

Fear God & Heed Him

Isaiah 8

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**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

This prophecy continues from Isaiah 7, where God assured Ahaz, king of Judah, that he would not be overthrown by the combined forces of Syria and Israel. God announced judgment against Syria and Israel, saying of their attack against Judah: *It shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass ... Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, so that it will not be a people.* Here, God gives Isaiah a sign to explain more about how soon the defeat of Syria and Israel will come.

Isaiah 8:1-10 – Assyria Will Invade the Land

Moreover the Lord said to me, “Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man’s pen concerning Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. ² And I will take for Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriaah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.”

³ *Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, “Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; ⁴ for before the child shall have knowledge to cry ‘My father’ and ‘My mother,’ the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria.”*

⁵ *The Lord also spoke to me again, saying: ⁶ “Inasmuch as these people refused the waters of Shiloah that flow softly, And rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah’s son; ⁷ Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them the waters of the River, strong and mighty— The king of Assyria and all his glory; He will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks. ⁸ He will pass through Judah, he will overflow and pass over, he will reach up to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel. ⁹ “Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces! Give ear, all you from far countries. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces; Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. ¹⁰ Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; Speak the word, but it will not stand, For God is with us.”*

v1 – What did God tell Isaiah to do?

Take a large scroll: It isn't often that the prophets are commanded to write, but here is one instance. Isaiah will write concerning his new, unborn son, *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz*, which means *speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder*.

What is the significance of a *man's pen*?

Isaiah's message was meant to be public, and at a level any man could read and understand.

- God wants the common man to be able to understand His Word without needing some scholarly teacher to tell us what God's Word really means... that is an important aspect of having a personal relationship with the Lord.

v2 – Why was there a need for witnesses here?

The LORD appointed two witnesses, so the validity of this word would be beyond dispute.

Deuteronomy 19:15 – *By the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.*

v3 – Who was this prophetess Isaiah went to?

This refers to Isaiah's wife. She is called a prophetess, though it could be in the sense of simply being the wife of the prophet. However, she clearly brought forth prophecy on at least one occasion. The birth and naming of her son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz was a word from God, so she certainly "brought forth" that prophecy!

What other prophetesses are in the Bible?

Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14), Anna (Luke 2:36), and Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:8-9).

- So, it may be that Isaiah's wife had a prophetic ministry. But it may also be that she was simply the wife of the prophet, and her "prophecy" was giving birth to Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.

v4 – How would the birth of Isaiah's son show when Syria and Israel would be invaded by Assyria?

For before the child shall have knowledge to cry "My father" and "My mother": Through the birth and naming of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, the LORD gives a time frame for the invasion of Assyria that will punish Syria and Israel.

- This is essentially the same as the near meaning of the Immanuel sign of Isaiah 7:10-17, but this sign was more public and plainer.

v5-8 – Which nation refused the waters of Shiloah?

The people of northern kingdom of Israel did not appreciate their humble streams (the waters of Shiloah).

- Instead, they rejoiced in wicked leaders: Rezin (king of Syria) and Remaliah's son (Pekah, king of Israel). So, God will give them a different kind of river - the waters of the River, strong and mighty.
- The capital of the Assyrian Empire was Nineveh which was founded on a great river: the Tigris. The Assyrian Empire was also centered across another mighty river: the Euphrates.

What point is being made here in the distinctions between the rivers of Israel and Assyria?

The whole land of Israel simply did not have a river like the Euphrates or the Tigris. God is using the difference between the small, humble, yet adequate waters of Israel and the mighty, yet uncontrolled rivers of Assyria to make a point. It is as if God is saying, "You don't like what I have given you? You persist in rejecting what I give you? Then I will give you something different, but you won't like it either."

v7 – How would the Assyrian river go up over all his channels and go over all his banks?

Like a large river in a flood, the Assyrian army will not stay confined to its "banks." Instead, they will "flow over" their attack on Israel and Syria, and "flood" Judah with violence and destruction (*he will pass through Judah*, v8).

v8 – How would the Assyrian river reach up to the neck?

Assyria would completely conquer the northern nation of Israel. The ten northern tribes would cease to be a nation after the Assyrians conquered them.

- But the Assyrians would not conquer the southern nation of Judah. They would "flood" them (fill the breadth of Your land), and reach up to the neck, but not over their heads.
- Judah would survive the Assyrian invasion, but suffer much destruction from the Assyrians.

Hezekiah was able to keep the king of Assyria away from Jerusalem, and barely able to survive, by buying his favor with riches from the temple - even stripping gold from the temple doors to appease the pagan king!

Whose land is the land of Israel and Judah?

Your land, O Immanuel: This refers back to the "Immanuel" prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. The land the Assyrians will invade doesn't really belong to Judah or to King Ahaz. It belongs to the LORD God, to the coming Messiah, to Immanuel.

v9-10 – Was there any prepping the people of Isaiah's day could have done?

Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces ... speak the word, but it will not stand, for God is with us: The victims of this Assyrian invasion (Syria, Israel, and Judah) could prepare for the invasion all they wanted (*gird yourselves*). But all their preparation would not protect them (*but be broken in pieces*).

- They could take counsel together, but it will come to nothing. All their plans and words and ideas will not stand. God's will was going to be done, despite all the plans and preparations Syria, Israel, and Judah might make against it.

Who is the "us" of God is with us?

In one sense the us is the Assyrian army, because they were the instruments of God's judgment against Syria, Israel, and Judah. Nothing could stop the Assyrian army, because even if they did not know it, or even if their own hearts were wrong in the matter, God was using them.

- But the "us" is also the prophet himself. As a messenger of God, his word would come to pass no matter what the nations involved did to prepare.
- *God is with us* also alludes to the *Immanuel* prophecy, because it means "*God is with us.*"

Isaiah 8:11-22 – Fear God, Heed His Word

¹¹ For the Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: ¹² "Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. ¹³ The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. ¹⁴ He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken." ¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. ¹⁷ And I will wait on the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. ¹⁸ Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion. ¹⁹ And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. ²¹ They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. ²² Then they will look to the earth, and

see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness.

v11 – What did it mean that Isaiah should not walk in the way of this people?

God had given the people over to themselves and Isaiah was not to do anything that that would reduce the impact of their consequences. As if that was even possible based on the previous verses (*it will come to nothing*).

v12 – What was Isaiah not to be afraid of?

Isaiah, and all the people of Judah, were tempted to give into fear and panic, knowing the dangerous place they were in...

- At the time of this prophecy, the armies of Israel and Syria had destroyed much of Judah. Their armies either encircled Jerusalem or were on the way. They planned to depose King Ahaz of Judah and set their own man on the throne (Isaiah 7:6).
- Now, Isaiah's prophecy declared the armies of Syria and Israel would not succeed in conquering Judah, but the Assyrians (who they trusted to help them) would attack them and do much damage.

Why did God warn them about being fearful of “conspiracies” lumping it in with “threats”?

Israel and Syria did conspire together but it would come to nothing and only served to accelerate their demise. It would be easy to be fearful of these conspiracies and threats, but God tells them not to.

How should we regard “conspiracy theories” like the globalist elite wanting to cull earth’s population?

Don't obsess over it despite knowing that it is amazing how many “conspiracy theories” turn out to be true. One Facebook meme I saw said we should start referring to “conspiracy theories” as “spoiler alerts.”

- God is in control and He allows conspiracies to serve His purposes.

v13 – What should be feared instead?

Instead of fearing conspiracies and threats, fear God. Don't see yourself at the mercy of opposing armies; you are in God's hands. Worry about your place with the LORD instead of your enemies!

v14 – How would the Lord be their sanctuary?

The LORD will be our sacred place, and our place of protection. He will keep us safe from our enemies.

v14-15 – How would the Lord be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense?

Instead of finding protection from the LORD, Israel and Syria will “trip” over Him, falling to destruction. Indeed, many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken.

How is Jesus the stone of stumbling and a rock of offense?

1 Peter 2:6-8 – *“Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”*

As believers, Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone of our faith but unbelievers will stumble over Him as their Judge.

- This is a strong statement of the deity of Jesus, because clearly in Isaiah 8:13-14, the LORD of hosts is the stone, and clearly in 1 Peter 2:6-8, Jesus Christ is the stone.

This is the same idea behind the statement of Simeon when he held the child Jesus...

Luke 2:34 – *Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against.*

v16-17 – What else was Isaiah to do?

Share his testimony and God's Word with those faithful to God, the remnant. And wait on the Lord, hope in Him...

- *Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples:* Waiting on the LORD and hope in Him is connected with His word.

v17 – Is waiting on the Lord active or passive?

Waiting on the LORD is not passive inactivity. It means to wait on the LORD as a waiter would wait on a table. It means to be totally attentive to the LORD, focused on His every move, and responsive to His every desire. At times it means inactivity, but even that is an “active inactivity,” where we stand before the LORD, totally focused on Him, waiting for what He wants next.

What were the people of Judah waiting on instead of the Lord?

At the time Isaiah spoke, the leaders and the people of Judah were waiting on the armies of Israel and Syria, because they were under attack.

- Isaiah says, “Battle against Syria and Israel by setting your focus on the LORD. Prepare for the coming attack from Assyria by waiting on the LORD instead of your enemies.”

v18 – How was Isaiah and his children a sign for Israel?

Isaiah had been called to prophesy, and to use his children in his prophetic messages (Isaiah 7:3, 8:3). So, it is as if he is saying, "Look at us! We are the message!"

- The name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz means, "Speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder." This spoke of the coming attack on Syria, Israel, and Judah by Assyria.
- The name Shear-Jashub means, "A Remnant Shall Return." This spoke of the restoration God would eventually bring.
- The name Isaiah means, "Salvation is of the LORD." This spoke of the attitude and hope Judah needed to have.

How are the children of God also the message of God?

Hebrews 2:11-13 – *For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying ... "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."*

Just as much as Isaiah's children were living witnesses of the truth of God's Word, so are we as God's children.

- We are living testimonies of God's redeeming work.

v19 – About what did God through Isaiah warn Judah?

In the present danger from Syria and Israel, and in the coming danger from Assyria, Judah will be tempted to seek guidance and comfort from those who are mediums and wizards.

- Isaiah exposes the foolishness of this, when he says, "*Should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?*"

When you are in trouble, shouldn't you seek your God? If you can't rely on your God when you are in trouble, then what good is your God?

What sense does it make to seek the dead on behalf of the living?

The living God speaks through His living Word and His living people to guide us. There is no reason to seek the dead which is what mediums do.

What does this verse have to say about praying to the saints?

It is foolishness... The exact same question should be asked: *Should we seek the dead on behalf of the living?*

v20 – What should Judah do instead of seek the help of the dead?

To the law and to the testimony! Forget about mediums and wizards and the dead. Instead of all that deception and foolishness, go to God's Word!

Why don't people go to God's Word for advice?

There is no light in them: They don't have the capacity to understand God's Word so they don't bother to use it.

1 Corinthians 2:14 – *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

How is "to the law and to the testimony" good advice for today?

It needs to be proclaimed to our pulpits today:

- Enough with your over-use of anecdotes and jokes; your emphasis on entertainment and sappy stories; your catering to itching ears; your hobbyhorses and pet peeves!

To the law and to the testimony!

What is more effective in people being saved... God's Word or man's commentary on God's Word?

In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, conversions are traceable to the Scripture text, not to any trite or original saying by the preacher expounding on it.

v21 – What becomes of those who do not have the light of God in them?

They will *be hard pressed and hungry* leading to their cursing the authorities over them as well as God.

- The ungodly are often angry, bitter people rebelling against all authorities.
- Their hunger leads them to try all manner of worldly distractions that fall short in fulfilling what only a relationship with the Savior can satisfy.

v22 – What becomes of those who are without God when they worry about the troubles of this world?

They will be driven into darkness: When they forsake God's word and trust in mediums and wizards and the dead, they are courting darkness, not light.

- Darkness is the absence of light... they are on their own and will have no help from God.

What applications come to mind from our discussion today?

- Direct understanding of God's Word is an important aspect of having a personal relationship with Him.
- Be satisfied with what God gives us... thinking it is greener on the other side of the fence gets us in trouble.
- Don't obsess over the conspiracies and threats of men... God is in control.
- Waiting on the Lord is not passive... it is being ready, willing, and able to serve Him when called.
- Children of God are a living testimony of Him... be the salt and light people see!
- Help others come to know God's Word, not just the human commentary on His Word.