

Isaiah 8 Handout

Last week we saw King Ahaz of Judah face a threat from the kingdoms of Aram (Syria) and Israel. Through Isaiah, God tells Ahaz to not fear because their plan will not succeed. God offers to give Ahaz a sign, but he refuses. God gives a sign anyway– the famous prophecy of Immanuel which symbolizes God's presence with His people. The chapter ends with a warning of what's to come including God using pagan nations as His instrument of judgment. Two key themes we saw in chapter 7 included:

- *In what or whom are you trusting?*
- *If you do not stand firm in your faith, then you will not stand at all*

In our chapter today, God warns of a coming judgment and urges them to trust in Him rather than in human alliances. We will see that rejecting God leads to faltering while those who are faithful will find refuge.

Verse 1

What does the Lord tell Isaiah to do? _____

He is to take a large scroll and an ordinary pen and write the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. This name means "speeding to the plunder, hurrying to the spoil". Soldiers would actually shout this phrase to one another as they defeated and plundered their adversary. The name of the child shows the enemy's plunder will come quickly.

Writing this name on a scroll and displaying it makes God's prophecy public and visible for all to see, as well as undeniable.

Verses 2-4

Two priests are called to witness his writing of the name on the scroll. This would have confirmed the date of the prophecy, so that when the predicted events happened, there would be witnesses to testify that Isaiah had predicted them.

Isaiah's wife gives birth to a son and the Lord tells Isaiah to name him Maher-Shalal-Mash-Baz.

What's going to happen before the boy knows how to say "My father, or my mother"?

Verses 5-8

The Lord speaks to Isaiah again.

The gently flowing waters of Shiloah is a symbol of God's steady protection and provision for His people. Shiloah was a stream that carried water from the Gihon spring right outside of Jerusalem into the city to the pool of Siloam. This stream faithfully provided water to all the people of Jerusalem.

So with this in mind, what do you think it means in verse 6 when it says “this people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah?”

How might we “reject the waters of Shiloah” in our own lives today?

The people weren't just rejecting God's protection and provision, they were rejoicing over the coming destruction of Aram and Israel, but they were misguided in their joy. They were relying on human strength (Assyrian army) rather than trusting God to be their protector and deliverer. This alliance showed misplaced confidence in temporary human strategies.

Who is compared to the Euphrates? _____

Assyria is being compared to the Euphrates river which would overflow at times and sweep away everything in its path. This is exactly what Assyria would do when they attacked a nation.

Assyria wouldn't just stop with Aram and Israel. **What else will they do?** _____.

This invasion happened around 701BC, but didn't completely wipe Judah out. As verse 8 says, it would only reach her neck. Judah will keep her head above water, unlike Israel who will completely drown.

The people have rejected the Lord, the gently flowing waters of Shiloah for Assyria, the mighty Euphrates river. As a result, that river will sweep over them.

Verses 9-10

The nations might think they are in control, but they are but instruments that God uses to bring about His purposes and plans. If they think they can completely wipe out God's people to achieve their own goals, they are mistaken. God is and will always be with His people no matter what strategies and plans are made by the surrounding nations. God will always prevail.

Verse 11

Isaiah gets a warning from the Lord. What is he not to do?

We see how God's message had come to Isaiah with great power and urgency - “with His strong hand upon me.” It was a forceful warning from God. He doesn't want Isaiah to follow in the way of the people. They were full of fear and turning to human alliances rather than trusting in the Lord. God is calling His prophet Isaiah to trust in His sovereignty and to speak His truth boldly.

Verses 12-13

God's message to Isaiah continues. He tells him not to follow and take part in the conspiracies and fear of the people.

How should Isaiah regard the Lord (v.13)? _____

This means to honor as being set apart, above all earthly powers; to recognize His absolute authority, uniqueness and purity. This helps remind Isaiah that God controls history, not kings or armies.

Who is he to fear? _____

This does not mean to be terrified, but to be filled with awe and reverence that leads to obedience and trust. The fact is, if we fear the Lord we need not fear anything else, because the fear of God takes out all lesser fears.

Proverbs 9:10 says, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”*

Matthew 10:28 says, *“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Psalm 56:3-4 says, *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”*

King Ahaz and the people of Judah had it all backwards. They were terrified of Aram and Israel, when they should have feared the Lord instead. Then they wouldn’t have had to fear anything else.

Some things we see from these verses:

- We need to have trust over panic. When everyone around us is anxious or looking to human solutions, we need to stay anchored in the reverence of God.
- The right fear leads us to peace. Anxiety does not come from the Lord. Fearing the Lord brings stability because it helps put everything in the right perspective.

Verses 14-15

God will be a holy place for those who fear and trust Him. This is a place of security, confidence and peace.

What will the Lord be to Israel and Judah? _____

What will He be for the people of Jerusalem? _____

Those who live for God and trust Him completely will find Him to be a sanctuary of refuge and peace; a place of safety and protection in the midst of judgment and fear. For those who reject God or refuse to give Him that place of prominence in their lives will instead find Him to be a stone they stumble over or a rock of offense. That’s where the people of Judah find themselves right now. Instead of finding a safe haven, they trip over the very one who could have saved them. People will either build their lives on Him or stumble in unbelief. Their lack of faith in the Lord will bring about destruction and spiritual downfall. They will be ensnared by sin and temptation. Without the Lord, there is no one to help them withstand it.

This passage presents us with a clear choice. We will either trust God and find refuge, or we will reject Him and face destruction. It encourages us to place our trust in God rather than the things of this world.

Verse 16

What is supposed to be bound up? _____

To “bind up” means to preserve it carefully; like a sealed legal document. The “testimony of warning” is God’s prophetic message that He has given to Isaiah. It is called a “testimony of warning” because it testifies against the people’s unbelief and warns of a coming judgment. The words spoken are being wrapped up and safeguarded. Isaiah is to preserve God’s message. This message would be preserved for the faithful remnant, even though most of the people are rejecting it now. This will ensure the truth remains intact for those who believe and follow the Lord, even though the nation turns away.

Verse 17

What does Isaiah say he will do? _____

Isaiah gives a personal response here. He doesn’t deny the reality of the coming judgment. Instead, he chooses to accept it and wait, continuing to trust in God. Even though Isaiah is not seeing the results that he would like, he is choosing to be faithful to the calling that God gave him.

It goes on to say that God is hiding His face from His people. This is referring to God’s judgment on them. Because of their sin and unbelief, God is withdrawing His favor and protection.

Isaiah says he will put his trust in the Lord. He is waiting and trusting in the midst of national panic and unbelief. When we wait, we need to wait in trustful dependence on God and not push forward to try to get the results we want. We need to rest in God and His timing. True trust almost always involves an element of waiting. We need to believe even when we cannot see.

Verse 18

What does Isaiah say he and his children are? _____

Isaiah and his sons were living signs of God’s word that proclaimed both judgment and hope.

Remember, the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz means “speed to spoil, hurry to plunder” which refers to the coming attack on Aram, Israel and even Judah by Assyria. The name Shear-Jashub means, “a remnant shall return”, referring to the restoration of God’s people that He would eventually bring. The name Isaiah means, “salvation is of the Lord”. This is the hope that Judah needed to have. It’s like Isaiah is saying, “Look, here we are. We are the message!”

Verses 19-22

Reality is, if God is left out of life’s equation, then we are going to find other ways to feel like we have some control over the events of life. This is exactly what the people of Judah were

doing. The people were looking to false spiritual guidance rather than looking to the Lord and His instruction. I like the question at the end of verse 19: “Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?” It makes absolutely no sense. Instead, we need to seek the living God!

Isaiah is telling them to go back to God’s word. That’s the solution to their problem; the need to hold onto the revealed word of God rather than superstition.

What does he say about someone who doesn’t speak according to God’s word?

Without light there is only distress, hunger and hopelessness. Instead of repenting and turning to God, they become bitter and curse their king and God.

What is the final outcome according to the end of verse 22?

They will look to the earth, but will find nothing but distress and darkness. It’s a picture of judgment and despair – a total absence of light.

Here are some key takeaways from today’s chapter:

- God’s warnings are clear and timely (vs.1-4)
 - He warns before He judges
 - He is patient and gives people time to turn back to Him
- Rejecting God’s gentle ways brings destruction (vs.5-8)
 - Since Judah rejected God’s protection and provision and instead trusted in human alliances (false security), God allowed the Assyrians to overflow the land.
 - When we seek security outside of God, we invite chaos into our lives.
- God is still with His people (vs.9-10)
 - God uses Assyria to bring judgment on His people, but they are allowed to do only so much.
 - Human plans cannot over rule God’s purposes.
 - “God with us” means that we can trust God and rest securely in Him even when times are dark.
- Fear God, not man (vs.11-15)
 - We need to regard the Lord Almighty as holy and fear Him only.
 - God will be a sanctuary to those who trust in Him, but will be a stumbling stone to those who reject Him.
 - The right kind of fear (reverence for God) will drive out the wrong kinds of fear (anxiety and panic over world events)
- Hold fast to God’s Word (vs.16-18)
 - Isaiah preserves God’s message among faithful disciples even while the rest of the nation turns away.

- God preserves a faithful remnant among widespread unbelief that keep His word alive.
- Seek God to guide us to truth (vs.19-22)
 - We need to turn to God and not other sources
 - Rejection of God's word leads to spiritual darkness, confusion and hopelessness.
 - True guidance comes only from the Lord.
- Darkness is not the final world
 - Even in the midst of God's judgment, He has a path for redemption that is already starting to play out. Hope is coming in "Immanuel", the promised Messiah.

In this chapter, we saw God come to Isaiah with specific instructions. He is not to lose his focus. He shouldn't be swept away with the latest conspiracy theory and should not fall into fear because of it. He needs to trust in God and Him alone.

This happens all the time in our world today. Humans have this deep need to explain what's really going on even when we don't have the data to do so. Often what happens is that people get so attached to these "conspiracy theories" that even when the correct data comes to light they would rather keep believing in their "theories" than the facts.

So, how do we keep from getting caught up in these things? How can believers today discern what voices or movements to trust or avoid?

How can we identify and resist modern forms of spiritual deception?

What does proper "fear of the Lord look like"?

What do we learn about the difference between faith and fear?