

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## Light To The Nations

by Dan Trygg

“But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the Way of the Sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. <sup>2</sup> The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. ...For a child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will accomplish this.” Isaiah 9:1,2,6,7

“And now says Yahweh, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of Yahweh, and My God is My strength), <sup>6</sup> He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations, so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’” Isaiah 49:5-6

The prophet Isaiah lived some 700 years before Christ came on the scene. He accurately prophesied a number of details about the birth of the Messiah. He spoke beforehand of Jesus’ virgin birth (7:14), about His appearance in Galilee of the Gentiles, along the highway known as “the Way of the Sea” (a caravan route that ran north/south along the western edge of the Sea of Galilee (9:1) that later became the main area of Jesus’ ministry activities [Matt. 4:16]). **At Isaiah’s time, Galilee was a place of spiritual darkness and depression.** They had rejected God and His word, and had devoted themselves to idols, mediums and wizards. Instead of seeking the counsel of God in His word, and being faithful to His covenant, they looked to the stars and these occult sources. As a result, **God had given them over to their folly. He removed His blessing, and they were experiencing the darkness of distress, anguish, and depression.** They were enraged, and they cursed God and their governmental leaders for their poverty. **They rejected God and His prophets, so He gave them over to the darkness they preferred. This is the setting of our passage at the top of this study,** “But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the Way of the Sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. **The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.** You shall multiply the nation, **You shall increase their gladness...**” (9:1-3). **What would this light be? It would be the coming of the Messiah.** Isaiah said that the Messiah would come as a child, but be called Mighty God and Father of Eternity (9:6). He would be the Prince of Peace, and would govern a Kingdom that would increase, one that would produce peace, ...a government that would never end (9:7). He would rule on the throne of David to establish it in righteousness and justice forevermore. Isaiah said that God *Himself* would bring this about. What other historical figure was a descendant of David who was ever called God, or reigned over a kingdom that only increased, and never came to an end? In fact, what other Davidic king ever had a significant impact in the area of the Sea of Galilee, so that people would think of the glory of God? None! Absolutely none! Not even close! **Only one Person in history has ever been said to fulfill these four simplest attributes: (1.) Would be born of a virgin; (2.) Would have a glorious impact in the area of the Sea of Galilee; (3.) Would be called Mighty God and Father of Eternity; and (4.) Would rule over an ever-expanding and never-ending kingdom of righteousness and justice that can legitimately claim to be David’s kingdom. There is no way to possibly apply these four facts to any other figure in history than Jesus of Nazareth.** This is only a small portion of what Isaiah prophesied in detail about this Messiah.

I want to trace another prophecy that Isaiah mentioned. **In 42:6, the prophet describes how God’s Servant would be clothed with the Spirit of God, and would bring forth justice to the nations.** He will be quiet and gentle, and will persevere in causing justice to be established on the earth. **Yahweh would appoint Him as a covenant to the people and a light to the nations,** to open the eyes of those who are blind, to set free those who are in prison and sit in the darkness. **God will proclaim that He will bring forth new things. He will bring joy, and cause His praise to sound forth to the ends of the earth!** He will defeat His enemies, and lead the blind in a way they have not known. He will turn the darkness into light before them, and the rugged places will become plains before them.

In Isaiah 49, things seem a bit confusing on the surface. The prophecy begins by *calling all the nations* afar off to listen and give heed. **The Servant says that God had called Him from His mother’s womb, and made His mouth like a sharp sword.** God had hidden Him in the shadow of His hand, or like a sharpened, select arrow hidden in God’s quiver. God said to Him, “You are My Servant, Israel, in whom I will show My glory.” At first, it appears that God is identifying the Servant *as* Israel, but this cannot be the case, because two verses later the same Servant

says God had formed Him from the womb *to bring Israel back to Him*. So, this Servant cannot be *the same as* the nation of Israel. **God is going to use Him to restore Israel**, who had been rejected, decimated and scattered for their sin and idolatry. How are we to make sense of this? It could be that God is saying to the Messiah-Servant, “You are My Servant, the *true* Israel, in whom I will show My glory.” Israel herself was to bring God glory, and show the world something of His great wisdom, righteousness and love, ...but they had failed miserably, because of their recurring sin. YET, God was not finished with this wayward nation. He will YET have His way. He will YET fulfill His word, and reveal His grace through them. **Out from this nation would come One who was especially formed from the womb as a select arrow of the Lord hidden in His quiver**, ...One whose mouth is a sharp sword hidden in God’s hand. These are images of weapons for war, and the chapter ends with the proclamation that **the Servant will contend with those who contend with God’s people** (vs. 25). He will deliver them from the mighty man, the one who has preyed upon them and held them captive. He will call them out of bondage and darkness to return to God. The name “Israel” means “God strives”. It could be that God calls the Servant by this name because **He is the embodiment of God’s warfare-struggle for His people**. All of this is somewhat of an aside. What I want to point out is that **Isaiah also prophesied** that “...it is “too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; **I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth**” (vs. 6). The Servant Himself will be the Light of the nations.

**Isaiah 52:13-53:12 describes how God will establish this salvation for all nations. It will be shocking, ...astonishing..., so much that many will have difficulty believing it!** Yet, this plan of action reflects deep wisdom. This Servant Himself will be beaten and disfigured almost beyond recognition, but He will sprinkle *many nations* with His cleansing blood. The Servant will grow up as a person of no special note or appearance. He will be despised and forsaken by people, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. **BUT, the Servant Himself will take our griefs, sorrows, sicknesses and pains upon Himself**. Many of His contemporaries would think God Himself was against Him, but **it was God’s plan for Him to take the punishment and chastening that we deserved**. “All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but Yahweh has caused the iniquity of us all to fall *on Him*” (53:6). Isaiah said, “He was pierced through for *our* transgressions, crushed for *our* iniquities. The chastening for *our* peace and well-being fell upon *Him*, and by *His* scourging, *we* are healed” (vs. 5). The details of this prophecy are amazing! He was (1.) despised; (2.) forsaken; (3.) pierced through for our sin; (4.) scourged; (5.) silent before His accusers; (6.) falsely judged by oppressive leaders; (7.) assigned a grave with the wicked; (8.) with a rich man in His death. (9.) His death would justify many; (10.) He would be exalted among the great. **Is there anyone else these ten facts could refer to? I know of none!**

**The next time we find this concept of a “light to the nations” is in Luke 2.** Mary and Joseph had brought the baby Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, to offer a sacrifice for His cleansing, as the OT Law prescribed (Ex. 13:2; Lev. 12:1-8). As they came in, an old man named Simeon met them. It had been revealed to him by God that he would not die until he had seen Yahweh’s Messiah. This particular day, the Holy Spirit had led him to go to the Temple. When he saw Jesus, he approached them and took the baby into his arms. He cried out, “Now, Lord, let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the nations, and the glory of Your people Israel” (vss. 22-32). Simeon called Jesus “God’s salvation” and “a light of revelation to the nations”. **Simeon added another insight to the picture. He is not just a light to the Gentiles, but a light of revelation or “uncovering” to these nations. What was Jesus “uncovering”? What was He here to make known to other nations beyond the borders of Israel?** Jesus came to make His Father’s heart known (Jn. 1:18). **He came to clearly communicate that God loved all people.** Paul taught “the mystery of Christ” to be that God always intended to reach *all* nations. In Christ, “the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the Body, and fellow partakers of the promise” (Eph. 3:4-6). **If the Jews of Galilee had been in darkness in the time of Isaiah, how much more the Gentiles!** The Jews at least had been exposed to the truth, but the Gentiles were living in the deep darkness of ignorance, superstition and hopelessness. They desperately needed to know the truth of God’s love! When the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul declared, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For thus the Lord has commanded us, **‘I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, that You should bring salvation to the end of the earth’**” (Acts 13:46-47). Years later, as he defended his ministry, he said, “I stand this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that **the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.**” (Acts 26:22-23). **Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life”** (John 8:12).