

A Light Shining in the Darkness *Isaiah 9:1-7*

What was the biblical situation of the nation of Judea (today's Israel) more than 2,700 years ago? The people living in Zebulun and Naphtali, i.e. Galilee, were militarily invaded by the Assyrian Empire and '*humiliated*' in warfare. Foreigners settled, speaking a language different from that of the capital Jerusalem. The residents were discriminated against and called the "*Galilee of Gentiles*". They were indeed "*a people walking in darkness*" and "*living in the land of the shadow of death*".

To such a people, Isaiah encourages them to "see a *great light*" and "*a light has shone*". Light is hope. God breaks "*the rod that strikes the shoulder, the whip of the oppressor*" and burns "*the soldier's shoes*" and other military equipment. God rejects weapons and prophesies the coming of peace. A "*child*" is born, and his name is proclaimed "*Prince of Peace (Shalom)*". The original meaning of *Shalom* is peace, health, and well-being. It is a prophecy of the birth of Jesus and a powerful statement of eschatological hope.

Modern society, both at home and abroad, continues to be plagued by gloomy news. The country's ruling party seems uncertain, and the opposition lacks cohesion. The problems of the Unification Church and Jehovah's Witnesses have tarnished the overall perception of the religious domain. Abroad, the world is in a state of darkness, with Israel's military offensives in Palestine, the protracted war in Ukraine, the civil war in Sudan, the military regime in Myanmar and so on. In such a situation, God has given us a source of hope in Jesus, a light that shines brightly in the darkness.