

COMMENTARY – ISAIAH 1-39 – Brueggemann

Walter Brueggemann. *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1998),

Is. 9:1-2

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. **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..

The former time is the time of failure and oppression under the rule of Ahaz.

The latter time is the time after Ahaz when new royal leadership (Hezekiah) makes new “peace and prosperity” possible. When this “former/after” is read in the larger context of the book of Isaiah (as in 43:18-19), then the “former time” is the entire preexilic and exilic experience of abuse and suffering, and the “latter time” is the time of homecoming and restoration in the land.

The “darkness” refers to a situation of despair and oppression at the hand of Assyria (cf. 8:11; 9:1). **And new light** – “Light” is regularly linked to the coming of Yahweh’s “glory,” that is, to the visible evidence of Yahweh’s splendor, majesty, and sovereignty. This is the coming of Yahweh vigorously into the life of Judah where there had been only absence. That “darkness into light,” evokes unrestrained celebration and rejoicing.