

Isaiah 9:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

Analysis

This verse transitions from judgment to hope. The regions 'vexed' and 'afflicted'—Zebulun and Naphtali in Galilee—would be honored afterward. The 'way of the sea' (Via Maris trade route), 'beyond Jordan,' and 'Galilee of the nations' (Gentiles) identify the specific geographic area. What was first humiliated (by Assyrian conquest in 732 BC) would later be glorified. This prepares for verse 2's great light—Matthew 4:13-16 identifies Jesus's Galilean ministry as the fulfillment. God's redemptive pattern: He glorifies what was humbled.

Historical Context

Tiglath-Pileser III conquered northern Israel in 732 BC, devastating Zebulun and Naphtali (2 Kings 15:29). These tribal territories became Assyrian provinces, ethnically mixed with foreign settlers, and scorned by southern Jews as 'Galilee of the Gentiles.' Yet God chose this despised region for Messiah's primary ministry 700 years later. Jesus's headquarters in Capernaum and ministry throughout Galilee fulfilled this prophecy precisely, demonstrating God's sovereign plan across centuries.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God often choose the humbled and despised places and people for His greatest works?
2. What does this teach about God's long-range planning and sovereign orchestration of history?
3. How does Jesus's ministry in despised Galilee demonstrate God's heart for the marginalized?

Interlinear Text

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Jordan

in Galilee

of the nations

H3383

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Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 15:29 (Parallel theme): In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

Isaiah 8:22 (Parallel theme): And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.

2 Chronicles 16:4 (Parallel theme): And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.

1 Chronicles 5:26 (Parallel theme): And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

Leviticus 26:24 (Parallel theme): Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins.

Leviticus 26:28 (Parallel theme): Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.