



Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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The Lord Encourages Isaiah (Isaiah 8:11-18)

¹¹ *Indeed this is what the LORD told me quite forcefully. He warned me not to act like these people:* ¹² *“Do not say, ‘Conspiracy,’ every time these people say the word. Don’t be afraid of what scares them; don’t be terrified.* ¹³ *You must recognize the authority of the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. He is the one you must respect; he is the one you must fear.* ¹⁴ *He will become a sanctuary, but a stone that makes a person trip and a rock that makes one stumble – to the two houses of Israel. He will become a trap and a snare to the residents of Jerusalem.*

The Lord Encourages Isaiah (Isaiah 8:11-18)

¹⁵ *Many will stumble over the stone and the rock, and will fall and be seriously injured, and will be ensnared and captured.* ¹⁶ *Tie up the scroll as legal evidence, seal the official record of God's instructions, and give it to my followers.* ¹⁷ *I will wait patiently for the LORD, who has rejected the family of Jacob; I will wait for him.* ¹⁸ *Look, I and the sons whom the LORD has given me are reminders and object lessons in Israel, sent from the Lord of Heaven's Armies, who lives on Mount Zion.*

The Lord Encourages Isaiah (Isaiah 8:11-18)

- Isaiah 8 is part of a larger section of the book that talks about the people of God needing to trust *God* rather than earthly political powers (7:1-12:6).
- The portion of chapter 8 that we will be looking at *today* draws a sharp contrast between:
 - Walking in the way of a rebellious people
 - Walking in the way of the Lord
- The *admonitions* in this text are given are concerning the *current situation* in Judea that are described in the previous verses (7:1-8:10):
 - The threat of war by Syria and Israel on Judah (7:1-9)
 - The sign of Immanuel (7:10-17)
 - The threat of Assyria (7: 18-25)
 - The “*sign*” of Maher-shalal-hash-baz (8:1-4)
 - The eventual onslaught of Assyria, which will come like a flood (8:5-10).

The Lord Encourages Isaiah (Isaiah 8:11-18)

- Today's text puts before the people the question: "How will you *respond* to such imminent threats?"
 - Will you call it "*conspiracy*" and live in fear of earthly powers (8:12) or will you fear the LORD (8:13)?
 - The Lord can be a *sanctuary* or he can be a *stumbling block, a snare and a trap* (8:14).
 - It's clear that *many* of the people had chosen a path of *stumbling*.
 - And so the LORD commands Isaiah to "*Tie up the scroll*", perhaps meaning that Isaiah here steps away of public proclamation of the word of God for a season (8:16).
 - Isaiah takes a *different* path in response to the impending devastation than the people do.
 - Isaiah walks a path of *complete trust* in the LORD – he and his children serving as "*reminders and object lessons*" to a rebellious generation of how they should follow the Lord (8:17-18).

8:11 *Indeed this is what the LORD told me quite **forcefully**. He warned me not to act like **these people**:¹² “**Do not say**, ‘Conspiracy,’ every time these people say the word. Don’t be afraid of what scares them; don’t be terrified.*

- Isaiah was “**forcefully**” instructed to avoid the mindset of “**these people**”, (i.e. the people of his day) who are unwilling to trust in the LORD to deliver them from their enemies.
- The need for such a **forceful** revelation shows how **tempting** it can be for even **faithful** believers to go along with the prevailing culture.
- And it’s not **just Isaiah** who was warned to disassociate himself from the popular thinking and conduct of the day.
- The plural verb “**Do not say**”, indicates that **others** would be walking in the way of faith and adopting Isaiah’s perspective on matters (see also verse 16 where it talks about the LORD’s “**followers**”).

8:11 *Indeed this is what the LORD told me quite forcefully. He warned me not to act like these people: ¹² “Do not say, ‘**Conspiracy**,’ every time these people say the word. Don’t be afraid of what scares them; don’t be terrified.*

- The Hebrew word translated “*conspiracy*” here is often used to describe a group seeking to overthrow an existing ruler (cf. 2 Sam 15:12; 2 Kings 11:14).
- Since a “*conspiracy*” usually refers to *internal* treason *within* a nation, it’s probably *not* referring here to the alliance of Syria and Israel, or to Ahaz’s foreign policy initiative to link up with Assyria.
- It seems rather to be talking about the conduct of a traumatized people who were reacting out of paranoia to an alarming set of circumstances.

8:11 *Indeed this is what the LORD told me quite forcefully. He warned me not to act like these people:* ¹² *“Do not say, ‘Conspiracy,’ every time these people say the word. Don’t be afraid of what scares them; don’t be terrified.*

- The prevailing confusion created an atmosphere of suspicion, causing the people to look for **scapegoats** whom they could blame for all the things that were going **wrong** in the country.
- When the relationship with Assyria turned **sour**, Ahaz’s regime was probably happy to **foster** such witch hunts to divert attention from its own policy failures.

8:11 *Indeed this is what the LORD told me quite forcefully. He warned me not to act like these people:* ¹² *“Do not say, ‘**Conspiracy**,’ every time these people say the word. Don’t be **afraid** of what **scares** them; don’t be **terrified**.”*

- It is likely that Isaiah and his followers were **among** those accused of treasonous “**conspiracy**” because of their opposition to Ahaz’s regime in seeking help from foreign powers rather than the LORD.
- Jeremiah will face **similar** accusations in his day when he warns against the **Babylonian** threat (Jer 37:11-13; 38:1-4)
- But the LORD commands Isaiah and the **true** believers not to be **alarmed** by this false accusation.
- Furthermore, they are not to be “**afraid**” of whatever it is that “**scares**” the unbelieving people around them, causing them to become “**terrified**”.

8:13 ***You must recognize the authority of the LORD of Heaven's Armies. He is the one you must respect; he is the one you must fear.***

- The words translated “*respect*” and “*fear*” here are the **same pair** of Hebrew words translated “*scared*” and “*terrified*” in the previous verse (vs. 12).
- While living in the midst of a fearful people, Isaiah and his disciples are not to be fear**less** but their fear is to be directed **differently**.
- **They** must “*recognize the authority of the LORD*” and **their** lives are to be governed by a “*fear*” of the LORD, **Yahweh**, who redeems his people and overthrows his foes.
- **He** is the “*LORD of Heaven's Armies*”, the omnipotent God, the Holy One!

8:14 *He will become a **sanctuary**, but a stone that makes a person trip and a rock that makes one stumble – to the two houses of Israel. He will become a trap and a snare to the residents of Jerusalem.* ¹⁵ *Many will stumble over the stone and the rock, and will fall and be seriously injured, and will be ensnared and captured.”*

- “*sanctuary*” is not a place of asylum but “a holy place”, a place where God dwells in all his holiness.
- The “*sanctuary*” is the coming of the Lord to dwell among his people.
- But, just as we see in the LORD’s temple, the place where the LORD dwells is a place of unapproachable holiness (Ex. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10).
- And yet, because this “*sanctuary*” was a house of *sacrifice, provision* was made (cf. Isaiah 6:6-7) for genuinely repentant sinners to be made *acceptable* before him.

8:14 *He will become a sanctuary, but **a stone that makes a person trip and a rock that makes one stumble** – to the two houses of Israel. He will become **a trap and a snare** to the residents of Jerusalem.* ¹⁵ *Many will stumble over the stone and the rock, and will fall and be seriously injured, and will be ensnared and captured.”*

- To **some** the LORD's presence offers a glad opportunity to repent, believe and, by the appointed means of grace, to enter into his fellowship and peace.
- But to **others** his presence spells **doom**.
- To **them** the LORD is “*a stone that makes a person trip and a rock that makes one stumble... a trap and a snare*”.
- The first set of words (“*trip and... stumble*”) describes the people's **attitude** to God – they **ignore** him and therefore “*trip and... stumble*” over him.

8:14 *He will become a **sanctuary**, but a stone that makes a person trip and a rock that makes one stumble – to the two houses of Israel. He will become **a trap and a snare** to the residents of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Many will stumble over the stone and the rock, and will fall and be seriously injured, and will be ensnared and captured.”*

- The second set of words (“*a trap and a snare*”) describes the **LORD’s** hostility to *them*.
- It’s as if a rock were put across a road to block the traveler from danger but, in carelessness or scorn, he refuses the warning and stumbles to his death.
- The same God in his unchanging nature is both “*sanctuary*” and “*snare*” – it all depends on how people **respond** to his holiness.

8:16 *Tie up the scroll as legal evidence, seal the official record of God's instructions, and give it to my followers.*

- The LORD now utters a command to Isaiah himself.
- Isaiah is to “*tie up*” and “*seal*” God’s revelation in the sense that he is to restrict it spiritually to his “*followers*”.
- What all is to be included in this revelation that Isaiah restricts to the LORD’s “*followers*” is not clear from this text.
- Who are these “*followers*” to whom the message is to be sealed?
- They are the elect; the ones among the nation who are taught about God and learn about him.
- Isaiah would seal the teaching in their hearts by faithfully proclaiming it to them.

8:16 *Tie up the scroll as legal evidence, seal the official record of God's instructions, and give it to my followers.*

- This verse is understood by many commentaries to refer to a withdrawal of Isaiah from public ministry when he perceived that he had been unsuccessful in altering the course of the nation during the Syrian/Israelite crisis.
- According to this view, his oracles were sealed up and committed to his disciples to be published at some later date when the things that Isaiah prophesied would have taken place and would therefore vindicate him.

8:17 *I will wait patiently for the LORD, who has rejected the family of Jacob; I will wait for him.*

- Here Isaiah affirms his trust in and dependence upon God.
- Although God seemed to be hiding his face from Judah and Israel, Isaiah would not lose his faith in him nor turn to some other source for his own strength and courage.
- This waiting upon God is often a prerequisite to receiving his blessing, for in the act of waiting we confess our own helplessness and our complete dependence upon him.

8:18 *Look, I and **the sons** whom the LORD has given me are reminders and object lessons in Israel, sent from the Lord of Heaven's Armies, who lives on **Mount Zion**.*

- Part of what gave Isaiah the ability to depend upon God, even though the immediate prospects for the nation were grim, was Isaiah's own **experience**.
- "**the sons**", of course, refer to "**Shear-Jashub**" and "**Maher-shalal-hash-baz**".
- Their very existence, as well as their strangely evocative names that the Lord had instructed Isaiah to give them, was **testimony** of God's working among his people.
- Furthermore, although God's face might be hidden for a time, it was still true that his dwelling was on "**Mount Zion**": "**the mountain of the Lord's temple [which] will endure as the most important of mountains and... [in the future] all the nations will stream to**" (Isaiah 2:2).
- Therefore the coming upheaval and destruction, as bad as it was, would **ultimately** only be temporary.

New Testament
Usage of
Isaiah 8:11-18

Isaiah 8:12b *...do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.* ^{13a} *But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy...*

¹Pet 3:14b *...Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,* ^{15a} *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...*

- **Isaiah 8:12-13** is quoted by Peter in **1 Peter 3:14-15** where he is teaching that as Christians we should not be afraid to do what is right, even if we have to suffer at the hands of unbelievers for doing so:
- *Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. **Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy**, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:13-15 ESV)*

Isaiah 8:12b *...do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.* 13a *But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy...*

1Pet 3:14b *...Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,* 15a *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...*

- In Isaiah 8, the “*fear*” that Isaiah and his followers are to avoid is sharing in the fear that the people around them have of being taken over by foreign armies and therefore turning to other nations for help rather than the trusting in the LORD.
- In 1 Pet. 3, the “*fear*” that Peter instructs *his* readers to avoid is not the fear that unbelievers around them *have*, but rather the fear of what unbelievers around them might *do* to them.

Isaiah 8:12b *...do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.* ^{13a} *But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy...*

¹Pet 3:14b *...Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,* ^{15a} *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...*

- But despite the fact that there are some minor differences between Isaiah 8 and 1 Peter 3, the *heart* of the message, both in Isaiah and in Peter where he quotes it, is a ***contrast*** between fearing *humans* and what they may do and fearing ***God***.

Isaiah 8:14 *[the LORD] will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling...*

1Pet 2:8 *[Christ is] a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word...*

- **Isaiah 8:14** is quoted by Peter in **1 Peter 2:8** where he is teaching that as Christians we **believe** in Christ and are blessed for doing so, but unbelievers “**stumble**” over Christ which leads to their demise:
- *“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “**A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.**” They stumble because they disobey **the word**, as they were destined to do. (1 Pet 2:7-8)*

Isaiah 8:14 *[the LORD] will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling...*

1Pet 2:8 *[Christ is a] stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word...*

- In Isaiah 8 the people being spoken of were primarily the leaders of Jerusalem and those who followed them.
- These people stand in contrast to the faithful remnant because the two groups respond very *differentl*y to the LORD and his revelation.
- But the reality is that *wherever* God discloses himself, people respond very differently.
- The people whom Peter has in view by this quotation from Isaiah 8:14, he explains, “*stumble because they disobey the word*”.

Isaiah 8:17 *I will wait for the LORD...* ¹⁸ *Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me...*

Heb 2:13 *"I will put my trust in him... Behold, I and the children God has given me."*

- **Isaiah 8:17-18** is cited by the author of Hebrews in **Hebrews 2:13**, a section of Hebrews where the author is demonstrating Jesus' **solidarity** with his people:
- *For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified [are of one stock]. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."* (Heb 2:11-13)

Isaiah 8:17 *I will wait for the LORD...* ¹⁸ *Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me...*

Heb 2:13 *And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."*

- Because Isaiah 8 occurs in a context where (as we have seen in the last few weeks) there are many prophetic types and references to Jesus as Messiah, the author treats the references to Isaiah in Isaiah 8:17 as ***Messianic***.
- That is to say, in the sovereignty of God, Isaiah's experiences described in Isaiah 8:17 ***prophetically prefigure*** things that would ultimately be true of Jesus, the coming Messiah.

Isaiah 8:17 *I will wait for the LORD...* ¹⁸ *Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me...*

Heb 2:13 *And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."*

- So in Isaiah 8:17b, where Isaiah says: *"I will wait for [i.e., put my trust in] the LORD"*
 - In its **original context** this confession of reverential faith towards God was given by the **prophet Isaiah** in the face of the Assyrian crisis when, in the eighth century B.C., that powerful nation threatened the Israelites with devastation.
 - The author of Hebrews sees this verse as **prophetically** prefiguring the **Son's** posture of trust towards the **Father**.

Isaiah 8:17 *I will wait for the LORD...* ¹⁸ *Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me...*

Heb 2:13 *And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."*

- And in Isaiah 8:18 where Isaiah says: *"Behold, I and the children God has given me."*
 - The author of Hebrews sees **this** verse as demonstrating that the person who verse 17b tells is trusting in *"in him"*, is in a **family relationship** with other *"children"* whom he is leading – and **they too** trust *"in him"*.
 - And in this sense, in the sovereignty of God, Isaiah's experience in this passage **prophetically prefigured** the Jesus' relationship with us as the children of God who were given to him by the Father.

Next Time

I plan to cover Isaiah 10:20-23, a section which talks about The Remnant of Israel.

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- As I was preparing to teach this passage, I was struck by a number of parallels between the situation that Isaiah faced in his day and the situation that we face in our own day.
- While society at large had rejected the LORD, Isaiah, his sons, and a small band of the LORD's followers continued to stay the course.
- Do you see ***other*** parallels between Isaiah's situation and our own? If so, what are they?
- Do you see any ***differences*** between the two?