

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 8:1-22

Topic

Isaiah is promised a second son whose name will be a second sign of the future Assyrian invasion

Title

"It's All Signs And Names Until Somebody Invades"

They're calling it, **Headline Stress Disorder.**

It is caused by exposure to excessive news coverage. Symptoms can include stomach aches, headaches, teeth grinding, panic attacks, feeling depressed or sad, feeling overwhelmed, insomnia, lack of energy, anger, and irritability. Further progression may lead to physical and mental diseases, e.g., anxiety disorders, depression disorders, endocrine disorders, and hypertension.

From pandemics to politics... From inflation to invasion... From climate to crime... From infrastructure to immigration... From guns to gas... From derailed trains to deadly disease strains... There is plenty to fear.

Seventh century Judah had **Headline Stress.**

Any of the following 'headlines' could have been above the fold:

- *Syrian-Israel Conspiracy Revealed*
- *Egypt on the Prowl; When will Pharaoh Pounce?*

- *Assyrian Empire Flexes Military Muscle*
- *King Ahaz Celebrates Sacrificing Son to Molech*
- *Government Scores High on Corruption*
- *Latest Poll Finds No Compassion for Widows & Orphans: 'Let Them Eat Manna'*

The LORD supplied Isaiah with a simple solve for stressful times. *"Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread. 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."*

We are likewise told to be unaffected. Jesus promised, *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33 ESV).

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 The Lord Is Your Sanctuary**, or **#2 The Lord Is Your Stone Of Stumbling**.

#1 - The Lord Is Your Sanctuary (v1-14)

Two competing recent US headlines:

- *Sanctuary City Policies are a Threat to Decent People*
- *Living in Fear: Understanding the Importance of Sanctuary Cities*

While we are stressing about sanctuary cities, the LORD says, *"He will be as a **sanctuary**"* (v14).

Herbert Lockyer writes, *"How good of God it is to promise Himself as a sanctuary! In the Old Testament He provided a Temple for His people; in the New Testament He has a redeemed people as His Temple. But the wonder of wonders is that He also is our Temple. How consoling it is to know that amid all the turmoil of the street, busy cares of the home, hurry and confusion of our modern life, we have a sanctuary."*

Our God is a strong, unassailable sanctuary, doubling as a mighty fortress:

- As our sanctuary, we partake of His promises and power.
- As our fortress, we have quite an arsenal of spiritual weaponry.

We can be spiritually safe, sound, and secure, no matter the turmoil or trouble in the world.

Isa 8:1 Moreover the LORD said to me, "Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man's pen concerning Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.

Isa 8:2 And I will take for Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah."

Isa 8:3 Then 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;

Isa 8:4 for before the child shall have knowledge to cry 'My father' and 'My mother,' the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria."

The name of this unborn son breaks down like this:

- Maher - *he is quick*
- Shalal - *plunder, loot, or spoils*
- Hash - *he hurries, or swift*
- Baz - *prey, as in hunting*

Quick to the plunder, swift to the prey. It was meant to serve as a warning of the future invasion of Assyria, which would result in the plundering and spoiling of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Our spiritual adversary, the devil, is swift to the prey. He is likened to a roaring lion, seeking to devour.

Do you know how to survive a lion attack? I mean in Africa. Experts say: Don't panic... Don't run... Stand your ground.

That's our strategy against the devil - Resist & Stand.

You've successfully resisted the devil, and he has fled from you. His next strategy is to plunder your life. The terrible thing about this is that he enlists your help to do it. You let down your guard, just a little, quit being vigilant, spiritually, and before you know it, your life has been plundered.

The Jews in Judah would watch as their fellow Jews in the north were plundered and devoured. It ought to have served as an object lesson for them. They saw what happened, but they continued to sin as if it could not happen to them.

Isaiah named his son as a prophetic sign to the people of Israel. No one would choose that name unless commanded by the LORD. It was also written on a placard and displayed for all to see. It was written "with a man's pen," meaning in big, clear, common letters.

The placard was witnessed by two respected men, "Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah," so that no one could deny that his birth was prophesied prior to the events predicted.

Isaiah's wife is called a "prophetess."

- A handful of ladies were called prophetess in the Old Testament: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Mrs. Isaiah.
- Between the testaments, we see Anna called a prophetess.
- In the Book of Acts, Philip's four daughters "prophesied."

At CalvaryHanford, we believe the Church was founded by apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). These were *offices* in the early Church, not *gifts*.

- There are no more apostles, if for no other reason than no one can meet the Bible's qualifications. In the Book of Acts, the office of an apostle could only be held by a man who had first-hand knowledge of Jesus and His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). They are all dead.
- There are no prophets, holding an office in the Church. The apostle Paul wrote about a mystery, "which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy **apostles and prophets**: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel" (Ephesians 3:5-6). They made that mystery known, and other men took their place to build upon the foundation they laid.

We are, nevertheless, continuists, not cessionists, when it comes to the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Men *and* women in the Church may have the gift of prophecy, or any of the gifts described in the Bible.

Regarding the ladies, what is called 'the role of women,' we are complementarian, not egalitarian. You can look those up later.

From the moment Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz was born, Damascus and Samaria were on the doomsday clock. Before he was old enough to say "Momma" or "Not the Momma," the king of Assyria would prey and plunder.

Isa 8:5 The LORD also spoke to me again, saying:

Isa 8:6 "Inasmuch as these people refused The waters of Shiloah that flow softly, And rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah's son;

Isa 8:7 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.

Every Jew would instantly comprehend this imagery:

- "Shiloah" (called Siloam in NT) was the gently flowing water supply of Jerusalem.
- "The River," in verse seven, is the mighty Euphrates, associated with Assyria.

"Rezin" was the last of the kings of Syria who reigned in Damascus. The son of Remaliah, Pekah, reigned 20 years over Israel in Samaria.

Because Pekah chose to ally with Syria, and not depend upon the LORD, they would not be protected to live the idyllic life-by-the-stream God promised them. Instead, they would be thrown into the geopolitical mess that is human history and be carried away by the raging flood of the Assyrian Empire. Their help would come from the LORD or not at all.

Isa 8:8 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.

Judah, meanwhile, formed an alliance with Assyria. Bad idea; the Assyrians would attempt to engulf them, too.

The "stretching out of his wings" is a change of metaphor from flood to a bird of prey overshadowing the land. An Assyrian god was eagle-headed.

The waters do not cover the head and drown Judah, the bird of prey circles but does not kill. Assyria would threaten Judah, but God would intervene. As Captain Picard said of the Borg, "Thus far and no further."

Despite the worsening situation, there was hope. "Immanuel," God with Us, Jesus. The promise of the coming of the God-man would be realized. The world will be rescued and restored. Mankind will be redeemed and regenerated.

Isa 8:9 "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.

Isa 8:10 Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; Speak the word, but it will not stand, For God is with us."

Former Secretary of State, General James 'Mad Dog' Mattis, had no problem expressing his confidence in the American military. My favorite quote: "We've backed off in good faith to try and give you a chance to straighten this problem out. But I am going to beg with you for a minute. I'm going to plead with you, do not cross us. Because if you do, the survivors will write about what we do here for 10,000 years."

That's the gist of verses nine and ten.

Isa 8:11 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:

Isa 8:12 "Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.

The "conspiracy" was the alliance Israel made with Syria, conspiring against Judah. It seemed insurmountable. Isaiah was instructed to not be stressed at the headline.

Have you ever told someone, or been told, that an animal can sense your fear? That African lion we talked about earlier. It can sense your fear. So, hey, *don't be afraid*.

I am afraid of all animals, to some extent. I have not yet found my don't-be-afraid switch.

In the Lord, however - totally different. What He tells me to do, I *can* do, if I believe Him and choose to.

God flat-out commands us, "Don't be afraid, don't be troubled."

Isa 8:13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.

"The LORD of hosts," or, "the Lord of the heavenly armies." When I was a kid, and maybe this is still true, if somebody challenged you, or threatened you in some way, you'd ask, "You, and what army?"

Not only the headlines, but *anything* and *everything* that threatens you, troubles you, stresses you - "You and what army" is no match for the Lord of the heavenly armies.

"Him you shall hallow." Consider God's holiness, that's what this means. Isaiah had earlier in this book been granted a rare glimpse of Heaven. He was immediately undone by its holiness and his sinfulness.

You and I have not been to Heaven like Isaiah. But there was the moment when I was shown by the Holy Spirit the holiness of God and the sinfulness of my soul. It frightened me, but there was grace in its reveal that led me to the Savior.

"Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread."

I have always had a tough time describing the fear of God. The safe, default, commentary is to say it is to 'reverence God.' That often leads to a rebuke at our being too casual with God.

I'm sorry, but a Christian is a son or a daughter of God. Jesus calls us His friends.

I can't help but think about John-John. Those of you who are old enough know he was the adorable son of President John F. Kennedy. There is a wonderful picture of JFK seated at his desk in the Oval Office, while little John-John plays underneath it. The president in the seat of his power, his son without a care at all about nuclear annihilation.

I prefer to think of my relationship with God like that - as His son, welcome in His presence, unaffected by the weight of the world.

Any talk about the fear of God must take that relationship into account. One aspect of the fear of God is that He knows if I truly want to be with Him, or if my heart is divided. Ever get caught looking at your watch when talking to someone? They might say, "Am I boring you?" That's the idea.

"Dread" is even tougher to grasp. We can turn to C.S. Lewis. Susan is talking with Mr. Beaver.

"Aslan is a lion - *the* Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh," said Susan.

"I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." "Safe?" said Mr Beaver. "Who said anything about safe? 'Course *he isn't safe*. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

Fearing our holy God, we will fear nothing else. If we don't fear Him, we need to fear everything else!

A few nights ago, I was cable news Headline Stressing. The host described the deepening alliance between Russia and China. It will be a disaster for the US, a total game changer - maybe even *Game Over*.

God says to us, "Do not say 'a conspiracy.'" Our nation must ally with the Lord. Then, "He will be as a sanctuary."

"Impractical," you say; we need more alliances, more armaments, more of everything that makes us powerful. Maybe. I would submit modern Israel. Even in unbelief, the LORD has protected them from every nation in the world.

#2 - The Lord Is Your Stone Of Stumbling (v14-22)

'Foot drop' is a general term for difficulty lifting the front part of the foot. You can't always tell you are doing it, but if you come to uneven ground, there is a real danger of tripping and taking a fall.

Instead of enjoying a walk with the LORD, both Israel and Judah were dragging their feet. They were headed for a disastrous fall.

Isa 8:14 He will be... 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.

Isa 8:15 And many among them shall stumble; They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken."

God is often represented in the Bible as a rock, the place of safety, to those who trust in Him. That same rock a stumbling stone, against which unbelievers fall and are broken.

The "trap and... snare" were a good description of what trusting in an alliance with Assyria was really going to be like.

Jesus is a superior Rock & Refuge to anything in the world. (Possible church name?). As we repeatedly proclaim, with great joy, God sent the Holy Spirit to live in you. He empowers you to overcome; He enables you to obey.

Isa 8:16 Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples.

Isa 8:17 And I will wait on the LORD, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob; And I will hope in Him.

Isa 8:18 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.

Isaiah had "disciples." "Bind up [and] seal" refer to teaching them, especially to know the times.

Isaiah uses the words that causes us so much agitation: "I will wait on the LORD." He would wait in "hope" because of his kids:

- Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz described the coming judgements.
- We met another son of Isaiah's earlier in the book, Shear-Jashub. His name means, *a remnant shall return*.
- Then there was a kid born to someone else who was named Immanuel, God with us.

They were "signs and wonders" from the God of Israel. After their national discipline, a remnant would return, and the Jews would bring forth Immanuel, the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world - Jesus.

Isa 8:19 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?

These were customs that the Jews adopted from their pagan alliances. The "wizards and mediums" often genuinely contacted evil, malevolent creatures. Why seek them, deceivers, liars, far less powerful than the LORD?

So much modern muttering involves contacting your dead relatives. You can't. Read the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in the Gospel of Luke. The dead in their sins realize Jesus was their only salvation, but it is too late for them. What about their loved ones? They have God's Word, more powerful than a testimony from beyond the grave.

Those who claim to speak for the dead always give a false hope. They aren't the evangelists that the Rich Man wished he could be.

Isa 8:20 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.

Measure *everything* by the Word of God.

Isa 8:21 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.

Isa 8:22 Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness.

Lots of SyFy stories give you a look at the horrific future landscape. That's verses twenty & twenty-one.

Why bother warning if the judgment was certain? *National judgment does not eliminate individuals from being saved.*

Is it too late for the United States? No one can answer that. If it is, individuals can still be saved.

- ➔ If you are a believer, tell folks what is coming upon the world. Let them see you waiting patiently for Jesus to return. Let them know that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but be given eternal life. Jesus said that by being lifted-up on the Cross, He would draw all men to Himself. He is the Savior of all men, provided you believe.
- ➔ If you are not saved, and you remain that way, you may one day wake up to the horrific headline, *Millions & Millions Missing*. Jesus promised to come to bring us to Heaven. He will come in the clouds, raise the dead in Christ, then catch-away living believers.

Don't be left behind.