

GOD AT WORK IN A CRISIS

Isaiah 8

Intro: There is some reason for believing that chapter 7 does not really end until 8:4, and there is just as strong a reason for saying that chapter 8 does not end until 9:7.

But we are going to look at chapter 8 by itself tonight, and then look at the first part of chapter 9, the Lord willing, next Sunday night.

Actually, it is all intertwined together. The problem that the Lord faces with His people is a spiritual problem, but the implications are international. It needs to be looked at historically and prophetically. At the same time these chapters are full of needed teaching for the people of God of all nations in every age. And so the wealth of the passage seems unlimited.

Keep in mind the situation.

Spiritually, we see Judah in chapter 1. Israel was even worse. Neither division of the nation knew much about walking with the Lord.

Israel (also called Ephraim) has made an alliance with Syria, and together they posed a threat to Judah to the south. Judah, under King Ahaz, had sought an alliance with Assyria rather than by turning to the Lord for help. We have seen in chapter 7 how the Lord tried to get Ahaz to see that that would never work--that in the end Assyria would turn against Judah too. He wanted them to know that the help of man is vain and that they should turn to the Lord in this crisis.

But Ahaz and most of the people of Judah were not about to listen to Isaiah or any other prophet.

Nevertheless, the Lord still seeks to reach them, to turn them to Himself. This is what is going on in chapter 9. **HOW AMAZED WE SHOULD BE TO SEE HOW MANY WAYS THE LORD SEEKS TO GET OUR ATTENTION AND TO GET US TO TRUST HIM!**

What did the people of Judah need to know?

It can be summed up under three headings--and these truths run throughout the chapter:

- 1) THE WISDOM OF GOD. It is omniscient wisdom. He has a plan. He knows what He is doing, and what is going to happen.
- 2) THE POWER OF GOD. It is omniscient power. He can use the nations according to His will. He is greater than the nations. It is sufficient power. If the people of God will only trust Him, they will find that that will be enough!
- 3) THE WORD OF GOD. Cf. vv. 1a, 3b, 5a, 11, 16, 20. Isaiah wanted it to be perfectly clear that the message was not his

own, but the Word of God! GOD DID NOT LEAVE THEM TO GROPE IN THE DARKNESS, BUT HE RAISED UP PROPHETS AND GAVE THEM HIS WORD.

First of all, note . . .

I. THE TWOFOLD WITNESS (Isa. 8:1-4).

It had to do with the word, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz."

- A. It was written on a tablet, or slab (vv. 1, 2).
IT WAS LIKE A MOTTO. IT WAS WRITTEN "IN ORDINARY LETTERS" (NASB) WHICH ALL COULD READ.
- B. It was also given to Isaiah's younger son (v. 3).
RELATE THIS TO 7:14-16.
- C. The reason is given (v. 4).

It means, hasten to the spoil, hasten to the booty. No more explanation is given, no nations are identified until Isaiah explains as he does in v. 4.

Here is a prophecy that Assyria will defeat Syria and Israel. But, as Isaiah goes on to explain in v. 7, it is not because of Judah's alliance; it is because this is something that the Lord was going to do anyway.

II. AN ADDITIONAL PROPHECY (Isa. 8:5-8).

Israel had refused "the waters of Shiloah," referring to a stream just to the east of Jerusalem, but meaning the help that God would give to His people. Temporal blessings were to be a witness of His constant care even in the future.

But, since "this people," Israel, did not accept the help of the Lord, the Lord was going to judge them with "the king of Assyria."

But now the alarming news: After the King of Assyria got through with Israel, he would seek to do the same thing to Judah! (See v. 8.)

III. PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS FOR JUDAH (Isa. 8:9-22).

- A. Some things which they needed to know (vv. 9, 10).

This is Isaiah's way of saying, "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Rom. 8:31b).

This was the whole purpose of the name, "Immanuel."
Cf. 7:14; 8:8, 10b ("for God is with us"—Immanuel).

No matter how many nations there may be, no confederacy can possibly be greater than God!

And this will always be true!

- B. What the Lord did not want them to do (vv. 11, 12).

The Lord is speaking to Isaiah, but the **same message** is for all who will give heed.

Rotherham translates this verse:

"Thus spake Jehovah unto me like a firm grasp of the hand . . ." (Carmichael, Thou Givest . . . They Gather, p. 1).

Regardless of how many might go the other way, Isaiah was not to enter in to this alliance. The Lord was to be his hope.

What a tragedy it is when the people of God make their decisions on the basis of what the majority want to do. Remember the spies who went into the land. It was 10 against 2--but the 2 had the mind of the Lord!

But now let us look at . . .

- C. What the Lord did want them to do--the positive side (vv. 13-18).

Note the **emphasis** upon the Lord, not just His blessings. This, according to 1:4, was the heart of Judah's sin. The only way to remedy that was by allowing the Lord to have His rightful place in their lives.

Vv. 16-18 give us Isaiah's prayer, and his own purpose to seek the Lord (v. 17), believing that his own children were evidence that God had confirmed His will.

In view of his prayer in v. 16 concerning the Word, Isaiah now goes on with . . .

- D. More that the Lord did not want them to do--and why (vv. 19-22).

Cf. 2:6. When people who have been exposed to the truth turn from the Lord, it is **amazing** how far they will go.

The result: darkness, and more darkness. The only safe way is "to the law and to the testimony" (v. 20a).

Concl: There is a very basic truth here which we often overlook because of our own immaturity in the things of the Lord. **THE LORD WANTS US TO SEEK HIM!** He was like One who was hiding (v. 17). Isaiah says, "I will seek Him." In v. 19, "should not a people seek unto their God?" Cf. 9:13. This is one of the

greatest reasons for our trials--that we might seek the Lord and,
thus be drawn closer to Him as He meets our needs.

The people of Judah would not learn; will we?