

God had spoken through the prophet Isaiah and told King Ahaz that his fear of Syria and Ephraim was unnecessary. Those nations would soon be conquered by Assyria, and then Assyria would stop just short of conquering Judah (8:7-8). Still, the Messiah from the house of David would come, born of a virgin (7:14). Ahaz refused to trust in God. His past experiences caused so much fear that he did not even desire a confirmation from God to prove the message true (7:12).

We pick back up in chapter eight verse nine with a short poem about the coming destruction of Syria, Ephraim, and other nations that Assyria would attack. ⁹ *Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered; give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered.* ¹⁰ *Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.* Isaiah 8:9-10 They could prepare for war and make their plans for defense, but the presence of God is the determining factor. If it was time for judgment, there was nothing they could do that would make a difference. God can be with us to defend us or to judge us. It all depends on our relationship with Him.

¹¹ *For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying:* Isaiah 8:11 Isaiah is not a person wondering if maybe God might be speaking to his conscience. This is a man under the strong hand of God hearing a clear word from the LORD. It is a warning, a warning that we should heed as well. **Don't walk in the way of this people!** God will elaborate on just what He means in the following verses. It has to do with the fear of man (Proverbs 29:25). In general, it has to do with the current of cultures that forsake God. Rarely is the majority following God (Romans 12:2). That means that, most of the time, fitting in with culture is to be in rebellion against God (2 Corinthians 6:17).

The way of Judah was to fear Rezin and Pekah, the kings that were planning another attack. The people of Judah were fearing another defeat by their enemies, a confiscation of their goods, and possible captivity. It wasn't coming from them. What does our culture fear? Perhaps it is pestilence or terrorism, economic collapse or an EMP destroying our electric infrastructure. But these are all temporal. If all of them were to happen, they wouldn't affect your eternal destiny. Cultures live in disregard for God and His justice (Matthew 10:28). God is telling Isaiah and us to refuse to live like that. Don't follow the culture!

¹² *Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.* Isaiah 8:12 Name your conspiracy. They abound in our city, from cloaked space ships escorted to secret bases by black helicopters, to Obama's internment camps, we have conspiracies galore. Might one of the many conspiracy theories come to pass? Possibly, but what God is saying here is that the people of God

Commented [PW1]: Isaiah 8:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, ⁸ and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel."

Commented [PW2]: Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Commented [PW3]: Isaiah 7:12 (ESV)

¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."

Commented [PW4]: Proverbs 29:25 (ESV)

²⁵ The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

Commented [PW5]: Romans 12:2 (ESV)

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Commented [PW6]: 2 Corinthians 6:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,

Commented [PW7]: Matthew 10:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And 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.

are not to fear what the world fears. If God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31). We aren't to dread what the world dreads. We should have total trust in the LORD and His ability to help us through whatever comes. Life is unpredictable, but God never changes (Hebrews 13:8). If we are in His hands, what do we have to fear?

Does our speech show that we do not fear what the world fears? I've been convicted about this. Start talking about our national debt and ballooning welfare and I join right in. I should be talking about being a citizen of the kingdom of heaven and not being worried about what comes. That would really bring up some opportunities to witness to the lost and help fellow believers set their priorities straight.

¹³ But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. Isaiah 8:13 Eternity is a long time. Anyone who enters into eternity with a heart set against God will experience the greatest dread a person could ever know (Mark 9:48).

Should the believer fear God? If you are assured of salvation in Jesus, should you be in dread of Him? Though He calls you friend (John 15:15), if you honor Him as holy you will (5:16). That is because His holiness is expressed in righteousness. That means He deals with evil, especially in His children (Hebrews 12:6).

I liken it to fearing a good father's discipline. Your mother says, "Boy are you gonna catch it when Dad comes home." You live in dread of Dad's return because you know he loves you enough to discipline you so severely that you'll think twice before doing that deed again.

I fear discipline on my deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9). Humans can justify almost anything. We do need to trust the Lord to be our shepherd and to keep us from falling (Jude 24). I've seen too many pastors fall to take that protection for granted. God will not protect us from our own will. If my deceitful heart justifies a sin convincing my mind that it is really alright to act on it, I have one more line of defense. It's the fear of God. I know God won't let me get away with it. He has entrusted me with so much and expects me to be faithful (Luke 17:10). If I am not, the discipline in this life will be severe.

The unrepentant person doesn't fear the Lord or they would change their ways and seek forgiveness. They fear the temporal change in circumstance that keeps them from enjoying the moment. That is what God was telling Isaiah not to fear. Christ followers should be noticeably different in this regard. People who fear the Lord depart from evil (Proverbs 16:6).

¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Isaiah 8:14 "He" refers back to the LORD of hosts. This is the God of angel armies. He is the One

Commented [PW8]: Romans 8:31 (ESV)

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Commented [PW9]: Hebrews 13:8 (ESV)

⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Commented [PW10]: Mark 9:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

Commented [PW11]: John 15:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Commented [PW12]: Isaiah 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.

Commented [PW13]: Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Commented [PW14]: Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV)

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Commented [PW15]: Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Commented [PW16]: Luke 17:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

Commented [PW17]: Proverbs 16:6 (ESV)

⁶ By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.

that spoke to Moses from the burning bush. He is different things to people depending on their relationship with Him. If He is your Abba daddy, he will be a sanctuary for you. That is a safe place and a place of worship (Psalm 27:5). I hope that is your relationship with Him. Even when He disciplines us, He is our sanctuary.

To the rebellious children of Judah and Israel who refused to believe the Word of God through Isaiah, the LORD of hosts was a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling. To the people of Jerusalem, He was a trap and a snare. Judah wanted to trust in Assyria, but Assyria was going to have them for dessert. Israel wanted to trust in Syria, but Syria would be defeated before Israel fell. Isaiah's call to repent and come and reason with God offended them (1:18), like a rock thrown at them. The stumbled over what Isaiah said because they didn't want to let go of their other gods or their trust in themselves.

It reminds me of attitudes in our day. Some say, "God would never bring calamity on us. He is a God of love. And besides, we are good people. You need to think positive." With the next breath they talk of conspiracies that they fear. The Jesus of the Bible is a rock of offense to them, a stone of stumbling. They hear the truth of His call to repent and receive Him as Lord, but they are offended that someone would think they need to repent. As we saw in a previous passage, they call good evil and evil good (5:20). So why would they need to repent?

Jesus will be a sanctuary for you, or the stone over which you stumble. You will meet Him one way or the other. No one escapes an encounter with the Almighty! **The stone of offense is declared by Peter (1 Peter 2:8) and Paul (Romans 9:33) to be Jesus, which means they believed He is YHWH Saba, the LORD of hosts.**

The apostle Paul tells us it was the grace of Jesus that the people in His day stumbled over. Grace declares we are in need of forgiveness and God has made it possible. Pride says, "I don't need it! I'm just fine like I am, thank you." Was that what was happening in Judah? Absolutely! God invited them to come reason with Him, and to look to Him instead of Assyria. Recognize your sin, repent, and let God be your sanctuary. But they refused to give up their idolatry and their trust in themselves. They were stumbling over the grace of God. They were offended at the rock that is Jesus, the salvation of God.

How did Peter know this verse was about Jesus? Jesus told him. *⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."* ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, Luke 24:44-45 Peter knew because Jesus opened his mind to understand the Scriptures, and Peter or the Holy Spirit explained it to Paul. It was grace the Jews were rejecting in the days of Isaiah and in the days of Jesus as well (65:2).

Commented [PW18]: Psalm 27:5 (ESV)

⁵ For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

Commented [PW19]: Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Commented [PW20]: Isaiah 5:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

Commented [PW21]: 1 Peter 2:8 (ESV)

⁸ and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Commented [PW22]: Romans 9:33 (ESV)

³³ as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Commented [PW23]: Isaiah 65:2 (ESV)

² I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices;

¹⁵ And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.” Isaiah 8:15 Man stumbles over grace because he thinks he is capable of doing something, of bringing about or participating in his own salvation. It is humiliating to recognize we are hopeless sinners in need of rescue. But that is the place we all must come if we are to know salvation and the peace of God in our lives. That is the only way we can walk differently from this world (Ephesians 4:1).

Jesus was probably referring to this passage when He said, *⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.*” Matthew 21:44 He changed the last part of the verse to line up with the Daniel two image, where a stone comes out of the mountain of God and strikes the image of man and fills the earth (Daniel 2:34-35; 44-45). “Snared and taken” was replaced with being crushed. The difference is that in the days of Isaiah, the nation was going to go into captivity, but Jesus saw Himself setting up the kingdom of God. To reject Him is to face the wrath of God.

If we throw ourselves upon the grace of God we will be broken, broken of pride and self-will. We will become dependent on another. If we reject the grace of God we will face judgment for our rebellion and hardhearted response to His Word.

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples. Isaiah 8:16 The people of Judah who were not Isaiah's disciples won't hear the message, but a later generation will (Daniel 12:4). The disciples needed to carry the message into captivity and pass it on. This book of Isaiah became a favorite in Jesus' day just as Isaiah predicted. It was unsealed by Jesus as He explained to the disciples how the Scriptures pointed to Him. I imagine that Jesus had to wait until after the resurrection or they could not have accepted Him, as amazing and unique as He was, as really being the LORD of hosts incarnate. The resurrection was the convincing proof that they needed (Psalm 16:10).

¹⁷ I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. Isaiah 8:17 Isaiah was content to not walk in the ways of the people. Though they would not hear the message, Isaiah believed it. Though there were no miraculous signs due to Ahaz' refusal, Isaiah would believe God and wait for Him. Will you? Will you trust the Word of God? Though He hide His face from America, will you place your hope in Him? Will you wait on Him to answer your prayers and fulfill His Word? We live in a time similar to that of Isaiah and we need to express the faith and hope that he exhibited. Just as he waited for the Messiah to come in God's time, so we wait for the Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. Isaiah 8:18 Before Shear-jashub would know right from wrong, Syria and Ephraim would be defeated. Before

Commented [PW24]: Ephesians 4:1 (ESV)

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

Commented [PW25]: Daniel 2:34-35 (ESV)

³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Commented [PW26]: Daniel 2:44-45 (ESV)

⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”

Commented [PW27]: Daniel 12:4 (ESV)

⁴ But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

Commented [PW28]: Psalm 16:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

Commented [PW29]: 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Maher-shalal-hash-baz could say "Mommy" or "Daddy" Assyria will have spoiled those countries (7:3; 8:3-4). What the people feared would not happen.

Those of you who are old enough remember the Bay of Pigs and the nuclear standoff with Cuba. We practiced "duck and cover" because we feared a nuclear attack. It never came to pass. Imagine if someone had told the press that we were doing all that practicing for nothing, that we needed to repent and trust the Lord. That kind of gives you a sense of what was going on in Isaiah's day.

¹⁹ And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? Isaiah 8:19 The multitude of spiritists is evidence of our nation turning its back on God. There have been TV shows of people supposedly speaking to the dead and giving living loved ones' responses. Should not the people inquire of God? Don't we want God's perspective? Don't we want truth? Like Ahaz, so many refuse it when it is offered to them.

²⁰ To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. Isaiah 8:20 Some translations will have the word "law" instead of "teaching". Both are a correct translation of the word "*torah*." Testimony here means attestation or precepts. Isaiah is saying that if someone is teaching or sharing an experience that does not line up with the prophecy he has given, they have no light of dawn. Later in the book (60:1), he will speak of the dawn being the revelation of the Messiah. Though it was specifically a word for the people of Judah to not listen to false prophets, it is also a warning for all people to not listen to anything that does not line up with the Torah and the writings of the Old Testament. Jesus may have been referring to this in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man wanted someone to go back and tell his relatives about the cost of refusing grace.

²⁹ But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' Luke 16:29

Grace is a theme of the entire Bible. The message is the same throughout. We are sinners in need of the grace of God. If anyone says otherwise, Isaiah says, they don't have a genuine revelation. They are in darkness. They don't know Jesus.

²¹ They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. Isaiah 8:21 When everything the people of Israel trusted in had failed them, in distress and hunger they would curse the king and God, shaking their fists in the air. Even calamity will not turn them.

²² And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness. Isaiah 8:22 The things of the world only satisfy for a time. Seeking for them to fulfill you only leads to darkness of the soul.

Commented [PW30]: Isaiah 7:3 (ESV)

³ And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.

Commented [PW31]: Isaiah 8:3-4 (ESV)

³ And 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 boy knows how to cry 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

Commented [PW32]: Isaiah 60:1 (ESV)

¹ Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

But the Light will still come. The next verse declares it (9:1). Grace comes even when we shake our fists at God. Even when we reject God's grace time and time again, He desires to bring us into the light. His desire is to lift us from our gloomy fallen condition and deliver us from stumbling in the dark by shining His light on us (John 8:12). The Messiah was coming. The next chapter tells of the wonder of the child that would be born of a virgin, the sign that we need so desperately (7:14). For us today, He has come. Will we humbly accept the grace He offers and place our hope in Him?

Questions

- 1 What is the way of the people?
- 2 What are we to do with conspiracies?
- 3 Why should we fear the Lord?
- 4 What are the two ways God can be toward us?
- 5 Why is the Gospel offensive?
- 6 How did Jesus use verse 15?
- 7 When was verse 16 unsealed?
- 8 What was Isaiah determined to do?
- 9 What does verse 20 teach us?
- 10 Where is this passage headed?

Commented [PW33]: Isaiah 9:1 (ESV)

¹ But there will be no gloom for her who was 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 has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

Commented [PW34]: John 8:12 (ESV)

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Commented [PW35]: Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.