

## Isaiah 8:5-22

<sup>5</sup> The LORD also spoke to me again, saying: <sup>6</sup> "Inasmuch as these people refused The waters of Shiloah that flow softly, And rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah's son; <sup>7</sup> Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them The waters of the River, strong and mighty-- The king of Assyria and all his glory; He will go up over all his channels And go over all his banks. <sup>8</sup> He will pass through Judah, He will overflow and pass over, He will reach up to the neck; And the stretching out of his wings Will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel. <sup>9</sup> "Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces! Give ear, all you from far countries. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces; Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. <sup>10</sup> Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; Speak the word, but it will not stand, For God *is* with us." <sup>11</sup> For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: <sup>12</sup> "Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. <sup>13</sup> The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him *be* your fear, And let Him *be* your dread. <sup>14</sup> He will be as a sanctuary, But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense To both the houses of Israel, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup> And many among them shall stumble; They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken." <sup>16</sup> Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples. <sup>17</sup> And I will wait on the LORD, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob; And I will hope in Him. <sup>18</sup> Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! *We are* for signs and wonders in Israel From the LORD of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion. <sup>19</sup> And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? <sup>20</sup> To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them. <sup>21</sup> They will pass through it hard pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. <sup>22</sup> Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven into darkness.

## Isaiah 9:1-7

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the gloom *will not be* upon her who *is* distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, And afterward more heavily oppressed *her*, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles. <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation *And* increased its joy; They rejoice before You According to the joy of harvest, As *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil. <sup>4</sup> For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff

of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning *and* fuel of fire. <sup>6</sup> For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Have you ever made decisions based on the fact that God is moving slower than what you would wish Him to? Have you ever thought that you will never receive that which you feel you must have, so you take your life into your own hands and work **to deliver to yourself** that which you feel **you must have**? Do you find yourself, like Abraham, impatient with God in the timing that He delivers on His promises so you try to come up with a way to take care of it yourself?

This morning we will start with a nation in the middle of a crisis. They desire an immediate solution to their problem. But they **are not trusting God**. They **will not trust** God. They are relying upon those things that they can see.

Verse 5 may be speaking about Israel, not Judea. But I think it is Judea. Whoever it is, these people are not satisfied with the provisions God has given them. They want something bigger, something better, something more impressive.

How often are we like that? We may be like that with our relationships. We may be like that with our affiliations. We may want to bypass the humble and trustable and move to the impressive.

<sup>5</sup> **The LORD also spoke to me again, saying: <sup>6</sup> "Inasmuch as these people refused The waters of Shiloah that flow softly, And rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah's son; <sup>7</sup> Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them The waters of the River, strong and mighty-- The king of Assyria and all his glory; He will go up over all his channels And go over all his banks**

Again, I think Isaiah is talking about Judea here. Shiloah is talking about the water that was redirected into Jerusalem via the underwater aqueduct as far as I can tell. Judea was no longer impressed with what God had supplied for them. They were no longer impressed with this wonderful source of water. They were more impressed with **foreign** things. They were impressed with Syria, their enemy. Man, isn't this like us? Don't we set our eyes on that which we don't have instead of that which we do? Don't we find ourselves impressed with all the things that are foreign to our walk with God? Doesn't the appeal of the world find its way into our hearts? That is what is happening here. They are looking for things of ultimate value outside of Christ, outside of their walks with God.

Think about when you have done that. Has it ever turned out well? Has your rebellion or disobedience ever worked out well? Has it ever given you what your soul craved? No. It may satiate but it will never satisfy. We are slow to learn this, but it is a fact none the less.

Now look what happens. When these people become obsessed with the foreign things, it is as if the River Euphrates, the River they are impressed with, overflows its banks and floods the lands.

But in this case we find out this is an allegory. We find out it is the king of Assyria who is the river. And we get a very interesting verbal picture.

**.<sup>8</sup> He will pass through Judah, He will overflow and pass over, He will reach up to the neck; And the stretching out of his wings Will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel.**

The imagery here is that the nation of Assyria overflows its banks and floods all the lands. And Israel and Syria will be flooded. But Judea will stand like people whose flood reaches their necks. They are in danger, but they are not ultimately destroyed.

**<sup>9</sup> "Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces! Give ear, all you from far countries. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces; Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces.**

Israel and Syria are girding themselves. They are preparing themselves for battle. They are doing their best to take care of themselves. They are showing the epitome of self reliance. They are worshipping their wonderful humanistic gods. But what happens? They are broken to pieces. They are crushed. They are destroyed. They are left in very bad shape.

Why? The next verse describes it.

**<sup>10</sup> Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; Speak the word, but it will not stand, For God is with us."**

Remember how Israel and Syria were working together to defeat Judea? Isaiah is saying, "Good luck with that." All of their plans, all of their counseling, all of their plans will come to nothing. That is always true of the enemies of God. Their plans will always come to nothing.

It is interesting that Albania was a country that sought to eliminate Christianity. But it was Catholicism that likely overthrew the government and there are at least 8000 evangelical believers in the country now. And the numbers are probably much higher than that.

Remember that two weeks ago we had the prophecy that God is with us. Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of this. But, really, Christ being with us is the ultimate source of **any** of our victories, any of our successes.

We need to stand on this statement. God is with us.

**Speak the word, but it will not stand, For God is with us."**

There are a million things that can be spoken against us as believers. The world may say that we are kooks. It can say that we are intolerant. It can say we are in the stone ages. It can say that we are evil because we believe in absolutes. It doesn't matter what they say. At the end of the day, God is not **with them** so what they say will not stand. But God is with us and what God says will stand. That is the truth. God is with His people. So it does not matter what the opponents may say against us.

" <sup>11</sup> **For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying:** <sup>12</sup> **"Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.**

Look at this closely. What do you see? Do you see empathy from God? Do you see God saying, I understand why you might feel frightened about this? Do you see God saying, I understand why this might get you a bit out of sorts? No. We see none of that. God spoke with a strong hand. What we see here is that God rebuked Isaiah with a strong rebuke. God was very straight forward in what He had to say to Isaiah. The rebuke was clear. Don't walk like the people around you. And what was this about specifically? The conspiracy of Israel and Syria. He was told to not be afraid of the threats or be troubled. Now how can God say such a thing? How can God tell a person not to be afraid of things that one can clearly see are frightening? Surely God would not be so harsh, so unreasonable, so inhumane? Well, yes, God would. Because **God says** these things are not going to happen. God has given promises that can be relied upon. It is very hard for us to see our unfaithfulness as what it really is. What it **really** is is we as humans are calling a God a liar to His face. We don't like to see it that way. But that is the truth of the matter. We are saying that God is not going to come through. God is not going to deliver on his promises. We cannot trust God to do what He says. We call it lots of things. But God calls it disobedience. Don't be troubled He says. Don't be afraid of their threats. Now do we think God was just talking here? Was God just giving words of comfort here that Isaiah had the option of believing or disbelieving. Do we think God really didn't expect that Isaiah was supposed to obey what God said here? If we think that, we are wrong. When God speaks, God means what He says.

Then God gives Isaiah the alternative.

<sup>13</sup> **The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.** <sup>14</sup> **He will be as a sanctuary, But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense To both the houses of Israel, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.**

Christ gave us a very good logical reason to not fear men.

## **Matthew 10:28**

**<sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

Essentially we are to fear the most who has the most power. We should fear the most who can do the most harm. It is simply a matter of reason and logic. If you fear the one who has the least power, you are still subject to the harm of him who has the most power. But if you fear and please the one who has the most power, he can protect you from his subordinates.

At work, I know one thing. If I please my boss, I am in good shape. Because my boss is the ultimate authority at work. There are other people who may not be happy with what I am doing. I have co-workers who don't think much of some of the decisions that I make. But if I please my boss, I am good.

That is the reasoning that God gives us. Fear the most who can do the most harm. If you please Him, you have nothing to fear from His subordinates.

Then Isaiah goes on and in a way prophesies about Christ. **But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense** describes Christ.

Why is it that Christ is so offensive? It is the same reason that **Christ is so wonderful** to us Gentiles and Christ was **so offensive** to most Jews. It is the fact that He offers salvation to those who could never deserve it. He offers salvation to those least worthy of salvation. He offers salvation to us Gentile apostates. We never lived by the law. We didn't even care about the law. But God saved us just as we were.

**<sup>15</sup> And many among them shall stumble; They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken."**

This is prophesying what will happen when Christ is revealed. Many, in fact most, of the Jewish people will stumble upon their true Messiah because He will not appeal to their pride. He will give nothing for flesh to appeal to. As a result they will be lost. They will fall into the snare of pride. They will be taken away in their pride and conceit. They will be lost.

**<sup>16</sup> Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples. <sup>17</sup> And I will wait on the LORD, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob; And I will hope in Him.**

This is how it always works. The stuff that God does is ultimately for those who have faith. The stuff that God does is primarily for the benefit of His disciples. It is not for mainstream religion. It is not for the fleshly products of religion. It has nothing to do with a human's way of trying to please God or his idea of what God is.

God hides His face from those who presume to know Him. God hides His face from those who think they have a right to Him, those who think they know Him by their own instincts, by their own presumptions of what God is. God will not be found by those.

But God is always found by those who trust in Him. God is found by those who believe what God says about Himself. Isaiah trusts only in that God. And that is the God that we must trust in too.

<sup>18</sup> **Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! *We are* for signs and wonders in Israel From the LORD of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion.**

Do you ever wonder what your life is for? Do you wonder why God continues to allow you to live? Well here is one of the reasons. We are for signs and wonders. The world looking on should see things in us that make them wonder what is going on. They should see things in us that are not predictable in the world's scenarios. They should wonder what it is that God is doing. There should be things about our lives that should not be able to be explained by human reasoning.

<sup>19</sup> **And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? <sup>20</sup> **To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.****

Here we see the danger of alternative solutions, alternative voices. Do you ever feel like doing things God's way does not produce enough of the results you are after? How about church growth, for instance? Do we ever think that we should help God along? Do we feel we should pursue a path that would get more people in our seats? We must be very careful. There are many alternative spiritual paths to the path God lays out for us.

We may often want something that is **more pleasant to us**, something that may be more clear, something that may seem more reasonable or effective. But we must be careful. We, like the Judean people, must stick to the narrow path. We must stick to the voices coming directly from God in His Word. Anything else can become very dangerous very quickly.

In high school I dated a girl. Eventually she moved away and broke off the relationship. At the time I viewed it as a very bad thing. She professed to believe in Christ. I was pretty serious about the relationship. Since then I looked her up on the internet and found out she is a professional medium. She specializes in talking to dead people, which we understand as communicating with demons. That was the advice that the Judeans were giving to each other. They were suggesting talking to Mediums to get answers about what they should do. What a horrible thing, to abandon the clear word of God to trust in a Medium, to trust in someone who is thinking to communicate with a person who did not even have the power to keep themselves alive.

Isaiah responds with absolute reason. He basically says that if a person does not respond to this evil and craziness by saying, **absolutely not**, I will call upon God, if they won't do that, it is because **they have no light in them**. It is only absolute

disbelief that would respond in such a way as to deny God and believe in witch doctors.

And what will be the end of those who pursue other avenues of direction other than the Word of God?

**<sup>21</sup> They will pass through it hard pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. <sup>22</sup> Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven into darkness.**

What we have here is a picture of the destiny of anyone who chooses to trust in an alternative God.

Their false God is not going to deliver the results they want. They are going to find that their false trust leaves them without resources. And that will result in frustration. The frustration will lead them to blame. And who will they blame? First they will blame the visible human authority. Then they will blame the supernatural source of power.

Isn't this interesting. The people doing the blame did nothing to respond to God's call on their lives. They did nothing to obey God. They did nothing to find out what God said or what God wanted. They would not submit themselves to God. But who do they get angry with? The king, who deserved their anger, and their God who did nothing to deserve a human's anger.

But look at the state of these "blamers".

Where will they look? To the earth. That is the saddest state of humankind.

When all we have to look at is ourselves, we are beyond hope. Everything we hope for is going to be hopeless. I think that is why those looking to political solutions to our problems are so heated and so frustrated. Humanism is one of the most futile beliefs a man can arrive at. The belief in humans is about the most blind faith that could be ventured. Humans have **never produced goodness** and never will. They may, on occasion do noble and virtuous things, but those are the exceptions to the rule. When one places one's hope on the earth and on the human race, that hopeful person will end up with trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish, and eventually God will drive them into total darkness, just as Romans 1 predicts.

But what we see from God is always better than what people deserve.

**Isaiah 9:1-7**

**<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the gloom *will not be* upon her who *is* distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, And afterward more heavily oppressed *her*, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles. <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation *And* increased its joy;**

**They rejoice before You According to the joy of harvest, As *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil. <sup>4</sup> For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning *and* fuel of fire.**

We might at first respond, what in the world is this talking about? But as we look at the history and then at their future **as we see it** in history, we can begin to make sense of all this. Galilee was distressed. Galilee was in the Israel territory that was taken over by Assyria. Horrible things were going to happen to her. But then **there is God**. God has something else in mind. There is no time period mentioned. These people may have thought this wondrous thing would happen right away. But it wouldn't.

We see it begin in verse 2.

**<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.**

We know this to be Christ. This land that saw death descend upon them will ultimately be the same land where Christ would show Himself most fully. Christ would dwell there. Christ would shine the light of God upon this land. The people who saw the great darkness of an enemy's invasion would see the wonderful light of their God's intrusion.

Isaiah goes on in this amazing deliverance by God.

**<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation *And* increased its joy; They rejoice before You According to the joy of harvest, As *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil. <sup>4</sup> For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning *and* fuel of fire.**

Basically God is saying through Isaiah that whatever happens bad in this territory will not be forever. God is going to release this land with an eternal blessing. The things **it was cursed with** will go away.

And then the real blessing is foretold.

How is this blessing going to be received? What is it that will kick off the eternal blessing to be received?

**<sup>6</sup> For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**

Look at your life now.



Don't you want a direct answer to your human problems right now? That which you suffer, don't you want an answer? Don't you want relief? Don't you want whatever brings you pain and suffering to go away right now?

Well look at this. What God says here will not give immediate relief to the suffering of the Judean people. God tells Isaiah something that will not happen for hundreds of years. God gives the people an answer to their problems that they will not see in their lifetimes.

We have to keep this in mind about God. He doesn't work according to our time tables.

What Christ promises here is Christ. He is God's Son. Eventually all of earthly government will rest on Christ. And what is Christ's name?

Well, what do we call Christ when we think about our salvation?

Don't we call Him Wonderful? How can we think of Christ without being filled with the wonder of His grace?

Counselor? Doesn't the Holy Spirit counsel us when we call out to God for Wisdom?

Isn't He our mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace?

We have been looking at a political situation for Judea. It doesn't look good. And then Ahaz makes an alliance with Assyria that dooms Judea. So everything in the near future is bad. But God steps in through Isaiah and gives the ultimate destination. All the true Judea will be in a good spot. There is coming something that is hard for us to even imagine. There is an eternal reign of God coming soon. There will be justice with proper and just judgment coming. And for how long? From this time forward.... Even forever.

These Judeans were not going to experience an earthly reign like this. There never has been one. No political force will ever create one. But one day some day the kingdom of Christ will come to our planet. And on that day everything will be as good as it can be for all the people who have trusted Christ for salvation.

This is an amazing thing. These people that Isaiah was addressing may have thought it was only a few years away. We don't understand God's timing. But we know we can trust His character.

There truly is a time coming when Christ will be King. In that day all will be made right. We will no longer need to concern ourselves about justice and righteousness. We will no longer need to concern ourselves with our weaker or poorer brothers. We will no longer need faith. We will see. And it will be the most wonderful of situations we can imagine.

Do we really need to stress about those things that are so temporary in our lives?