

Isaiah 9:1-4ⁱⁱⁱ

In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

ⁱⁱⁱ **About the First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4**

In today's reading, the prophet refers to "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali" (v. 1), the land allocated to these two tribes of Israel in the region called Galilee. Because of its distance from the temple in Jerusalem and its proximity to foreign cultures, many Israelites regarded it as more susceptible to pagan influences. A scorned land, it also bore the brunt of enemy attacks from the north. It was situated near the large inland lake called the Sea of Galilee or later the Sea of Tiberius.

Here Isaiah describes God's grand reversal of human situations: the most despised will receive the greatest privilege; those living in spiritual darkness will enjoy the first glimmers of light. The results of God's glorious scheme will include freedom from enemies and the end of war.