

Five Important Lessons in Biblical Thinking from Isaiah 9  
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From Isaiah 9

FIVE IMPORTANT LESSONS IN BIBLICAL THINKING: THE DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL AND THE MATERIAL

LESSON 1: THE ZEAL OF THE LORD DOMINATES THE HISTORICAL SETTING v.1-5.

#1. There is a differential between the spiritual realities and all that is material. This distinction between the two has been generally problematic to mankind. *The differential is, apparently, the pretext for unbelief in God and rejection of any revelation from Him.*

#2. If we cannot see the spiritual, then, it has no credibility. It has no importance. It is not immediate. The differential is real but it can serve as the foundation for human ideology. *Naturalism, relativism, empiricism, evolution, sociologism and postmodernism are ultimately grounded in the differential.* These are generated on the material side. And that affects human behavior.

#3. Isaiah tackles the *problem of the differential*: "For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian" v.4.

#4. The prophet maintains that *the material side* of the differential is not the true context for our existence. Rather, *the spiritual side* of the differential dominates the world of matter and human experience. And that truth will govern our understanding of situation and circumstance.

#5. The differential is the locus of our hope while we are in this world, because the Almighty dominates the differential. The Lord will act and "there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times" v.1. Our psychology relies on the spiritual side and is not controlled by the temporal world.

#6. "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them" v.2. Truth and wisdom beyond the darkness of the material side, cut off from the spiritual, changes the range of the human mind.

#7. It will be the spiritual side that lifts us up. "You shall...multiply the nation...increase their gladness...as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" v.3.

#8. The differential tests our faith, every day.

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### LESSON 2: THE DIFFERENTIAL IS THE SPHERE OF ABSOLUTE GOVERNANCE v.6, 7.

#1. The differential between the spiritual and the material poses no impediment to the will of God. Nothing on the material side can resist this *spiritual governance*. In fact, the two are bracketed together by the authority and power of the Almighty.

#2. "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders" v.6.

#3. The amazing generalization: *The whole of the material side is nothing less than a portal for the spiritual government and regulation of time*. This would apply to the personal situations and conditions of men in time. Here, then, is the revealed fact that serves as the prerequisite for confidence in prayer.

#4. Upon the shoulders of Jesus rests the governance of time and eternity. Nothing on the material side, nothing inside our bodies stands outside of this governance.

#5. And so we can rejoice because "His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" v.6. #6. This prophetic revelation forces necessary adjustments, changes in how we think about our experiences here.

#7. Rationalism and its consort Naturalism, as ways of thinking, unless they are corrected attempt to shear the material side away from the Governor. We are moved to believe that the two sides are independent, one from the other. That mode of reasoning is wrong.

#8. Why? Because "There will be no end to the increase of His government"v.7. He occupies "the throne of David over his kingdom". His authority acts "to establish" and "to uphold" our wellbeing in the kingdom. Our thinking must be *punctuated* by Scripture. "From then on and forevermore, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this" v.7.

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### LESSON 3: THE APPEARANCE OF REVEALED PROPOSITIONAL TRUTH DEMANDS A CORRESPONDING ACCEPTANCE OF THOUGHT, SPEECH and BEHAVIOR v.8-12.

#1. "The Lord sends a message against Jacob, and it falls on Israel. And all the people know it" v.8. It is God who speaks; yet the differential intervenes. The prophet depicts a reading of Scripture.

#2. Human reason and wisdom diminish the import of revelation; "asserting in pride and in arrogance of heart..." v.9. The word of God is not acceptable, not "reasonable" to many people, perhaps the majority.

#3. This is not a modern reaction. It started in Genesis 3. Defiance of revelation is a hallmark of the fallen human mind. And so consequences are pronounced on human behavior and remain documented for centuries. But human independence, founded on a mistaken understanding of the differential, responds: "The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with smooth stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will replace them with cedars" v.10.

#4. There is no end of defiance, pride and arrogance. The Word of God is not history. It is rather the language manifold of God. Its purpose is to make known the objective reality of God and His invisible yet quite real governance of the material side.

#5. The Bible has always been subject to misrepresentation by believers and unbelievers alike. Currently its authority over the material side is disputed.

#6. Even by believers. This called *progressivism*. To surrender trust in it is to elevate the material side above God.

#7. It is possible to be nice and not love the word of God.

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LESSON 4: REJECTION OF REVELATION IS THE FORK IN THE ROAD v.13-17.

#1. Although the Lord had spoken, "Yet the people do not turn back to Him who struck them, nor do they seek the Lord of hosts" v.13.

#2. The Word of God had no effect on the reasoning of the people who heard it. The wrong understanding of the differential was behind it all. The moral, social, cultural and intellectual leverage had shifted from the spiritual side to the material.

#3. The rejection of revelation became systemic and organized. "The head is the elder and the honorable man, and the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail" v.15.

#4. At some point the majority opinion had been reshaped. The majority opinion was anti-God, anti-revelation. "For those who guide this people are leading them astray; and those who are guided by them are brought to confusion" v.16.

#5. Rejection of the Word of God is *an active sin*. It precedes and fosters the collapse of culture. First the individual refuses the governance of the eternal. Then the mind becomes darkened and as this spreads, the soul of a people dies.

#6. This is not a function of time nor of history. It is the consequent of preference for the material side of the differential. "For every one of them is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth is speaking foolishness" v.17.

#7. Language becomes distorted and confusing. All avenues of self-expression, are corrupted and the mind becomes disabled as a *spiritual instrument*.

#8. This condition is dangerous to any people. Our culture is collapsing under a severe and unseen weight. "In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out" v.17. Fear and confusion are palpable among our people, young and old. The Almighty is speaking to us.

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### LESSON 5: THE DIFFERENTIAL and THE WORLD OF "FACT" v.18-21.

#1. Positivism is the theory or ideology which insists that only facts, verified mathematically are worthy of consideration. That way of thinking is inadequate according to Isaiah.

#2. "...In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out" v.21. There is no conventional mathematical formula for that.

#3. Usually, the differential between the spiritual and the material is used, by some, to assert the material side above the spiritual. Human reason, in this case, puts limits on revealed truth. This is called interpretation. However, the most imposing, the most determinant fact of all is God Himself. "By the fury of the Lord of hosts the land is burned up, and the people are like fuel for the fire...v.19.

#4. A misunderstanding of the differential will immediately affect how the Bible is read. The standardized reading of Scripture holds that biblical meaning must be brought subject to the material side.

#5. The prophet reverses this *habit of thought*. The material side is always, in every generation, to be subordinated to the language manifold originating in the spiritual.

#6. Accordingly, human wisdom, human temporal experience, the intuitive and common sense may be useful but they are marginalized, even contradicted, by the Word of God.

#7. The relation between the spiritual and the material is that of *cause --> to effect*. "The fury of the Lord" v.19 and "His anger" v.21 are just two of the effecting agents of what can happen on the temporal side.

#8. Isaiah's emphasis is that our thinking, while in the temporal side, must be consistent with revelation from God.

#9. The governance of the spiritual over the material is reflected in the governance of the mind of God over the mind of a man.