

## **Isaiah 8:16-9:1**

[16] Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples.

[17] I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.

[18] Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

[19] And when they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

[20] To the teaching and to the testimony! Surely for this word which they speak there is no dawn.

[21] They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry; and when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse their king and their God, and turn their faces upward;

[22] and they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.

[1] But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zeb'ulun and the land of Naph'tali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

### **Devotion**

I hate waiting, especially for important things. If something is going to affect my life I want to know about it now. If someone has something to say, I want to hear it now. If there's bad news I'd rather know what it is sooner than later so I can go ahead and deal with it. Waiting means being in doubt. It means a lack of control.

I've had to learn patience through the years and I've had to learn how to deal with waiting patiently while someone else makes decisions about my life. I remember one particular event that tested my patience to the very limits and beyond.

My wife and I decided it was time to have children in the middle of our fifth year of marriage, but that was not to be. Like many couples we went through the painful struggle of infertility. Month after month we faced the uncertainty of wondering if we would be blessed with a child only to have our wonder turned to despair. We tried every recommendation that seemed reasonable and many that weren't. We went to doctors and specialists who promised solutions to our childlessness. As months turned into years, we had to deal with the growing realization that we would remain childless, that our genes would end with us. Surely God's face had been turned against us and we were forced to settle in a place of exile where no happy couple wishes to go.

All around us other young marrieds were announcing their future bliss. Sunday after Sunday new babies were being presented in worship. Every place we went had child care that was overflowing. No place was safe from those young voices that reminded us of our plight. Mother's Day became the most dreaded holiday of the year.

I believe that this is the type of emotion that Isaiah was dealing with as he tried to speak God's word to Israel. People had fallen into despair and with good reasons. Even if they didn't realize it yet, a deep darkness was overshadowing everything. Their plans for the future were becoming shadows of meaninglessness. Life has times when it seems we have been abandoned, forgotten by God. Times when we are tempted to turn to anything in our society that might hold a glimmer of hope, even if we know that hope baseless, or built on the sand. Others may turn to those false promises but they will prove to be only destructive in the end.

It is in those times of doubt and darkness that we must remember the God who is the foundation of our hope and faith. Our days may be dark but we have not been forgotten by our God. It is in those times that we must remember that God's promise has not been removed from us. There is a bright future for those who can find the strength to persevere. Those of us who live our lives based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ have a foundation for hope that goes beyond anything we can imagine, if we but trust in God.

Fortunately for my wife and I. God's plans for us did include children. Once we decided that we could adopt we found a world that needed the love and care we could provide. Amazingly, only nine months after our initial contact with an adoption agency, a beautiful baby boy only 3 weeks old was placed in our care. It may seem that God's face is turned from us for a time, but that is only the result of the limitations of our human perspectives. God is faithful to the end.

### **Prayer**

O God of hope, continuing to abide with us that we may not lose sight of your promises for our future. Help us to cling to you and your ways that we may realize the abundance of your love in this time of uncertainty; through Christ our Lord. Amen.