

SEPTEMBER 11

Isaiah 8-9

Today we have another prophecy concerning Jesus, delivered during desperate times. The situation in Judah would get even worse, but these prophecies would remind the people following God that He was still present with them. The same is true for us today. Regardless of who is in government, we know that until the coming of Jesus, things will get worse on earth. Yet, Jesus is Immanuel, God with us, guiding us in the harvest, giving us joy and fruit as we live under the radar doing His work, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples.

Isaiah 8

Vs. 1-3 Although one child had already been foretold as a sign that God would stop the attack coming from Israel and Syria, now another child is foretold. The first child, Immanuel, would be born in this distress, but would live and thrive, being a symbol of God's presence and peace. But when would there be a breaking of the enemy? That time would be signified by this second child, a son of Isaiah and his wife, *the prophetess*.

So, if you follow the math it would be nine months of pregnancy and then the birth. Then before the child can say "dada" or "mama" (another year?), Assyria could take captive Israel and Syria. The people of Judah would have to wait patiently for maybe 18 months.

By the way, *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* is the longest name in the Bible. Surprisingly, it's not in my spellchecker.

Vs. 5-10 Because the northern kingdom didn't listen to God, they will be smashed by the coming of Assyria and the destruction will reach "Immanuel" (Jerusalem?), but Assyria will be shattered, proving that God is with them. This will happen in the years of Hezekiah.

You notice that v. 10 also has the name Immanuel (*God is with us*) in it. My German Bible has both as Immanuel.

Vs. 11-22 This is a warning to Isaiah to stand firm. Judah will prove to be utterly faithless and ungrateful to God. King Ahaz, rather than honoring God for this deliverance, will honor and revere the king of Assyria. In spite of the promises that God has made, the people, led by the king, will see deliverance as coming from Assyria. Isaiah is not to lose heart or stop following God during these years of sin and arrogance. This is where you understand Jesus' words from Matthew 13:5 as He quotes Isaiah 6:10.

Vs. 11-15 Isaiah was to fear the Lord and not give into interpreting truth as the people did. Living during Ahaz's ungodliness was going to be hard. Equally as hard would be watching people get swept into Ahaz's beliefs and lifestyle. Those who resisted God would be broken and taken.

Vs. 16-18 Isaiah and his children would be testimonies against the people. Remember too that his children had special names that would be signs to those who believed. Isaiah and his family would hunker down and wait on the Lord.

Vs. 19-22 The people would actually ask Isaiah to *inquire of the dead* on their behalf. God's argument here is, "Why call on the dead when you have a living God?" Since there was no good answer, all that was left for them was judgment.

Isaiah 9

Vs. 1-7 You will recognize these prophecies as having to do with Jesus. This is holy ground. The connection here is that destruction and threat always came upon Israel from the north. The two tribes mentioned here were northern, so they are the peoples who would feel the fear the greatest because they would be hit first.

Everlasting Father could be referring to the king being called a father to the people. This wasn't a heavenly designation, but how those whom he ruled over would regard Jesus.

Just as God gave Isaiah two prophecies dealing with children who would symbolize God's presence and His deliverance, now God is giving Isaiah a view of a coming child who would be the ultimate Savior of Israel. The darkness of the Tribulation would be the ultimate threat against Israel; but then, their ultimate Savior would come. In much of Isaiah, Isaiah did not see the gap between the first and second comings of Jesus, and so he went from the birth and coming of the Messiah to His physical reign on earth. This was obviously confusing during Jesus' time; but then, all they really needed to do was ask Jesus.

Vs. 8-21 The cause of this distress from the north, at that moment, was the northern tribes of Israel being joined to the kingdom and armies of Syria. There are three divisions in this section, all ending with the phrase, *For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.*

Vs. 8-12 God had been sending word to the northern kingdom for years, most notably through Elijah and Elisha. The people didn't listen. Instead they thought, "Whatever." In v. 10 they just put a good face on things and said they would rebuild. But God promised His unfailing wrath in v. 12.

Vs. 13-17 The people didn't repent or turn to God either. As a result, God wouldn't bless them or allow them to prosper. He allowed them to weaken, to become corrupt and *His hand* was *stretched out still* against them.

Vs. 18-21 Over the years the land was consumed little by little, and the people were miserable. But they didn't learn or turn to God, and God kept His hand stretched out against Israel.

This reminds me of the verse in Romans 5:11, *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* Without being reconciled to God, there is no peace and there is no reason to rejoice in God. Jesus makes the difference, but people need to turn to Jesus. That is our message in the harvest.

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

You'll have a great time discussing this in a group. Having read Job and so much of the OT, this is an amazing passage on being a disciple and having the Lord own your life. I guess I'd be tempted to say what a great man Paul was, but the point here is what a great God we serve. Jesus talked about pruning the vines for fruitfulness. As if all the disasters Paul mentioned weren't enough, God allowed Satan to humble Paul.

One note here is that if you go back 14 years before this letter, you go back before Barnabas brought Paul into the work in Antioch in Acts 11. It is also possible that many of Paul's sufferings, beatings, and shipwrecks date back to that time before Acts 11. Paul was loved by the Lord and was a very devoted disciple; but God used Paul, and some of that use entailed abuse. We hear of this great vision, similar in some respects to Daniel, but what came before and after was lots of work and lots of suffering and lots of blessing. I think Paul's model for a disciple was Jesus, as described in Isaiah 53.

Vs. 1-4 Unlike Paul's opponents, Paul couldn't even show what he knew from the vision because he was forbidden by God to express what he had heard. So why talk about the vision in the first place? Here we go.

Vs. 5-7 As a result of this vision and the confidence it gave Paul, God allowed Satan to attack Paul and give him a permanent disability. This is very similar to Job. So the evidence that Paul had been honored by God was a disability brought on by a successful spiritual attack. What a thing to share. I'm sure the super-apostles didn't think this was something to share with others.

Vs. 8-10 Not only that, God didn't answer Paul's prayer. So how great an apostle was Paul if God didn't answer his prayer? How great a man was Job? They might be in the same category. Imagine finding your strength in *weakness*, because your weakness drives you to Christ and to His power. And then imagine being OK with that; I mean, really at peace with the disability from Satan and the weakness because you realize these are why you know *the power of Christ*. I'm sure this caught the false apostles off guard. After the reading of this section of the letter, I'll bet the false apostles woke up the next morning limping, saying, "Look what God allowed to happen to me because I'm so great."

I remember being a very little kid and my mother asking me what position I wanted to play if I was a baseball player. I said I wanted to be the batter. I understood much later that you had to work in the field before you earned the right to come up to the plate. I need to work a lot more in the harvest following Christ. It is the only place to learn the closeness of the Savior.

Psalm 55

The sense of betrayal in this psalm is very strong. It is hard to say when David experienced this. It might have been in his early years running from Saul. It would have been convenient for some of his friends to have turned their backs on David, not only to gain the position that David left vacant in the army, but also in feeding Saul information to gain status and show their allegiance to Saul. On the other hand, it could also be that this is referring to the time when David ran from Absalom. The mention of going to the house of God in v. 14 might suggest that the ark of the covenant was already in Jerusalem. Who knows, but we know that David faced betrayal and knew where he could pour out his heart.

Vs. 1-3 In David's cry for mercy, not only was he emotionally restless, but his enemies were angry with him and bearing old offenses. This would fit the situation with Absalom.

Vs. 4-8 If it was Absalom who was seeking David, David's old sins would be nagging at him too. The desire to escape and just flee would be natural. Even with David's past sins, he understood he could go to the Lord and would be accepted and receive refuge.

Vs. 9-11 This prayer could have applied to David's earlier flight as well as to his later flight. As a result of both events, Israel was weakened. Since the city is mentioned, it must be Jerusalem and this could point to Absalom's takeover.

Vs. 12-15 The friend here could either be Absalom in a figurative, but deeply emotional sense, or Ahithophel, David's close advisor. Both of these men had deep grudges against David, and unfortunately, rightly so. Yet, harboring hate and not extending forgiveness is an affront to God Himself. Regardless of the reasons for our pain, we are told to forgive.

V. 13 This looks like something Jesus could have experienced.

Vs. 16-19 David was a veteran of calling out to God and receiving God's deliverance. He was broken and knew how to present his heart and wait on God's answer.

Vs. 20-21 Again, this could have been either Absalom or Ahithophel. Probably as David thought of those last conversations before all of the betrayal came to light, he thought of how he had not suspected their brewing hatred for him.

V. 22 This looks like the lines for a very sweet song, yet behind this thought there is emotional and relational bitterness woven into the verse. Few things we endure are harder than relational betrayals. Even in Job, the most dangerous threat came through the accusations and pressure from his friends.

V. 23 This is the final appeal to God. David knew there would be judgment, but David would concentrate on trusting in the Lord.

Proverbs 23:4-5

Amen. The image of the eagle here adds a sense of certainty to what the writer is saying. The eagle was very strong and fast, and in this context, almost unstoppable. Earthly wealth is fleeting and doesn't deliver on what it promises. Trusting in the Lord and seeking Him is what brings real wealth in heaven, and we have confidence and strength on earth as we follow in the harvest.