

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series

(Proph14S_Prophecy in the Prophets_Isaiah_Chps1-39_Part 1)

Introduction – Chapters 1-39

In two prior sessions, we have covered a general introduction to the book of Isaiah and a general review of the historical background of the book. In this lesson, we will focus upon chapters 1-39 by reviewing things pertinent to this section of the book in particular as well as overview the passages in this section that have eschatological overtones.

Two halves – You may recall from our first introductory session that Isaiah has two major sections – chapters 1-39 and chapters 40-66. The first section has a historical background rooted in the Assyrian threat to Israel and Judah. (Chapters 36-39 form a bridge of sorts between the two sections with a historical interlude). The last half of the book has a historical background rooted in the Babylonian threat to the southern kingdom – Judah.

Important concepts in the first half – There are several important concepts that we've previously reviewed which are related to the first half of the book.

- ✓ The word "comfort" is used 1 time in the first half while it is used frequently in the second half of the book.
- ✓ The theme of "judgment" is emphasized in the first half; whereas, salvation and comfort are a more prevalent theme in the second half. (This follows the pattern set by the Mosaic Law – violations of the covenant will result in judgment prior to any blessings being dispensed under the terms of the Abrahamic covenant).
- ✓ While "Yahweh" is the most common name for God used by Isaiah (300+ times), the Hebrew compound name Yahweh Ts^a va-ot (translated "Lord of hosts") appears 46 times in chapters 1-39 and only 6 times thereafter.

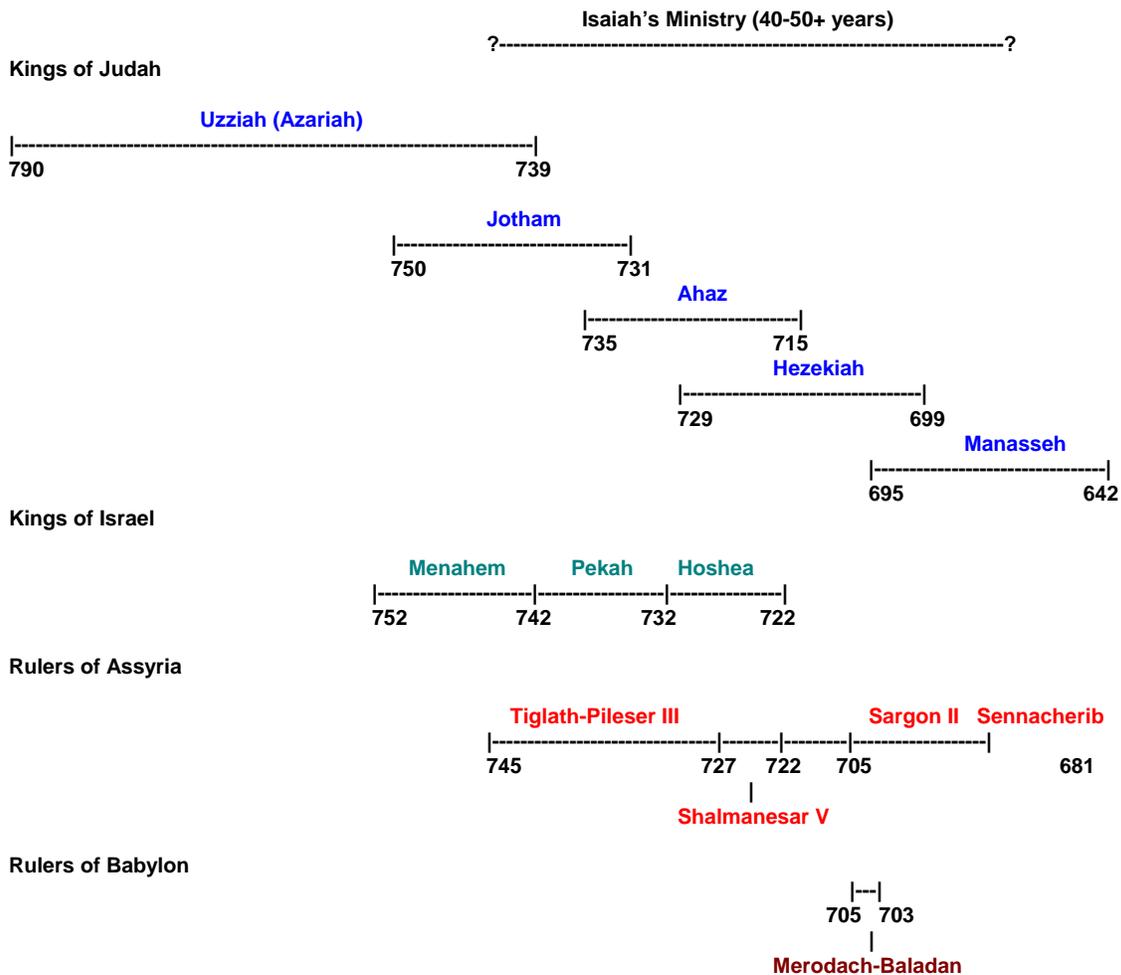
Important principles from our first two sessions – Already in this study, we have seen two important principles emerge related to the spiritual believer and leader.

- ✓ *Principle:* God uses prepared people.
- ✓ *Application:* Isaiah was a man who was prepared and who, as a result, was God's man for the crisis (30:1-5, 15). Consider the fact that Isaiah's ministry spanned the Assyrian invasion, the Syro-Ephramite war, the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians and the exile of the Northern Kingdom.
- ✓ *Principle:* A spiritual believer's life should be characterized by a balance between objectivity and compassionate care for others consistent with our Lord's example.
- ✓ *Application:* While Jesus' 1st Advent was still future to Isaiah, Isaiah demonstrated certain spiritual attributes that would be modeled perfectly by our Lord. Isaiah accurately assessed the spiritual condition of his times (objectivity) and at the same time, he was an intercessor and servant (37:21; 59:9-15; 62:6, 7; 64:1-2 cf. 44:26; 61:1-3).

Important historical context for chapters 1-39 – In this section of the introduction to this lesson, we will depict some of the important figures at play in the power struggles that form the historic backdrop for chapters 1-39. We will also overview some of the highlights or significant mentions in these chapters.

Isaiah mentions in chapter 1 verse 1 several Judean kings that reigned during his ministry. In addition, there are several Assyrian rulers as well as a Babylonian ruler that are either mentioned or to whom allusion is made. Egypt and other nations are mentioned too. The diagram below is an attempt to depict how these ruler's and nations inter-relate chronologically. We don't know the exact dates of the beginning nor end of Isaiah's ministry; however, we do

know it began toward the end of the reign of Uzziah (a.k.a. Azariah) per 6:1 and it probably ended sometime into the reign of Manasseh according to early Christian tradition.



Background highlights in chapters 1-39 and attempted chronology:

- ✓ Isaiah notes the character of Israel's leadership – greedy (5:8 cf. 3:14, 15; 5:1-7), self-indulgent (5:11), and cynical (5:19).
- ✓ The people are religious and pretentious, not compassionate as would characterize a spiritual people (1:16, 17)
- ✓ Isaiah's ministry would seal the fate of unbelieving Israel (6:1-13)
- ✓ Assyria was God's agent (10:5-11)
- ✓ Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 B.C.) wanted to extend Assyria's rule to the west
- ✓ Tiglath received tribute from Menahem (752-742 B.C.) and Pekah – Israel's king (2 Ki 15:17-22, 27-31)
- ✓ Pekah aligned with Rezin – the King of Damascus, Syria – about 734 B.C.
- ✓ King Ahaz refused to join the coalition
- ✓ The Syro-Ephramite war against Judah ensued
- ✓ Pekah wanted to install a puppet king in Judah, a man by the name of Tabel (7:6)
- ✓ Ahaz could not match Isaiah's faith and did not follow God's request to seek a sign (7:1-8:18)
- ✓ Ahaz sought to preserve his throne by becoming a vassal state to Assyria
- ✓ In 732 B.C., Tiglath-Pileser III swept through Damascus and invaded as far south as Galilee (9:1; 2 Ki 15:25-29)
- ✓ Tiglath was succeeded by Shalmanesar V (726-722 B.C.)

- ✓ Hoshea, king of Israel, then rebelled against Assyria (2 Ki 15:30)
- ✓ Shalmanesser began the attack on Israel and Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) completed it by leveling the city of Samaria and deporting its populace (2 Ki 17:5, 6)
- ✓ When Shabako became pharaoh of Egypt in 715 B.C., the smaller western states sought Egypt's help against Assyria.
- ✓ After Israel's fall, Isaiah tries to influence Judean policy against joining the rebellious alliance of Western states that were opposed to Assyrian domination (20:1-6) by walking naked and barefoot as a sign of being exiled into captivity
- ✓ Sargon defeats the alliance and Sennacherib (705-703 B.C.) assumes the Assyrian throne
- ✓ Hezekiah, successor to Ahaz (2 Ki 16:20; 18:1) decides to withhold tribute to Assyria when Sennacherib becomes ruler of Assyria
- ✓ Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon (705-703 B.C.), probably provided motivation for Hezekiah's actions by encouraging the western states to rebel. He sent ambassadors to Hezekiah (39)
- ✓ Hezekiah shows off his armory and treasury – two essentials to support a revolt (30:1, 2). However, his actions were arrogant because he had reverted to human might and counsel just after experiencing a victory at the hands of the Lord.
- ✓ Sennacherib marches through the Shephelah (Judah's western foothills) and to the gate of Jerusalem (10:28-32; Mic 1:8-16) in response.
- ✓ When Hezekiah repented, the Lord relented and spared the city (37:1-38; Jer 26:18, 19)

Isaiah 2 – Prophecies of the Future House of the Lord

In chapter 1, Isaiah introduces the basis for God's case against Israel and Judah. He describes their rebellious pattern of life in ways that indicate that the two nation's populations were reversionistic.¹ For instance, Isaiah states that "they have rebelled" (v. 2), "they have forsaken the Lord" (v. 4), "they have turned away backward" (v. 4), and they are so hardened that the Lord's discipline only hardens them more (v. 5-6). He compares them to Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 10) – the epitome of wickedness, sinfulness and departure from Yahweh. Their sacrifices and religious observances were spiritually empty (vv. 11-15) largely due to the fact that they were also participating in the worship of false gods through involvement in fertility rituals (vv. 29-30). Whatever good existed was made unrighteous or impure because of these spiritual failures (v. 22). The leadership was characterized by greed, bribery and political corruption (v. 23).

As a result, Isaiah spoke of judgment as if it had already occurred because it was so certain (v. 7) in spite of calls for repentance (vv. 16-20). Jerusalem ("daughter Zion" – v. 8), is portrayed as without any protection from judgment (v. 8). Yet, God would preserve the spiritual remnant (v. 9) in order to honor His own covenantal promises in accordance with His Own integrity.

The mention of a remnant causes Isaiah to think ahead to how different things will be in Israel's "latter days." The prophecy recorded in chapter 2, verses 1-4 relates to those "latter days." In Isaiah's mind, there was no Church Age dispensation in his view of the future. Instead, Isaiah and all other OT prophets to this point envisioned a future earthly kingdom with the promised "seed" (Ge 3:15) as its ruler. Therefore, from Isaiah's perspective, eschatological events consisted of God sending His Messiah/King who would be a servant/deliverer to His

¹ I've adopted the term "reversionism" or "reversionistic" to describe the spiritual state of a person (believer or unbeliever) who has been exposed to divine truth, but rejects it. As a result, that person will demonstrate a pattern of thought and actions that "revert" from Truth and which are characterized by reaction to the Truth, being guided by emotions, constantly seeking personal happiness in the things of this world, and substituting the lie (cosmic deception) for the Truth, among other things.

people. This Messiah/King would suffer greatly even to death (Isa 53 cf. Psa 22), yet be resurrected to establish His kingdom and conquer His foes.

While this chronology was never explicitly stated by any OT prophet, the elements of a basic eschatological framework were definitely present. We can reasonably conclude that Isaiah would have been very familiar with the connection between such passages as Genesis 3:15 and Psalm 22 as well as a number of other passages we have studied in this series and which had already been committed to writing by the 8th Century B.C. The Holy Spirit used that thematic thread that ran through recorded Scripture up to the years that Isaiah ministered (8th Century B.C.) to provide Isaiah with a basis for grasping the significance of the additional revelation he would receive from the Holy Spirit about the coming Servant/Messiah. As a result, Isaiah's eschatological vision of the future was built upon these interconnected thematic elements and enhanced by additional revelation he received. Yet, a more definitive understanding of eschatological events would not be attained until other prophets arose later in Israel's history, e.g. Daniel, Zechariah, and others.

To Isaiah, the period of time that would elapse between the suffering of the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom on earth was not known. Nor did Isaiah (and other OT prophets) know that the earthly kingdom would consist of a definite number of years. To him and other OT prophets, that kingdom was viewed as eternal. Finally, Isaiah clearly understood the concept of resurrection – an essential element a belief in a future eternal judgment by God (see Isa 26:19). The seeds of Isaiah's belief in the resurrection are found in such passages as Job 19:26 and in Abraham's demonstration of faith when he offered Isaac to be sacrificed (Ge 22) for Abraham knew that God would have to resurrect Isaac in order to fulfill His own promise to Abraham regarding the "seed." Thus, resurrection was an essential element of the eschatological understanding of Isaiah.

So, to Isaiah, the phrase "latter days" or "last days" would have been a reference to Israel's future with a focus upon the period surrounding the Messiah's establishment of the earthly kingdom. We have studied this phrase in a previous lesson in this series and we noted that the phrase is used (depending upon the context) in reference to a span of time that ranges from the last days of the Age of Israel (a.k.a. Daniel's 70th Week or the seven year Tribulation) to the end of the Millennium. Frequently, the focal point within that span of time in Scripture is the period leading up to the 2nd Advent of the Messiah and the period following that 2nd Advent when the Kingdom is established on earth.² In Isaiah's mind and writing, the phrase is used in reference to both sides of the Messiah's 2nd Advent, depending upon the context of the specific passage.

Verses 1-4 mirror the same terminology found in Micah 4:1-3. The description of the Temple Mount ("the mountain of the Lord's house... established on the top of the mountains") could refer to the change in topography in Jerusalem associated with the Messiah's Second Advent (Zech 14:, 4, 10) or it could be a figurative reference to the restoration to a position of prominence that Jerusalem will enjoy after the Second Advent as the center of worship of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. In all likelihood, it probably encompasses both ideas. This idea – the prominence of the Temple in the Messianic kingdom – is a prominent theme throughout Isaiah's book (see 11:9; 25:6-7; 27:13; 30:29; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20).

Just as the Temple in Jerusalem was a type of the heavenly sanctuary (see Heb 9:24), so the "mountain" (Mount Zion) was to be a copy of a heavenly reality (see Heb 9:23, 24; 12:22-24). This passage points out the fact that in the coming Kingdom, the city of Jerusalem and the

² For more discussion on the subject of the phrase "latter days," see the lesson Proph10C. Also, see helpful discussions in John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies: 37 Crucial Prophecies That Affect You Today* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 351 and J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 230, 351.

Temple will be prominent. How can this be since Daniel indicates in Daniel 9:26 that the Temple will be destroyed during the Tribulation? (Compare to Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4). The logical conclusion is that the Temple will be rebuilt for the Millennial kingdom. This is in fact what happens according to Ezekiel 40-43 where the prophet records a vision of a Temple unlike any that Israel or the world has seen to date.

As the detailed picture of the temple was unfolded [in Ezekiel], it was obvious that it cannot be explained as plans for the temple built by the returning exiles from Babylon. The temple they built was totally different in its structure. Also, it is unexplainable if you take this in a symbolic sense because the details given were not necessary for a symbolic temple. Accordingly, those who believe in interpreting prophecy in a literal sense believe this will be an actual temple that will be built in the millennial kingdom. There may be a previous temple built on different specifications in the period of the Great Tribulation before the Second Coming as a sacrificial system of offerings was restored and then stopped by the political developments, but it will not be the temple that was described here in Ezekiel.³

Only the regenerate desire to seek God, thus only regenerate people will go up to the mountain of the Lord. This is also an indication that this passage is a reference to a period just after the 2nd Advent during the Messianic Kingdom when the city of Jerusalem is exalted and Jesus' righteous reign has been inaugurated. Some other observations about chapter 2 follow:

- ✓ There will be nations in the Millennium (v. 2)
- ✓ These nations will consist of redeemed believers who desire to worship the Lord (vv. 2-3) for they will desire to be taught by the Lord and "walk" (live) by the light of Truth.
- ✓ The judgment of nations will be the Lord's responsibility, not man's responsibility since there will be no more war (v.4).
- ✓ God (through Jesus' rule) will settle disputes and injustices between nations during this era (v. 4)
- ✓ Isaiah reminds his readers that when great truths about the future are given in Scripture, it should affect their current life and conduct (v. 5 cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18; 5:1-8; 2 Pe 3:10-14; 1 Jn 3:2-3).
- ✓ In vv. 6-9, Isaiah describes the reason that God had forsaken His people – they had become like the unbelieving nations around them through participation in their pagan rituals.
- ✓ They had even begun to practice divination to discern the future and to even control people when, as God's people, they should have understood their future through the revelation He had already given them (v. 6).
- ✓ The nation of Judah had material wealth and military strength (v. 7), the source of which was probably seen as their idols (v. 8) due to their arrogantly motivated spiritual blindness.
- ✓ Isaiah recognized that their spiritual hearts were so hardened that he asked that they not be spared (v. 9).
- ✓ The judgment of the Lord is such a terrifying thing that people seek to hide in caves (v. 10, 19, 21 cf. Re 6:16).
- ✓ Throughout Isaiah, there is an interesting interplay between the judgment which the Lord will inflict upon the nation by the Assyrians and Babylonians and the judgment that will come upon the whole world and Israel in the "last days" just before the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.
- ✓ Though many of the predictions in vv. 2:10-21 happened when Assyria and Babylon attacked Israel and Judah, the passage looks ahead to a period when judgment will be poured out upon the entire world.

³ John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1990), 199.

- ✓ God's discipline and judgment has a way of refocusing people's priorities (v. 20). Material objects of value lose their importance.
- ✓ After reflecting upon the judgment to be experienced by Judah in chapter 3, Isaiah returns to address the wonderful fellowship with the Lord (i.e. the "Branch" – 4:2 cf. Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8) that the believing remnant will enjoy in "that day" (4:3-6).
- ✓ The believing remnant will have been proven pure through the baptism of fire that attends judgment associated with the 2nd Advent (4:4 cf. Matt 3:11).
- ✓ God's glory will once again be visible as it was during the Exodus (4:5).

7:14 – A Virgin Shall Conceive a Son Named Immanuel

10 Moreover the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 11 "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" 13 Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you [Judah] a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. (Isa 7:14)

Questions surrounding this Prophecy – How could this prophecy have been a sign to Judah that Israel (sometimes referred to as Samaria or Ephraim) and Syria (sometimes referred to as Damascus) would be destroyed?

King Ahaz has been so arrogant that he refused to comply and ask for a sign as directed by the Lord. So, Isaiah then turns from King Ahaz and addresses the "house of David" or Judah. Isaiah says that the sign will be a virgin who will conceive and bear a son by the name Immanuel.

How could this be a sign to Ahaz if it is a prophecy regarding the virgin birth of Christ some 700 plus years later? Does "virgin" really mean "virgin?"

Answers to these questions – The Hebrew word translated "virgin" in this passage means a "young woman of marriageable age" or it can mean a "virgin." Depending upon which way it is translated influences how one interprets when the prophecy was fulfilled. Some of the arguments in favor of both an immediate fulfillment through Isaiah's son and a more distant fulfillment through Jesus are listed in the chart to follow:

Distant or Immediate Fulfillment?	Arguments/Comments
Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Isaiah's wife, the "prophetess" of 8:3 who bore "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz" [speed the spoil, hasten the booty], could have been the "virgin" if this prophecy indeed had an immediate aspect to its fulfillment. ✓ Isaiah 8:1, 3, & 4 which describes the relationship between Isaiah's son's name and the historical events surrounding Ahaz seems to bear a direct relationship to the prophecy relating to a virgin in 7:14-17. ✓ Isaiah's son's name was Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz and means "speed the spoil, hasten the booty." The prophecy in 7:15 that he would eat curds and honey (verses bread and wine from cultivated lands) represented the simple diet of Judah after the Assyrian invasion. There was no cultivated land and the diet was associated with hard times. ✓ Isaiah called his children "signs" in 8:18.
Distant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In the Hebrew, the word "virgin" is accompanied by the definite article, thus "the virgin." ✓ The 2nd Century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible translates the Hebrew word with the Greek word <i>parthenos</i> which means a virgin.

	<p>(Certainly, Isaiah's wife did not conceive Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz apart from sexual intercourse with Isaiah.)</p> <p>✓ The description of Isaiah's son - Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (speed the spoil, hasten the booty) doesn't reconcile with the "Child" of Isaiah 9:6 who is called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."</p>
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Conclusion – It can be argued that this is a case of dual fulfillment in Scripture whereby the prophecy has one level of fulfillment in the immediate future and a final fulfillment many years later. If this is the case, then the immediate fulfillment was “a” fulfillment and not “the” ultimate fulfillment. *The more immediate fulfillment* – Isaiah's son was a sign to Ahaz and Judah in that he symbolized the judgment to come upon Israel and Syria. Thus, he was a sign of hope to Ahaz and Judah. *The ultimate fulfillment* – is found in Jesus Who was born of a virgin and Who is to ultimately deliver Judah (as well as all of Israel) from all enemies and Who is to establish His reign of peace at His Second Advent.

My personal view – While dual fulfillment is indeed a possibility for Isaiah 7:14, it is my personal opinion that Isaiah could have had just the Messiah in mind. Had Ahaz been a spiritual man, he could have taken comfort in knowing that Judah would survive the threat from the Syrian-Ephramite alliance and from Assyria to eventually produce the Messiah. Isaiah merely continued an oral tradition that traces its roots back to the first recorded Messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15. We could safely speculate that there was a thread of understanding associated with this oral tradition that weaves its way through human history and that understood “the seed of the woman” in Genesis 3:15 to be a reference to a virgin birth of the Messiah. Isaiah merely built upon this tradition with his prophecy in 7:14. On the other hand, the book of Isaiah is full of such dual references to future events – more immediate and more distant – at the same time.

Principle – The fulfilled prophecies of the Bible should provide us with absolute confidence that those prophecies which relate to events still future to us will come to pass.

Principle – The fulfilled prophecies of the Bible help us to understand the integrity of God's essence.

Application – Just as this prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 now finds historical fulfillment in both the 8th Century B.C. deliverance of Judah and in the virgin birth of Christ some 700 plus years later, we can take comfort knowing that Jesus is the ultimate victor at the 2nd Advent no matter how much evil we see today.

Principle – Why should it be a sensational prophecy for a man to be born of a woman unless it was miraculous, i.e. the woman was actually a virgin?

Application – some related passages –

Matthew 1:22-23

So all this [*the angel of the Lord's appearance to Joseph in a dream*] was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet [*Isaiah 7:14*], saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Luke 1:31-32

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

Isaiah 9:7

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.