

Isaiah 8:1-22

"To The Word!"

How do you handle a "no win" situation? I mean, from all appearances there's no way out. Maybe you've made some decisions & the inescapable destructive consequences are upon you. Now what do you do?

That's where the king of our current passage was sitting when Isaiah the prophet came to him. Ahaz, king of Judah (who by all accounts was a wicked king) had lived his life w/out regard to God. Making decisions w/no consideration for God... Now, the ramification of his ways are upon him & Isaiah comes to him w/a message from the Lord. Essentially, God throws him a lifeline. "You've lived life w/out regard to Me up to this point. Turn to Me now, forsake your sin, take heed to My word & you'll be forgiven & established. However, if you will not believe, you will not endure." (Your reign will be cut off).

God was exhorting him to not react in fear, but to trust Him by faith. Yes, the outlook appears pretty bleak. God says, "Try the *up look*." We could take & place proverbs 3:5-6 right over the top of Isaiah Ch's 7-9 (& perhaps right over the top of your current situation). "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*"¹ But Ahaz *didn't* trust in the Lord. In fact, he became increasingly *unfaithful* to the Lord. – Ch 8 continues.

Vs 1-4

Perhaps you recall from Ch 7 that the northern kingdom of Israel had banded together w/Syria & had brought absolute devastation & decimation upon Judah & had gone up to the capital city of Jerusalem to make war *it*... Their plan was to kill king Ahaz & put a puppet king in his place.

That's when God threw the "lifeline" to him through the prophet Isaiah. He told him, "Look, what they're wanting to do isn't going to succeed. In fact, in a short while they won't even be players on the world stage anymore." God assured Ahaz that their plots & plans would fail. But rather than trust in the Lord to take care of it, he turned to the king of Assyria (not to be confused w/Syria) & paid him a huge sum of money to come fight for him...

Now, the invasion was going to fail. God had already established that fact. However, the *fallout* from the disobedience of Ahaz would take its toll. But here God continues to underscore exactly what's going to happen concerning these nations Ahaz is so worried about so that he will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is the One who is in control.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Pr 3:5-6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It wasn't the great military prowess & competence of the king that saved them. God was w/them (remember, "Immanuel"). God would save them, not because *they* were so great, but because *He* is so great. (& Though it's a bit of a stretch to tie this next statement to our current text, I just want to go on record saying that the reason God saves us isn't because *we're* so great, but because *He's* so great. It's not our wonderful personality or tremendous skill set that causes God to draw near & save us. It's the greatness of His grace & His mercy springing forth from His unrelenting love).

But God tells Isaiah, "Take a large scroll & write on it w/a man's pen..." What's up w/the "man's pen"? Is God saying, "Don't use a dainty little lady's writing utensil, use a *man's pen!*" No. ☺ The idea here is that of the common man's language. Use the common penmanship. In other words, "Don't write the message in some super spiritual cryptic code. Don't write after the form of scholars, keep it simple so that everyone can understand." When God was speaking to Habakkuk, He said it this way, "*Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it.*"²

Listen, when a pastor/preacher/teacher is communicating the Word of God, the *last* thing they should want to do is present it in some complicated, difficult to understand kind of fashion that leaves you feeling like you just must not be on their level... Now, I'm not saying that you should be diligent to present yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, one who rightly divides the word of truth... I'm not saying that you shouldn't put in personal work to gain/grasp an understanding of the word... But what I am saying is that the job of the preacher is to make plain the word of God so that we all *understand* it & can respond appropriately to it!

So, "Isaiah, go get a large scroll & write something super plain on it so that everyone understands (it's a public message). 'Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz'." It means "Quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil." It was a battle cry of sorts. Words that soldiers would shout as they were defeating/plundering their enemies. A word & warning of a coming invasion.

So Isaiah goes before 2 priests so they can witness when & what he's writing so that they can testify to the truth (by the mouth of 2-3 witnesses Duet 19:15) that Isaiah wrote it well before it ever came to pass.

Then Isaiah goes to his wife, she conceives & bears a son (presumably 9 months later). & God says, "Remember the phrase you wrote on that scroll? That's what you're to name your son." & God gives him more details concerning what's to happen w/Syria & Israel.

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Hab 2:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He says, “Before your son can even say, ‘momma’ & ‘dada’ (w/in 2 yrs or so from when he wrote those words) Assyria was sweep in & utterly crush Syria & Israel. He’s saying that Assyria will be “quick to the plunder” of Damascus (the capital of Syria) & “swift to the spoil” of Samaria (the capital of Israel). They’re coming against you now, but Assyria will carry Israel off completely into captivity. – It won’t be the brilliant military strategy of Ahaz that saves them, it will be the sovereign grace of God...

Btw, it’s interesting that Isaiah’s wife is here referred to as “the prophetess”. We don’t know if she had a prophetic ministry (outside of bringing forth this son) or if she’s referred to as the prophetess by the fact that she’s married to the prophet. There are certainly many examples of prophetesses in scripture... So perhaps she ministered in like fashion... But again, it could simply be her relationship to her husband that’s in view here.

& For you trivia type folks. This is the longest name found in scripture. “Allow me to introduce myself. I am Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.” ☺ (A mouthful for sure).

Vs 5-10

Now, at this point some believe Isaiah turns his attention to the northern kingdom of Israel. It’s possible. I’m not personally persuaded that’s the case, but the point remains applicable either way.

The reason people think that is because he addresses Rezin (Syria’s king) & Remaliah’s son in Vs 6 & speaks of the coming invasion that’s coming upon them from Assyria. Like I said, all that’s true. I tend to lean more to the side that he’s still speaking to Judah because that’s how he resolves the point in Vs 10.

The point is that the people weren’t content w/the provision & the supply that God had allotted to them. The gentle & humble peace that He had sought to avail to them. They refused the little stream, the humble brook of Shiloah that supplied life to them, had been good to them... Instead, they preferred the power plays of wicked leaders (Rezin, Remaliah’s son).

Essentially, what God is communicating to them is that since they didn’t appreciate the peaceable, “softly flowing” waters of Shiloah. He would bring to them the overflowing out of control rivers of Assyria. Assyria (whose capital was Nineveh, where Jonah was sent) was founded on the great Tigris River & centered upon the strong & mighty Euphrates.

It’s an object lesson of sorts that God is giving to them. Not being content w/God’s provision, they want something greater, something that gives the impression of power to the nations. The basic principle is this, be careful what you wish for, you just might get it.

They were this little humble nation that wanted to be more than what God had established for them. They weren't content when they looked at the glory of the mighty nations around them.

& God is saying, "Since you envy these strong & mighty rivers, I'm going to release a flood into your land. Ahaz (the king of Judah) is like a gentle stream compared to what's coming. The king of Assyria will be like a wild, out of control river overflowing its banks.

Listen, what's the take home from this section of scripture? God takes offense when we persist in rejecting what He supplies for us. You want something different because you don't like what you have? That's fine, God will give you something different, but you won't like it either.

Remember when the children of Israel grew discontented over the manna God was providing in the desert? They wanted meat! God said, "You want meat? It'll be coming out your nostrils..." Their lust for more made for their judgment. What does the Bible say?

*"Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."*³

We think we know what's best for us. God knows what's best for us. It's not our comfort He's interested in so much as it is our character, not our happiness our holiness. Listen, you're going to have all eternity to live in comfort, joy inexpressible & full of glory, this life is preparatory. God would have us walk by faith & learn contentment in that which He provides...

It's true that Assyria would annihilate Syria & Israel to the north. But they wouldn't stay in the "banks" of their river. They would overflow into Judah like a flood w/violence & destruction & the "waters" of Assyrian might would come right up to their necks.

In other words, they'd take everything but Jerusalem. God wouldn't allow them to be completely overtaken, but like a bird stretching out its wings, Assyria would fill the breadth of their land. (2 Kings 18 details this).

That's what the prophet means when he writes in Vs 9-10 (read). God was in control. God was w/them & wouldn't allow them to be completely overtaken, it didn't matter how "mighty" Assyria was on the world stage.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Ti 6:6-9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God was w/Judah so their attempt to overtake them would ultimately fail. Judah would suffer the ramifications of their decisions. But God would keep them from total destruction. Again, not because they were so great, but because of His great grace.

Vs 11-15

What a word in due season for you & me (& I suppose for any believers of any time). God speaks w/a strong hand (in non-negotiable terms), “You should not walk in the way of this people...” Don’t follow after the way & rationale of the world. Don’t follow after the ungodly political persuasions popular opinion because that’s the “safe” move. Stay true to the ways/word of God.

This word “conspiracy” (Vs 12) could also be translated, “confederacy” or even “treason”. Last week I informed you that Ahaz decided to reach out to Assyria to come save him (& God was telling him that would snap back on them). But it’s probable that this was the political persuasion that was being pitched & one could even be accused of treason if they spoke against it. That’s why God says, “Don’t be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”

Listen, when you’re considering a course of action, what are the questions you ask yourself? The exhortation here is, don’t ask, “Is it safe?” Ask, “Is it right?” Don’t ask, “Will it please people?” Ask, “Will it please the Lord?” God is here telling Isaiah (& by proxy the godly remnant of Judah), don’t buckle to political pressure that runs in complete opposition to My word, be strong in the Lord & in the power of His might.

Look at Vs 13, “The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, & let Him be your dread.” Here’s the idea. You & me, at any given moment are being “motivated” or “moved” by fear. The fear of man, or the fear of God. God is saying, “Don’t fear man, fear Me.” Jesus said that like this, *“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”*⁴ The eternal perspective is everything.

You can worry about what *man* thinks, or you can worry about what *God* thinks, but you can’t do both. You can seek to live a life pleasing to man, or pleasing to God, but you can’t do both. Now, that can mess w/you sometimes because we tend to think logically but God will often times move... or move us in a direction that defies logic & invites criticism... Be willing to fail in the eyes of man to remain faithful in the eyes of God...

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Lk 12:4-5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He is your sacred place, your place of protection. But if you choose the fear of man, He is your stumbling stone & rock of offense... To believe God, to trust in His word is to have Him as a refuge, a sanctuary... Should you choose *not* to believe, Christ becomes your stumbling stone & your snare. Meaning, you'll either be saved by Him or destroyed by Him, there's no in between.

This is strong affirmation of the deity of J.C. Because here the reference (Vs 13) is to the "Lord of hosts". But in the N.T. it's applied over & over again to Jesus. In Matt's gospel, Jesus said, *"And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."*⁵ You will either fall upon the chief cornerstone of J.C., be broken & be saved, or it will fall on you & grind you in judgment.

The Lord is 1 of 2 things in every individual's life. He's either your best possible Friend & Savior. Or your worst possible Enemy, your Destroyer.

Vs 16-18

Isaiah wasn't going to put his hope in Ahaz, he wasn't going to wait upon Assyria to deliver them. His hope was in the Lord. He would wait upon Him. & Notice waiting on the Lord is connected to His word, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples." "Look, I know what God has said, & I'm going to trust in Him, not the ungodly political persuasion of the people or the leaders of the nation."

& Btw I should point out that "waiting on the Lord" isn't a euphemism for passive inactivity. "Well, I'm not serving, I'm just kind of waiting upon the Lord..." Think of a "waiter" in a 5-star restaurant. Often there's multiple waiters per table. & If your glass gets below a quarter empty, they're there to fill it up. They're very active in "waiting" upon you. They're very attentive to you, responsive to your desire. Even so, as we "wait" upon the Lord we're to be focused *on* Him, responsive *to* Him.

& Look at Vs 18. "Here am I & the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs & wonders in Israel." Isaiah & his family were an object lesson to the nation. He had 2 sons. "Speed to the spoil & swift to the plunder" (there's an invasion on the way). The other one was, "A remnant shall return" (God will restore). & Isaiah means, "Salvation is of the Lord." This was where their hope was to be fixated.

Question: what's the message people get when they look to you & your family? What's the message your life sends out to the people around you? Can they see the goodness, the mercy, the faithfulness of God in your lives? You are the light of the world...

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Mt 21:44). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You're His witness whether you like it or not. The only question is, what kind of witness you are...

Vs 19-22

It's interest where people will turn in times of crisis. It's not uncommon that people will consult mediums, tarot card readers, channelers. "People who whisper & mutter." Underline this, "Should not a people seek their God?" Listen, if you can't turn to your God in times of crisis, you're serving the wrong god! Why turn to darkness when you're seeking after light (insight & understanding)? Why seek the dead on behalf of the living? It doesn't even make sense!

"To the law & to the testimony!" He's saying, "Go to God's word!" If the person you're seeking direction from doesn't point you to the word of God... It's because there's no light in them! What does the bible say? *"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path."*⁶ Peter referred to God's Word as a light that shines in the darkness (2 Pet 1:19).

People are looking for answers. They'll go to people who speak w/demons or claim to be in touch w/a relative that's died. They call psychic hotlines, look to the tarot cards...

God's word condemns all that kind of stuff. Peter tells us that God has given us all things that pertain to life & godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us (it's in His word). Don't go to the father of lies when you're looking for truth. Go to the Author of truth, even J.C. – If you need "light" shed on a situation, don't go to the *world*, go to the *Word*...

This is a good exhortation to remind pastors/preachers/teachers today. Enough w/the over played anecdotes, jokes or touching stories about your life. Enough w/the emphasis upon entertaining people & scratching itching ears. Give to people the Word of God! To the law & to the testimony. "If they don't speak according to this word, it's because there is no light in them." **If there's a discrepancy between the word of God & the word of the one giving the message, you don't have to wonder which one is wrong. The messenger is wrong. The messenger doesn't judge the word, the word judges the messenger. Close**

"...it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged & curse their king & their God." When judgment comes, rather than turn *to* God, they'll be enraged w/God. We see it in Rev 16 as well. People curse God rather than repent of their sin...

The result? They look to the earth (rather than to God) & see trouble, darkness, gloom of anguish, & they will be driven into darkness.

Jesus spoke in Jn Ch 3 how that light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. & When people practice evil they hate the light, they won't come to the light lest their deeds should be exposed... Ultimately, to refuse the light is to be driven into darkness. Jesus is the light of the world. But if you prefer darkness (leading to despair), then outer darkness, eternal darkness is where you will abide.

God won't force anyone to come into the light. But He would plead w/you. Be reconciled to Christ, come into the light. Find forgiveness of sin & new life in Him...

Prayer Points:

God Your Word is a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path. Strengthen us in our resolve to honor Your word. Keep us from falling prey to ungodly political persuasions of popular opinion. We will wait on You, we will hope in You... & May our lives be a message to those around us of the hope, the help & the healing that's found in You. We trust in You, we trust in Your word.

& If God is calling you to come into the light of salvation, to trust in J.C. & be forgiven, don't put it off another day. Believe on the Lord J.C., the finished work of His cross & be saved.