

Isaiah 8: 1-10
March 11, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When are we most vulnerable to redirecting our faith in God to other people or things? [When He doesn't answer prayer; when He feels absent; when we look for quick fixes, when we feel fear and look for protection, etc.]

I think it's fair to say that when the times get hard, that's when our faith gets tested. Hopefully, we lean on God's Word and His promises; we lean on prayer; we lean on the work of the Holy Spirit to help us navigate a difficult chapter in our life. BUT, the moment we think that we would "never" misplace our faith is when we're the most vulnerable! The Enemy will see that and try to use that against us.

Misplaced faith can be subtle. We might start out with lots of prayer and reading His Word. But then we start to share with our friends. We seek "godly counsel." We place trust in what certain people say to us, but then we *don't take it back to the Lord for confirmation!* We should seek counsel; it's okay to read helpful words from Christian authors; it's okay to hear a great sermon that intersects your need in your difficult trial. We just need to remember to take all of those good things back to the Lord and let Him guide and direct our thoughts to make sure our faith is solely in Him.

Transition: You will recall that King Ahaz did not have his faith in God. He had formed an alliance with the King of Assyria to take care of the threat of Israel and Syria. He had taken from the Temple treasury and the royal palace to bribe the King. God saw Ahaz misplace his trust to the king of Assyria, and in spite of that, He reached out to Ahaz and invited him to "ask for a sign." Ahaz declined with false humility. He didn't want "to put the Lord to a test." This was unfortunate because God was trying to reveal His presence to Ahaz to bring comfort and encouragement. God decided to give Ahaz a sign anyway! However, God was not pleased with Ahaz's lack of faith.

So as we read today's passage, I want us to consider that **All of us CAN be inspired to maintain a strong faith in God BY remembering the ATTRIBUTES of God that Isaiah points out to the Israelites.** No matter how hard our circumstances can get, these ATTRIBUTES will remind us of why placing our faith in God is the only way to go! Let's begin with v.1-10.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.1:

- The LORD said to me, "Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: **Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.**

V.2:

- And I will call in Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah as reliable witnesses for me."

V.3:

- Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, “Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.

V.4:

- Before the boy knows how to say ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.”

V.5:

- The LORD spoke to me again:

V.6:

- “Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah,

V.7:

- therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the River - the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks

V.8:

- and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!”

V.9:

- Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered! Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Prepare for battle, and be shattered!

V.10:

- Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.1-2: What has the Lord asked Isaiah to do? [Get Uriah and Zechariah to witness the name He wants Isaiah to write down on the scroll.]

Q: What name does the Lord ask Isaiah to write on the scroll? [Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz]

Q: What does Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz mean? [“Quick to plunder; swift to the spoil”]

Q: Why is this name significant? [It spoke of future judgment when Assyria would conquer Syria and invade both Israel and Judah, and when Babylon would take Judah into exile.]

Q v.3: What happens next? [Isaiah and his 2nd wife, a prophetess, and bear a son. And the Lord tells him to name the son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz]

Observation: So Isaiah has witnesses as he writes this name on a scroll, and we can deduce that at least nine months passed.

Q v.4: Based on this verse, approximately how many years will pass before the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria? [A child would start speaking meaningful sentences at about age two.]

Observation: Interestingly enough, in 732 B.C., about two years after Isaiah's son was born, both Pekah and Rezin were dead (7:1); and Assyria had conquered Syria and begun to invade Israel (2 Kings 15:29). The army was "quick to plunder and swift to take the spoil."

Q: Before we move on, do you see any ATTRIBUTES of God that would inspire you to maintain a strong faith in God? [Let people engage; Sovereign; Present with His people]

Q v.5-6: The Lord found two errors that His children made. What was the first one? [They rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah]

Q: What does the Lord mean by that? [He's using a figure of speech. God represents "the gentle waters"]

Q: What was the second error? [They rejoiced over Rezin and the son of Remaliah]

Q: Why was God displeased with their rejoicing? [Because it revealed their alliance with the King of Assyria who defeated Israel and Syria]

Q v.7-8: So how does the Lord intend to respond? [He's going to use the king of Assyria, who represents the mighty floodwaters of the Euphrates river, to wipe out most of Judah – except for a remnant ("up to the neck")]

Q: What do you make of Isaiah referencing "Immanuel?" [He wanted to assure the hearers that God had not forgotten His covenant people and would be with them (cf. 8:10).]

Q v.9-10: Isaiah speaks a powerful message to his listeners? What does he want them to understand? [Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.]

Q: Before we go any further, what do we learn about God when He sees misplaced faith by His people? Are there some ATTRIBUTES we can tag? [Jealous; Intolerant; Judging; Present; Sovereign]

[Read Isa 8:11-18]

LOOK:

Today's passage shows the mistake of trusting Assyria instead of trusting in the Lord. We learned the attributes of God that should inspire us to maintain a strong faith in God ALONE.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (pp. 34-35). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

2. Maher-shalal-hash-baz: A warning of judgment (Isa. 8:1–10)

Isaiah married the virgin, and the legal documents were duly witnessed and sealed. He even announced that their first child would be a son and his name would be Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which means “quick to plunder, swift to the spoil.” Since Isaiah’s sons were signs to the nation (8:18), this name was significant. It spoke of future judgment when Assyria would conquer Syria and invade both Israel and Judah, and when Babylon would take Judah into exile. A child would start speaking meaningful sentences about the age of two. In 732 B.C., about two years after Isaiah’s son was born, both Pekah and Rezin were dead (7:1); and Assyria had conquered Syria and begun to invade Israel (2 Kings 15:29). The army was “quick to plunder and swift to take the spoil.”

In the remainder of this chapter, Isaiah used three vivid contrasts to show the rulers of Judah the mistake they were making by trusting Assyria instead of trusting the Lord.

They chose a flood instead of a peaceful river (Isa. 8:5–10). The pro-Assyrian faction in Judah rejoiced when Assyria defeated Syria and when both Pekah and Rezin died. These victories seemed to prove that an alliance with Assyria was the safest course to follow. Instead of trusting the Lord (“the waters of Shiloah, that go softly” in v. 6), they trusted the great river of Assyria. What they did not realize was that this river would become a flood when Assyria would come and destroy Israel and devastate Judah. God offered His people peace, but in unbelief they opted for war. They were walking by sight and not by faith. But Isaiah saw no permanent victory for the invading army. After all, they were entering Immanuel’s land; and God was with His people and would deliver them for His name’s sake. Assyria might plan its strategy, but God would thwart its every move. Sennacherib’s army camped around Jerusalem, certain of victory; but God wiped them out with a single blow (chap. 37).

Martin, J. A. (1985). *Isaiah*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 1049–1051). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

a. The coming fall of Israel and Aram (8:1–4)

Isaiah had already prophesied of the fall of the Aram-Israel alliance (7:4–17). Now he gave another prophecy of the same event. As in chapter 7, this prediction also involves the birth of a baby, this time to Isaiah and his wife, a prophetess. Some have suggested that this birth fulfilled the prediction in 7:14. However, the two accounts have several differences. The child in 8:1–4 was not named Immanuel (cf. 7:14). The child in 8:1–4 was born to Isaiah’s wife. She was not a virgin because Isaiah already had at least one child (7:3), unless the wife in 8:3 refers to a second wife of Isaiah. This, however, seems unlikely. This birth probably occurred some time after the prediction in 7:14 because according to 8:4 the fall of the alliance would occur fairly soon—before the child was even able to say “my father” or “my mother.” Most children can say those words before or soon after they are one year old. Apparently God graciously allowed this second prediction of the Assyrian destruction of Aram to be given to Judah. This prophecy was witnessed by several important people, to prove to the nation once again that Isaiah was speaking for the Lord and that his words were true.

8:1. Isaiah was to use a visual aid to help secure the prophecy in the minds of his audience. On **a large scroll** Isaiah was to record the name of a son to be born to him soon. The son's name was to be announced even before he was conceived, thus pointing to the certainty of the birth. The name **Mahe-Shalal-Hash-Baz**, the longest personal name in the Bible, means "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil." Soldiers would shout these words to their comrades as they defeated and plundered their foes. Isaiah's listeners, remembering his prophecy of the fall of the Aram-Israel alliance (7:4–17), would have understood the significance of his son's name as they continued to listen to his prediction of impending doom for Aram and Israel.

8:2. God said He would **call in two witnesses** (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15), who could confirm that His words were true. **Uriah the priest** is mentioned later in an unfavorable light (2 Kings 16:10–16) when he complied with Ahaz's order to change the temple worship after the Aram-Israel alliance had been broken. Apparently he was an influential priest. **Zechariah son of Jerebekiah** is nowhere else mentioned by that full title. He may have been a prophet during the time of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:5) or a Levite who helped cleanse the temple in Hezekiah's day (2 Chron. 29:12–13).

8:3–4. **The prophetess**, Isaiah's wife, is unnamed. She was called a prophetess either because she was married to a prophet or because she had the God-given ability to prophesy. The latter seems preferable. Isaiah's son, **Mahe-Shalal-Hash-Baz**, was a sign of the coming break in the Aram-Israel alliance against Judah. In about a year and nine months (nine months for the pregnancy and one year of the child's life), Assyria would **plunder** both **Damascus** (Aram's capital city) and **Samaria** (Israel's capital). This happened in 732 B.C., which confirms the date of 734 for Isaiah's prophecy. When Damascus and Samaria fell, Judah should have turned to God as Isaiah had told them to. Unfortunately Uriah, one of the two witnesses (v. 2), followed Ahaz's orders after 732 B.C. and changed the temple worship to conform with the pagan worship practiced at Damascus.

b. The coming Assyrian invasion (8:5–8)

8:5–6. **This people** could refer to the Northern Kingdom of Israel since she was the nation that **rejected** Judah in favor of aligning with Aram, under its king **Rezin** (cf. 7:1). **The gently flowing waters of Shiloah**, also called Siloam, then would refer by metonymy to the city of Jerusalem. These waters were a spring that fed a small reservoir within Jerusalem's walls. This gentle pool contrasted with the "mighty floodwaters" (8:7) which would destroy the people. On **the son of Remaliah** see comments on 7:4. Others interpret "this people" to refer to Judah (the house of Ahaz and his people). They had rejected God ("the gentle waters") and therefore the mighty flood (Assyria) would come and engulf them. This of course happened in 701 B.C. when the Assyrians invaded Judah.

8:7–8. Because Israel allied with Aram, she would be swept away by **the mighty floodwaters** from **the River**, a normal designation for the Euphrates River, which ran through the Assyrian Empire. **The king of Assyria** (cf. 7:17) would **sweep** down on the Northern Kingdom like a river in flood stage overflowing **its banks**. Amazingly this "floodwater," that is, Assyria, would continue **on into** the land of **Judah** (701 B.C.). Assyria would cover Judah up **to the neck**, meaning that Judah would be almost but not quite drowned.

Isaiah changed figures of speech and pictured Assyria as a giant bird whose **wings** would **cover** the entire **land**, ready to devour it.

This message was given to **Immanuel** ("God [is] with us"). Isaiah had used that word (7:14) when he told Ahaz that a boy, soon to be born, would be a sign that the nation would not perish at

the hands of Aram and Israel. Now the Assyrians would try to “drown” the land of Judah. But the word Immanuel assured the hearers that God had not forgotten His covenant people and would be with them (cf. 8:10). The next verses (vv. 9–15) discuss that fact.

c. The coming victory from God (8:9–10)

Though Judah would be almost defeated by the Assyrian invasion (vv. 1–8), Isaiah noted that Judah should not fear because she would experience victory.

8:9–10. The great truth of chapters 7–9 is that God was with Judah. Isaiah uses the same term Immanuel to close verse 10—**God is with us**. Even though the **nations** would **raise a war cry** and **prepare for battle** against Judah, they would not succeed. They would **be shattered**, a fact stated three times in verse 9 for emphasis. Even though they would carefully work out a **strategy** and a **plan** for battle they would not succeed because God was with Judah (“Immanuel” in Heb.; cf. 7:14; 8:8). That great truth separated Judah from all other nations of the world. Because God has promised to be with His people they were to have faith in Him no matter how bad their circumstances. He would not desert them. Thus God and Isaiah were proved right, and Ahaz was rebuked for his lack of faith (cf. 7:9).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (p. 1004). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

8:6 Why would the people of Judah have “rejoiced with Rezin,” the Syrian king who was attacking Jerusalem and whom God had promised to destroy (v. 4)? Some hypothesize that this referred to a group who wanted to join Rezin’s revolt against Assyria, and were therefore happy to see the invader’s military progress. Other translations emend the text to read “melt in fear” picturing the fearful people of Judah terrorized before the Syrian onslaught. The best option is to interpret the people rejoicing over the announcement in verse 4 that the “wealth of Damascus ... will be carried off,” implying Rezin’s defeat.