

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

This chapter contains an illustrious prophecy of the Messiah. He is represented under the glorious figure of the sun, or light, rising on a benighted world, and diffusing joy and gladness wherever he sheds his beams, Isaiah 9:1-3. His conquests are astonishing and miraculous, as in the day of Midian; and the peace which they procure is to be permanent, as denoted by the burning of all the implements of war, Isaiah 9:4, Isaiah 9:5. The person and character of this great Deliverer are then set forth in the most magnificent terms which the language of mankind could furnish, Isaiah 9:6. The extent of his kingdom is declared to be universal, and the duration of it eternal, Isaiah 9:7. The prophet foretells most awful calamities which were ready to fall upon the Israelites on account of their manifold impieties, Isaiah 9:8-21.

Verse 1

Dimness - Accumulated darkness - Either "menuddechah", fem. to agree with "aphelah"; or "aphel hammenuddach", alluding perhaps to the palpable Egyptian darkness, Exodus 10:21.

The land of Zebulun - Zebulun, Naphtali, Manasseh, that is, the country of Galilee all round the sea of Gennesareth, were the parts that principally suffered in the first Assyrian invasion under Tiglath-pileser; see 2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chronicles 5:26. And they were the first that enjoyed the blessings of Christ's preaching the Gospel, and exhibiting his miraculous works among them. See Mede's Works, p. 101, and 457. This, which makes the twenty-third verse of chap. 8 in the Hebrew, is the first verse in chap. 9 in our authorized version. Bishop Lowth follows the division in the Hebrew.

Verse 3

And not increased the joy - Thou hast increased their joy - Eleven MSS. of Kennicott's and six of De Rossi's, two ancient, read "lo", it, according to the Masoretical correction, instead of "lo", not. To the same purpose the Targum and Syriac.

The joy in harvest - "kesimchath bakkatsir". For "bakkatsir" one MS. of Kennicott's and one of De Rossi's have "katsir", and another "hakkatsir", the harvest; one of which seems to be the true, reading, as the noun preceding is in regimine.

Verse 5

Every battle of the warrior - The greaves of the armed warrior - "seon soen". This word, occurring only in this place, is of very doubtful signification. Schindler fairly tells us that we may guess at it by the context. The Jews have explained it, by guess I believe, as signifying battle, conflict: the Vulgate renders it violenta praedatio. But it seems as if something was rather meant which was capable of becoming fuel for the fire, together with the garments mentioned in the same sentence. In Syriac the word, as a noun, signifies a shoe, or a sandal, as a learned friend suggested to me some years ago. See Luke 15:22; Acts 12:8. I take it, therefore, to mean that part of the armor which covered the legs and feet, and I would render the two words in Latin by caliga caligati. The burning of heaps of armor, gathered from the field of battle, as an offering made to the god supposed to be the giver of victory, was a custom that prevailed among some heathen nations; and the Romans used it as an emblem of peace, which perfectly well suits with the design of the prophet in this place. A medal struck by Vespasian on finishing his wars both at home and abroad represents the goddess Peace holding an olive branch in one hand, and, with a lighted torch in the other, setting fire to a heap of armor. Virgil mentions the custom: -

Cum primam aciem Praeneste sub ipsa
Stravi, scutorumque incendi victor acervos.
Aen. lib. viii., ver. 561.

Would heaven, (said he), my strength and youth recall,
Such as I was beneath Praeneste's wall -
Then when I made the foremost foes retire
And set whole heaps of conquered shields on fire.
Dryden.

See Addison on Medals, Series 2:18. And there are notices of some such practice among the Israelites, and other nations of the most early times. God promises to Joshua victory over the kings of Canaan. To-morrow I will deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire, Joshua 11:6. See also Nahum 2:13. And the psalmist employs this image to express

expounds the law; shows its origin, nature, and claims; instructs, pleads for the guilty; and ever appears in the presence of God for men. He is the mighty God; God essentially and efficiently prevailing against his enemies, and destroying ours. He is the Father of eternity; the Origin of all being, and the Cause of the existence, and particularly the Father, of the spirits of all flesh. The Prince of peace - not only the Author of peace, and the Dispenser of peace, but also he that rules by peace, whose rule tends always to perfection, and produces prosperity. Of the increase of his government - this Prince has a government, for he has all power both in heaven and in earth: and his government increases, and is daily more and more extended, and will continue till all things are put under his feet. His kingdom is ordered - every act of government regulated according to wisdom and goodness; is established so securely as not to be overthrown; and administered in judgment and justice, so as to manifest his wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and truth. Reader, such is that Jesus who came into the world to save sinners! Trust in Him!

Isaiah 9:8-10:4

This whole passage reduced to its proper and entire form, and healed of the dislocation which it suffers by the absurd division of the chapters, makes a distinct prophecy, and a just poem, remarkable for the regularity of its disposition and the elegance of its plan. It has no relation to the preceding or following prophecy; though the parts, violently torn asunder, have been, on the one side and the other, patched on to them. Those relate principally to the kingdom of Judah, this is addressed exclusively to the kingdom of Israel. The subject of it is a denunciation of vengeance awaiting their crimes. It is divided into four parts, each threatening the particular punishment of some grievous offense - of their pride, of their perseverance in their vices, of their impiety, and of their injustice. To which is added a general denunciation of a farther reserve of Divine wrath, contained in a distich, before used by the prophet on a like occasion, Isaiah 5:25, and here repeated after each part. This makes the intercalary verse of the poem; or, as we call it, the burden of the song.

â€œPost hoc comma (cap. Isaiah 9:4) interponitur spatium unius lineae, in Cod. 2 et 3: idemque observatur in 245. in quo nullum est spatium ad finem capitis 9.â€ Kennicott, Var. Lect.

â€œAfter this clause (Isaiah 9:4) is interposed the space of one line in Cod. 2 and 3. The same is likewise observed in Cod. 245, in which no space exists at the end of chap. 9.â€

Verse 8

Lord â€œJehovahâ€ - For אֲדֹנָי (Adonai), thirty MSS. of Kennicott's, and many of De Rossi's, and three editions, read יְהוָה (Yehovah).

Verse 9

Pride and stoutness of heart â€œCarry themselves haughtilyâ€ - וַיִּגְבְּהוּ (veyadeu), â€œand they shall know;â€ so ours and the Versions in general. But what is it that they shall know? The verb stands destitute of its object; and the sense is imperfect. The Chaldee is the only one, as far as I can find, that expresses it otherwise. He renders the verb in this place by וַיִּתְרַבְּבוּ (veithrababu), â€œthey exalt themselves, or carry themselves haughtily; the same word by which he renders וַיִּגְבְּהוּ (gabehu), Isaiah 3:16. He seems, therefore, in this place to have read וַיִּיגְבְּהוּ (vaiyigbehu), which agrees perfectly well with what follows, and clears up the difficulty. Archbishop Secker conjectured וַיִּדְבְּבוּ (vayedabberu), referring it to לְמֹר (lemor), in the next verse, which shows that he was not satisfied with the present reading. Houbigant reads וַיִּיְרֵבוּ (vaiyereu), et pravi facti sunt, they are become wicked, which is found in a MS.; but I prefer the reading of the Chaldee, which suits much better with the context.

Houbigant approves of this reading; but it is utterly unsupported by any evidence from antiquity: it is a mere mistake of ר (resh) for ד (daleth); and I am surprised that it should be favored by Houbigant.

Verse 10

The bricks - â€œThe eastern bricks,â€ says Sir John Chardin, (see Harmer's Observ. I., p. 176), â€œare only clay well moistened with water, and mixed with straw, and dried in the sun.â€ So that their walls are commonly no better than our mud walls; see Maundrell, p. 124. That straw was a necessary part in the composition of this sort of bricks, to make the parts of the clay adhere together, appears from Exodus 5. These bricks are properly opposed to hewn stone, so greatly superior in beauty and durability. The sycamores, which, as Jerome on the place says, are timber of little worth, with equal propriety are opposed to the cedars. â€œAs the grain and texture of the sycamore is remarkably coarse and spongy, it could therefore stand in no competition at all (as it is observed, Isaiah 9:10) with the cedar, for beauty and ornament.â€ - Shaw, Supplement to Travels, p. 96. We meet with the same opposition of cedars to sycamores, 1 Kings 10:27, where Solomon is said to have made silver as the stones, and cedars as the sycamores in the vale for abundance. By this mashal, or figurative and sententious speech, they boast that they shall easily be able to repair their present losses, suffered perhaps by the first Assyrian invasion under Tiglath-pileser; and to bring their affairs to a more flourishing condition than ever.

