrian Empire. Later in Isaiah a miracle will occur where thousands of Assyrian soldiers die and the Southern Kingdom (where Isaiah lived) didn't get conquered but again that's many chapters from now! Here, Isaiah's describing the land of the North Kingdom as if it's already been conquered. He's describing bad news, mixed with hope of the future Messiah coming. It literally describes Jesus First and Second Coming mixed together. I believe Isaiah wrote this to give hope not only to those Israelites back then, but to us Christians, that despite our sins, God still has great plans for our eternal future. This short chapter is full of horrible things those Israelites dealt with due to disobedience mixed with specific promises that tie well to Jesus First and Second Comings. Okay then, time for details:

It opens describing the area of the Northern Kingdom around the Sea of Galilee. Realize the North did already suffer in battles with the Syrians (separate from Assyria). So, in a sense Isaiah is speaking both in recent past tense and in future tense as that area will be completely wiped out by the Assyrian Empire and they relocated most of the Israelites there, captive to different areas. Anyway, Chapter 9 starts with a reference to the Israel tribes who lived around the Sea of Galilee. Again, they are part of the "North"! The text switches in Verse 2 to say, in effect "Despite your rejection of Me, you (that area) will witness a great thing!" Remember Jesus lived most of His life and did most of his miracles in that area! Best to read Verses 2 and 7 and realize the "double vision" of references to the First and Second Coming!

Let me address that for a second: Why doesn't the Bible blatantly say the Messiah comes twice? We're all aware it was once to pay for our sins and a second time to rule. So why not state that? Best I figure is God wants us to figure that out for ourselves. The same idea applies to Jesus returning twice in effect as one time is for the "church rapture" even though Jesus doesn't appear for that! Then Jesus returns as ruling King for eternity after the Revelation "bad stuff"!

Meanwhile I'm only on Verse 2. I'll just say Verses 2 through 7 have blatant references to what Jesus is going to do in the future, ruling as king over the world, not just Israel forever (not just 1,000 years)! He will rule both as man and God. This is the "ball game", in that 30% of the bible is predictions that have and will come true, so I trust the Bible is the Word of God as much as I trust I'm alive! Verse 6 to me is a fascinating double reference of a "son" being both literally born AND given. It means He'll return as a grown man (fully man and fully God) to rule! Obviously, Jesus has never ruled over anything yet, so this double visit is part of both literal history and future predictions!

Bottom line Verse 2-7 are good news tied to both Jesus First and Second Coming. Now comes the bad news of Verse 8-21 of "meanwhile, you're still in big trouble!" Yes, the Northern part of Israel rejected God blatantly in the roughly 200 years since the kingdom split in two. I'm not saying they are guilty of more sin than us. God expects us to be a witness for Him! A possible reason for suffering is due to our failure to live as He desires. I'm WELL AWARE we suffer for all sorts of reasons. My point is simply that it's a dangerous thing to suffer due to His wrath and it's not something we should desire! It simply means that we must regularly confess our sins and be aware of our behavior!

So why does Isaiah spend so many more verses on their sins and suffering now, then all the good news of a great eternal future? First remember God's timing is His timing. He expects us to be a witness for Him. God's using the "carrot and the stick" to say in effect, "Get with the program!" The eternal stuff's coming because of His unconditional promises! In the meantime, God's saying, "Ignore Me, and you'll pay a big price for it now!" For example, the Northern Kingdom suffered from recent wars and they're saying in effect "We'll rebuild even better than before not knowing the Assyrians will wipe them out as a nation once and for all"! The point for us is we can't think, "I am one of God's chosen, He'll never let me suffer significantly in this lifetime!" Stop and think of all the Christian martyrs. God never gives a promise of a comfortable life here and now! He desires we be a witness for Him, plain and simple!

Bottom line, Isaiah lays it on thick how the Israelites will suffer despite their plans for a better future. I realize we should all do our best to try for a better future as if God won't stop it. The issue comes down to making God part of our lives as we go through our lives. He created us to glorify Him. Of course, it is necessary to provide for ourselves and our families. Isaiah is saying if we ignore God while trying to make the best of every day, we'll suffer for failing to be a witness for Him. Again, Isaiah uses positive and negative examples in this text. He mentions previous war victories in their history. He also states a bunch of horrible things that will happen to the Israelites because they ignore Him as their God!

I can just hear you saying, "I'm not like that, I go to church, and God is central in my life!" That misses the key point: Are we living as He desires? If we read our bible regularly and pray for His guidance it becomes obvious what He desires of us! Of course, bad things can still happen to us. Well aware of all that! Yes I sin, and of course I confess it when I realize it! I realize God isn't to be messed with. When I study tough passages like this, I'm reminded why I was created in the first place! Do I believe Jesus is going to return to rule one day? Of course, until that happens, I'm going to live my life as a witness for Him as that's what God expects of us! Oh, the topic of "bad stuff" finishes in the first four verses of the next chapter! More on that in my next lesson!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. The rest of this email is links to questions you may have. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!

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