

## Reading 1

[Is 8:23-9:3-1](#)

### Jerome Biblical Commentary

(d) THE PRINCE OF PEACE (8:23-9:6). **23.** Zebulun and Naphthali were the first provinces of Israel to be overrun by Tiglath-pileser III in 733. Some of the population of these territories was sent into exile (*VBW* 3, 32). *but in the end:* Eventually God would restore the ravaged lands to their former glory. Mt 4:15-16 sees in Jesus' Galilean proclamation of the kingdom of God the fulfillment of this prophecy. The swift change in this verse from a vision of ruin to a promise of restoration prepares the way for the following oracle, one of the most important Messianic passages in the OT. The oracle has been incorporated into the Christian liturgy of Christmas Day.

**9:1.** Some scholars believe that the entire oracle (1-6) is a liturgical piece excerpted from the ceremony of a royal accession. Every time that a Davidic king came to the throne and was hailed as an adopted son of God there was cause for rejoicing. On this occasion, the promises of an eternal covenant with David were reaffirmed and hopes were raised for that ideal king of the future who would perfectly realize the dynastic ideal. Therefore, the oracle does not concern any historical king, such as Ahaz or Hezekiah, but the ideal king who would introduce the definitive era of peace and justice. Once again, the prophetic perspective is focused not on a king of the present but on the ideal Davidic king, the Emmanuel of 7:14. Perfect tenses are used by Isaiah, but they are "prophetic perfects," expressing the certainty of a future event.**3.** The captive's condition is compared to that of a harnessed farm animal, a fairly common image of enslavement. Usually the yoke was made of wood but sometimes of metal (Jer 28:13). The "pole" was the bar of the yoke that pressed down on the captive's shoulders (*VBW* 3, 33). Isaiah later compares the liberation of Israel from Assyrian captivity to the breaking of a yoke and the lifting of a burden (10:27; 14:25). *as on the day of Midian:* An allusion to Gideon's defeat of the Midianites (Jgs 7:16-25).

### Haydock's Catholic Commentary

None available for these specific verses

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*VBW* B. Mazar *et al.*, eds., *Views of the Biblical World*, tr. M. Dagut (5 vols.; N.Y., 1961)

## Word Biblical Commentary (non-Catholic)

The laments of the doomsayers of 8:19–22 are interrupted by a claim of hope. The speech denies that *gloom* and *anguish* are the inevitable results of the events. While recognizing the bitterness of the moment, it reminds them of a hope based on God's intervention. Election is viewed as a guarantee of his eventual redemption.

The perfect verbs begin a series that extends through the first line of 9:5. Note that they are used here both for "the first" as well as "the later" time. They are independent of a time context. We have tried to show this by translating with present time throughout (Watts, *Syntax*, 46).

The *first time* for the lands of *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* is not easy to identify. *Zebulun* was located in south Galilee astride the valley east of Carmel that is drained by the river Kishon. But its significance as a tribe had been diminishing since the days of the Judges. Solomon's districts have the territory absorbed into that of Asher (1 Kgs 4:16). Whatever of its territory was not seized in Tiglath-Pileser's drive down the coast in 734 B.C. was taken the following year in the invasion of Naphtali. The Province of Dor was established for the coastal region from Carmel south to Joppa (*MBA*, 148).

*Naphtali* was the northernmost territory of the Kingdom of Israel, occupying the northwest of the lake of Galilee on up to the southern slopes of Mount Hermon. It had also not been significant since the period of the Judges, although Solomon did have a district named Naphtali. The *first time* could appropriately refer to a time beginning before the monarchy. But it is also possible that this reference is simply figurative for the area of the Northern Kingdom that was occupied by Assyria in 732 B.C. The Assyrian campaign of 733 B.C. drove across the heart of its territory (*MBA*, 147), attacked its major cities, and reduced it to a province under an Assyrian governor (2 Kgs 15:29). The same campaign subdued Gilead and it, too, was made an Assyrian province (*Annals of Tiglath Pileser III*). Some of its leaders were taken into exile (1 Chr 5:6).

A. Alt's (FS A. *Bertholet*) suggestion to add a line listing parallel terms such as the Valley of Sharon and the Mountain of Gilead is appropriate as a comment on the geography even if it is judged unnecessary for the strophic structure of the passage.

Being *brought into contempt* apparently refers to these invasions and the subsequent oppression under a foreign ruler. Both verbs in this verse lack an explicit subject. Two possibilities are likely. One is that Yahweh is the subject. Some commentaries suggest that he should be put into the text. This would fit, especially if the second persons of the verbs in 9:3–4 also are addressed to him. Another possibility is

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MBA Y. Aharoni and M. Ari-Yonah, *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1977)

that the subject is “the first time” and “the later” (Budde, *Jes. Erl.*, 99; Wildberger). We have chosen this second course. The emphasis is on the hope that a later time can bring a reversal of fortunes for the stricken area. But the subject’s ambiguity is deliberate and is intended to let the hearer or reader make the choice.