



December 31, 2023

Ancient Words, Present Hope
Grace for All

Isaiah 9:1-7; Matthew 4:12-17

For Discussion and Reflection

1. Isaiah ends with a responsive refrain for the people. “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” The name for God here is “LORD of hosts” and is the military name used for God. He is God of “hosts” of angelic armies. Why would the prophet use this name for God? How does the passage explain this usage? What is Isaiah communicating?
2. Isaiah says that God showed contempt (9:1) for this region of Israel by thrusting them into darkness, Isaiah 8:22. You can read why in Isaiah 8:11-22. What is the darkness? How does God thrust them into darkness (remember what darkness is)? How is this an act of judgment?
3. Isaiah 9:4, speaks of joy as in the day of Midian. Read about this event in Judges 6-7 where Gideon, with 300 soldiers, watch as God destroys the Midian army. Why does Isaiah mention this event? How does it compliment the text?
4. Zebulun and Naphtali are the tribes that inhabit the region west of the sea of Galilee. The Via Maris, a road that runs along the Mediterranean Sea crosses over to connect with the Kings Highway, leading into Syria. These were major trade routes where merchants would bring their pagan deities. These were also the major roads that foreign armies would use to invade making Naphtali and Zebulun the first to be attacked. How would this have affected the people in this region? How do these facts help explain the influx of Gentiles in this region? What does it communicate that Jesus begins his ministry in this region?
5. By moving to a region, heavily populated by the Gentiles, Jesus is making a statement. While the Jewish community is very tribal and segregated, Jesus extends his grace to the outsiders. How should this shape the people of God today?
6. Jesus offers grace to the Gentiles, but he also offers grace to the two notorious tribes of Israel, known for their idolatry and integration of the world. What does this tell us about God? What does it tell us about his kingdom?
7. What have you learned about these prophecies and what they mean for you today?