

(Isaiah) How to Prepare for God's Judgment

by David Guzik

God is using the Assyrian invasion to teach Judah a lesson about trusting in Him and not despising the small, humble blessings He provides.

Duration: 52:44

Scripture: Isaiah 8:19-22, Isaiah 40:31, Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 2:13

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Faith Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of focusing on the word of God and seeking guidance from it. He encourages the audience to trust in God and look to Him for help in their struggles. The speaker highlights the significance of living a life that reflects God's message, as many people may not read the Bible but will observe and be influenced by the way believers live. The sermon also discusses the consequences of seeking guidance from mediums and wizards instead of seeking God's word.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to Isaiah chapter eight. If you didn't bring a Bible, raise up your hand, somebody will bring one to you, you're going to want to follow along this evening. Isaiah chapter eight.

I was kind of thinking that we'd get through two chapters tonight, but we won't. It's one of those cases where two chapters is a little bit too much. One chapter might be a little shorter study this evening.

Never once have I ever heard anyone complain that the preacher finished too early. Never once have I heard that. So I don't think we have anything to worry about here tonight.

Isaiah chapter eight. Now, as we begin this chapter, as it is so important in the book of Isaiah, as well it is in any book, we need to understand the context from which Isaiah is speaking from. Isaiah is prophesying to the nation of Judah at this time, the people of God, the descendants of Abraham, the Jewish nation is divided into two separate nations.

There's the northern kingdom of Israel. There's the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom of Israel was by far the most persistently wicked of the two nations of all the kings through all the hundreds of years that the northern kingdom of Israel existed.

Not one godly king did they have. The southern nation, the southern kingdom of Judah. They had some good ones and some bad ones.

At the time of the prophecy of Isaiah chapter eight, there is a good excuse me, a bad king on the throne of Judah. His name is Ahaz. And let's just paint the situation here.

Ahaz, king of Judah, has been assured by the prophet Isaiah that even though the combined armies of the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Syria have come against him and have conquered much of the land and have just run roughshod over much of Judah and now the armies are either presently encircling the capital of Judah, Jerusalem, or they're going to be encircling it shortly. The prophet Isaiah brought a word to King Ahaz and said, don't be afraid. God will deliver you.

You can trust that God will deliver you and will strike down the king of Israel and the king of Syria and their armies, which have come against you. Trust in the Lord. Instead, Ahaz, the king of Judah, put his trust in Assyria.

Assyria was the world dominating empire at the time, and he's looking to big brother for help. However, it's kind of like, you know, the rats look into a cat for help. And that's what Isaiah wants to get through to King Ahaz.

Don't trust in Assyria, trust in the Lord. God's going to deal with the kingdom of Israel. God will deal with the kingdom of Syria.

You don't have to worry about those people you're trusting in Assyria. You're going to have more to fear from the Assyrians than you will from these other two enemies. So now this is continuing on in this prophecy where the prophet Isaiah is speaking to King Ahaz and the rulers of Judah.

Verse one. Moreover, the Lord said to me, take a large scroll and write on it with a man's pen concerning Mahershalah Hasbazi, and I will take for myself faithful witnesses to record Uriah, the priest and Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam. Then I went to the prophetess and she conceived and bore a son.

Then the Lord said to him, said to me, call his name Mahershalah Hasbazi. You're not going to find that name in the baby books. For before the child to have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Syria.

Now, as I said before, God is speaking to the king of Judah through the prophet Isaiah. He's saying, King, don't worry about Israel to the north and Syria to the north. God will take care of them.

And in the last chapter that we studied, he gave a prophecy of Emmanuel saying that a child is going to be born. And before that child is old enough to know right from wrong, these two things are going to be destroyed or at least set back severely. And in the same way, now he's reinforcing that prophecy by saying, look, here's the son born to Isaiah and now verse four before the child to have knowledge to cry, my father or my mother, Damascus, which was the capital of Syria, Samaria, which was the capital of Israel.

Those two nations are going to be gone. Don't worry about it. God's saying to the king of Judah, I will take care of this.

You don't have to trust in a Syria. Now, God wanted the prophet Isaiah to make this message clear. So take a large scroll, not a little one, a large scroll, and then he says, write on it with a man's pen.

And I say, well, what I mean, did they have the lady pen back then? And, you know, the man's pen, the lady's pen, you know, something smaller and more delicate. I don't know. That wasn't at all when he says, write on it with a man's pen.

Literally what that means is the pen of a common man. It means write it in words and in lettering that any common man can understand. Make it plain.

Make this prophecy plain so that everybody, even the most ignorant person in Israel or in Judah, I should say, can understand. And what's it all about? Well, it's centered around this guy, this son that's born to Isaiah and his wife, Mahershalah Hashabai, whose name means speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder. You know what that means? That's God's call to the Assyrian army to go get Israel and Syria.

Speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder. It's like God's whistling for Syria, go get them. And God's saying they're going to do it.

They're going to take care of it. Matter of fact, he says, take myself to faithful witnesses to record. Let's get this done.

Let's get this established. And so Isaiah says, OK, I'll get the scroll. I write out a pen.

Then he goes to the prophetess. By the way, an interesting reference in verse three, Isaiah's wife is referred to as the prophetess. Now, what's very interesting is never once in the scriptures do we read of Isaiah's wife prophesying.

And so probably she's called the prophetess here merely in the sense that she's just the wife of the prophet. However, there are many examples of prophetesses in the Bible. You have Miriam in the book of Exodus, Deborah in the book of Judges, Huldah in the book of Second Kings, Noah-Diah in the book of Nehemiah, Anna in the book of Luke, and Philip's four daughters in the book of Acts.

So it's possible that Isaiah's wife had a prophetic ministry in her own right, but probably the idea here is, you know what her prophetic ministry was? She brought forth the word from the Lord. And you know what the word from the Lord was that she brought forth? Mahershalah Hashabai. Here she brought him forth.

Here he is. It's a living prophecy. The birth and the naming of her son was a word from God.

So she certainly brought forth that prophecy. And before that child is old enough to cry, my father or my mother, God gives a time frame for the invasion of Assyria that will punish Syria and Israel. And so it's essentially the same meaning of the prophecy that was given back in chapter seven, which spoke of before the child has knowledge, these things will happen.

But the idea here is this prophecy is far more public and far more plain to everybody. Well, fine, the Assyrian army is going to come and take out the whooping stick on the northern kingdom of Israel and on the Syrians, but that's not where it's going to end. Take a look at verse five.

The Lord also spoke to me again, saying in as much as these people refused the waters of Shiloah that flow softly and rejoice in resin and in Ramalah's son. 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.

He will pass through Judah. He will overflow and Passover. He will reach up to the neck and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of your land.

Oh, Emmanuel. He shattered, oh, 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.

Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing. Speak the word, but it will not stand for God is with us. You see, now the Lord is speaking again.

And now he's speaking to Judah, not about the northern kingdom of Israel, not about the Syrians. God is speaking to Judah about Judah. Take a look at verse six again, it's very interesting if you know what's going on in as much as these people refused the waters of Shiloah that flow softly.

Now, the people of Israel and of Judah did not appreciate their humble streams. Let me tell you something about the geography of Israel, both in the ancient world and today, it's a lot like California. And when you come to California, if you've moved there from another area, one thing you notice is that we don't have rivers here.

You know, you drive to Ventura from Cine Valley and you go across a bridge between Oxnard and Ventura and you drive over the Santa Clara River and there's this big ditch full of sand and rock and gravel like stuff. And there's this little tiny stream trickling through there. You go Santa Clara River.

What's this? And you go around, you drive around, there's no rivers. There's not. Oh, sure.

You'll find a little meandering stream every once in a while. But if you've ever gone to a place where there's a real river. You've ever seen the Mississippi or the Columbia River up in the northwest, you look at those things, you know, those are rivers.

Those are mighty rivers of water. Now, Israel is much like Southern California in that way. In its topography, it really doesn't have rivers.

And this water of Shiloh that it's speaking out here, this was the mainstream that fed and that filled Jerusalem. And you know what it was? It was a stream. It was a creek.

It wasn't a river. And you can just imagine them kind of saying, well, Shiloh, what's that little creek, little stream? What's the big deal there? Nothing much to look at, nothing like you can't even sail a boat on it. You can't navigate it.

What good is it? But you know what? That little stream of Shiloh supplied the water for all of Jerusalem. It did. It supplied.

It wasn't spectacular. It wasn't fancy, but it was enough. It supplied.

Now, look at what it says here in verse six. Inasmuch as these people refuse the waters of Shiloh that flow softly and rejoice in resin and Ramali's son, those are two political leaders, both of Syria and Israel. Verse seven.

Now, behold, therefore, the Lord brings up over them the waters of the river, strong and mighty. The capital of the Assyrian Empire was Nineveh, remember the place that Jonah went, this was the capital of the Assyrian Empire and Nineveh, the city was founded upon two great and mighty rivers or actually the

Assyrian Empire had two great mighty rivers. Nineveh was founded on the River Tigris, one of the great rivers of the world.

And then also very prominent river in the river that's specifically referred to in this verse is the Euphrates Rivers. And these are huge, mighty rivers like the Mississippi, like the Danube, like like the Amazon, you know, these huge, huge rivers. Now, that's a river.

Boy, you want to see a river? Forget about Shiloh. What good is that? Go look at the Euphrates, go look at the Tigris, go look at these other rivers. You see, my friends, this is the whole point of this.

God is using the difference between the small, humble, yet adequate rivers of Israel and he's contrasting them with the mighty, yet uncontrolled rivers of Assyria to make a point. It's as if God's saying, you don't like what I'm giving you. You don't like how I've supplied you.

You don't like the gentle waters of Shiloh. OK, I'll give you a river. Here's the Euphrates with all these Syrians behind it.

And you know what they're going to do? They're going to flood you. You want a river? I'll give you a river and you're going to sink in it. You can't control it.

It's going to flood you over. I'll give you something different, but you won't like it either, because look at what it says here. Verse seven.

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. He'll 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. Oh, Emmanuel, like a large river in a flood.

The Assyrian army will not stay confined to its banks. Oh, that's what Judah would like. Yes, Lord, send the Assyrians to go put the whooping stick on the Syrians to put the whooping stick on the Israelites.

Yes, do that, Lord. Yes, yes. Your righteous judgment.

God says, you know what, Judah? That river is going to overflow its banks and you're going to get wet, too. You're going to get flooded, Judah, the kingdom of the Assyrians, that Assyrian army is going to flood you over. They're going to flow over and attack on Judah with violence and destruction as well.

And how bad will it get? Look at how bad I'll get in verse eight. He'll reach up to the neck. Now, the Assyrians would completely conquer the Israelites, the northern kingdom, the Assyrians finished off the northern kingdom of Israel, conquered it.

There was no more northern kingdom of Israel. Once the Assyrians conquered them, they sent upon the exile. That was it.

All you had left then was the southern kingdom of Judah. So the Assyrians delivered a death blow to the kingdom of Israel in the north. They flooded them over the head.

What do you say is going to happen to Judah or the Assyrians? They're not going to kill you. The waters will just come up to your neck. A severe, severe flood, but it won't kill you.

Now, Judah would survive the Assyrian invasion, but suffer much destruction from them. Indeed, Second Kings chapter 18, verse 13, describes the extent of the Assyrian invasion against Judah. Listen to this.

And in the 14th year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them all of them, all the fortress cities. The Assyrians came in against Judah and took them all. But they didn't conquer Jerusalem.

So the nation survived and was able to buy them off. You know how Hezekiah survived this attack from the Assyrians. He bought off the king of the Assyrians.

He bought off Sennacherib. You know how he bought him off. He pillaged the temple.

He even stripped the gold from the temple doors and gave it to the Assyrian king. Bought him off, bribed him. And that's how he bought off the king of Assyria and kept him from destroying the nation.

Friends, this is an important word to us. Sometimes we're not satisfied with what we have. Sometimes we're not satisfied with where the Lord put us.

You know, we look at it and go, Shiloah, look at it. They flow softly, softly flowing stream. What good is that? Yeah, boy, I've seen some mighty rivers in my day.

Wouldn't it be great to have a mighty river? Look at me. I've just got my little Shiloah. What good is that? God says, oh, you don't like your Shiloah? You don't like your softly flowing stream? Let me tell you, that stream's provided for you.

That stream's been good to you. You may not think it's much compared to the Euphrates. You might think it's not much compared to a mighty river.

But that stream's been good to you. You think you want something else? God gives it to you, might just flood you over. May not kill you, might come up to your neck, though.

Isn't this an important word? Calvin said of this, the small and gentle waters should be more highly valued by us than the large and rapid rivers of all the nations. And we ought not to envy the great power of the ungodly. Has God just given you a little Shiloah to provide you a little Shiloah to be your supply? Praise the Lord for it.

Take refuge in that. Don't despise. I think it's interesting, too, in verse eight, how at the end he says it will fill the breadth of your land, O Emmanuel.

Who's Emmanuel? Jesus Christ. In other words, Isaiah is almost outraged at this, that this Assyrian invasion is going to come upon Judah and this is Emmanuel's land. It's not right.

Oh, if only Judah would have turned to the Lord, if only they wouldn't have trusted in the Assyrians, they could have been spared this. The land that the Assyrians are going to invade, it doesn't really belong to Judah. It doesn't really belong to King Ahaz.

It belongs to the Lord God, to the coming Messiah, to Emmanuel. Notice this, so he says, verse nine, be shattered, O ye peoples, and be broken in pieces. Give ear, O you from far countries.

Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. The victims of the Assyrian invasion, that's Syria, Israel and Judah, they could prepare for the invasion all they wanted.

Go ahead, gird yourselves. That's what Isaiah is saying. Go ahead, protect, gird yourselves, build up your fortresses, strap on your armor, do everything you can, go for it.

But all your preparation is not going to protect you. Gird yourself, but be broken in pieces. God says it's going to happen.

This is going to happen. I'm going to send the Assyrians down. And it does not matter how much you prepare for it, how much you gird yourself, you're still going to be broken in pieces.

You can take counsel together. Go ahead, make your plans, establish your schemes. But it's going to come to nothing.

Why? Speak the word, but it will not stand, for God is with us. God's will was going to be done despite all the plans and preparations that Syria or Israel or Judah might make against it. Now, who's the us of God is with us at the end of verse 10? Isn't that interesting? For God is with us.

Who's the us? Who is it that's saying God is with us? Well, in one sense, excuse me, in one sense, the us is the Assyrian army because they were the instruments of God's judgment. You know, the Assyrian armies could say God is with us. God has appointed us to be instruments of judgment against you, Syria, against you, Israel, against you, Judah.

God is with us. Now, believe me, the Assyrian army was not praying before the Lord saying, Lord, how do you want to use us today, Lord? No, the Assyrian army, the Assyrian king, they were wicked men, but God was still going to use them. God would still use their wickedness and you use them for judgment.

And then, you know, God would do God would then judge the Assyrians. So in one sense, you could say the us is the Assyrian army, but the us, I would say, is probably more likely and more properly the prophet himself as a messenger of God. His word would come to pass no matter what the three nations did to prepare against it.

As this is saying, hey, God's with us. You can make whatever preparation stand, but this is the word of the Lord. But by the way, don't you like how he ties it in neatly, too, because God is with us also alludes to the Immanuel prophecy of the previous chapter.

Because what does Immanuel mean? God is with us. So. The invasion's coming.

How do you prepare for the invasion? How do you prepare, Judah? Now, what's interesting about this. Is at the time. The land of Judah, the nation of Judah, the kingdom was already invaded by the combined forces of Israel in Syria.

I mean, those armies were in Judah right then when Isaiah was making this prophecy, that seemed like it was the danger. And, you know, it's funny how God is prophesying this because the Lord's he's like, who cares about Israel in Syria? And this is funny because you don't say Israel, Syria. That's the problem is that their armies are here.

They're invading right now. That's it. No, I got them taken care of.

You want to worry about somebody worry about the Assyrians. And it's as if Judah's saying, well, worry about the Assyrians. Why would we worry about them? They're helping us out.

They're our friends. God says, no, they're not your friends. They're the ones you should worry about.

Well, what do we do? Verse 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, do not say a conspiracy concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The Lord oppose 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 and many among them shall stumble and they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.

Now, Isaiah and all the people of Judah were tempted to give in to fear and panic, knowing the dangerous place they were in again at the time of the prophecy, the combined armies of Israel and Syria are there in Judah and their armies had either encircled Jerusalem or were on the way and they planned to depose King Ahaz of Judah and set their own man on the throne. Now, Isaiah's prophecy declared that the armies of Syria and Israel would not succeed in conquering Judah, but that the Assyrians, whom they were trusting in for help, they would come up and attack Judah and do much damage. Now, in the midst of all of that, it's very easy to let your heart settle on conspiracies and threats.

The Lord won't let him do that. So what does he say? Do not say a conspiracy. Do not be afraid of their threats.

You trust in me instead, the Lord. Now, when he says, do not say a conspiracy. That Hebrew word for conspiracy could be translated one of two ways.

It could be translated conspiracy, and he may be warning them against that. You know, when you're afraid, you can start getting all these conspiracies in your mind and get all afraid and freaked out by that. And the Lord doesn't want your head there, my friends.

He does not want your head there at all. So that's a valid word. Do not be afraid of their conspiracies.

Do not say a conspiracy. But the word conspiracy in the Hebrew can also mean an alliance. And God may be saying, do not say an alliance and concerning all these people call an alliance.

And this may be a reference between Judah's trust in Assyria and their alliance with them. And God is saying your alliance is with an ungodly nation. Don't put your trust there.

Put your trust in the Lord instead. And it really could go either way. God may even have both of those things in mind when he was speaking to Israel.

But instead of fearing those things, look at verse 13, the Lord of hosts, him you shall hallow. Let him be your fear instead of fearing conspiracies and threats. Fear God.

You know, don't see yourself at the mercy of opposing armies. You're in God's hands. Worry about your place with the Lord instead of your enemies.

Don't you see now at this time, do they have some real enemies? There were real armies on their soil. There were real troops from Syria, real troops from Judah, excuse me, from Israel. And there were real armies in Assyria that God said was going to come down against them.

You know what God says? Don't worry about him. Hear me instead. Put your heart in the right place with me.

That's what's important. Because if you do that, take a look what the Lord will do. Verse 14, he will be the sanctuary.

And you know what's beautiful about that? A sanctuary was really two things in the ancient world. Number one, it was a place of worship. The Lord wants to be your place of worship.

But number two, a sanctuary was also a place of protection. And one of the ancient customs of the ancient world was the idea that if you were being chased by somebody, if you were a criminal on the run, if you could make it into the temple of a God and go into the temple, you were safe and the police or whoever it was that was chasing you couldn't pursue you into the temple.

That was your place of sanctuary. You were safe there. Now, by the way, that's not how it was in the Temple of Israel.

God said, no, no criminal is going to find refuge in my temple. There's specific passages in the law of Moses that say, you know what, some criminal comes up and hugs the altar and claims sanctuary, says, don't you spare him, you go get him. But among the pagan temples, the idea was that a sanctuary was just that a place of sanctuary.

So God saying, I'll be your place of worship, I'll be your place of protection, fear me instead. And then he goes on to say, I'll be your 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. You see, for those who trust him, the Lord will be as a sanctuary.

But for those who don't, he'll be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Instead of finding protection from the Lord, you're going to trip over him falling to destruction. And indeed, many among them shall stumble, they shall fall and be broken.

Friend, isn't that heavy? We love to sing the song. What a friend we have in Jesus. And every line of that song is true.

What a friend we do have in Jesus. But friends, you know, for those who reject the Lord. For those who turn their back on Jesus Christ, you know what they should say? What an enemy I have in God.

You see, because instead of being a sanctuary, God is a trap and a snare. Instead of being protected, they shall fall and be broken. Do you realize that? Do you realize that the sinner, they wish that their worst enemy was the devil? No, for the sinner, their worst enemy is God.

The sinner has a lot more to fear from the Lord than they do from the devil. The Lord who can be a sanctuary to you will be a trap and a snare to them. No wonder Psalm 2, verse 12 says, kiss the son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way when his wrath is kindled, but a little blessed are all those who put their trust in him.

And I think of what the prophet Simeon said at the dedication of Jesus. Remember that old man, that prophet of God who held the child Jesus in his hand and he said, behold, this child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel. It'll be the purpose of fall for many and the rising of many.

And isn't it awesome that Jesus is a dividing line? He really is. He's either your sanctuary or your stone of stumbling. So that's the word here.

Verse 15, and many among them shall stumble. They shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken. Verse 16.

Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples, and I will wait on the Lord who hides his face from the house of Jacob and I will hope in him. 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.

Now, the first way you prepare for the coming of Assyria is you prepare by not being afraid of Assyria, but fearing the Lord. Right. Don't be afraid of Assyria.

Fear the Lord. That's what we just took a look at in verses 11 through 15. But in verses 16, 17 and 18, he says, here's the second way you prepare for the invasion of Israel.

You prepare by waiting on the Lord. There it is. Verse 17.

And I will wait on the Lord. I don't want to wait on the Lord. The fellow just came up and showed me the cover to his Bible on the cover of Bible.

You got one Bible because they're proud of one of the kids in our youth group. His dad just bought him a Bible. The first Bible I ever had that was all my own.

He shows me the cover, too. And it has that passage from Isaiah chapter 40. Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.

Don't you love that passage? You want your strength renewed, don't you? You want to wait on the Lord and say, well, what does it mean to wait on the Lord? Think, OK, I'm going to go and I'm going to sit down on my chair and I'm going to wait for the Lord. Hey, Lord, I'm waiting. I'm waiting.

Anytime now, God, I'm waiting. I mean, waiting on the Lord is not a passive inactivity. No, it means to wait on the Lord as a waiter waits on a table.

It means to be totally attentive to the Lord, focused on his every move and responsive to his every desire. Now, you ever been to a real fancy restaurant or like me, at least seen it in the movies? Uh, here it is, you know, the fancy table here and here's the people at the dinner table and all around the dinner table are these waiters or these butlers. And all they do is they stand there.

But they're not just standing there, you know, daydreaming, you know, this, that, half the time they are totally attentive on the people that they're waiting on. And that water glass gets one quarter empty and the guys, they're filling it. And as soon as they're done with something, they're taking it away and putting out something.

And so there they are, they're waiting, they're waiting on the people on the table, but it's not a passive inactivity. It's a total focus on the people that are there saying, I'm going to serve you now when there's

nothing for me to do. I'm just going to stand there and I'm just going to wait and look and be focused.

But when there's something for me to do, I'm going to do it. That's waiting on the Lord. At times it means inactivity, but even that is an active inactivity where we stand before the Lord, totally focused on him, waiting for what he wants next.

Now, again, let's remember at the time that Isaiah spoke, the leaders and the people of Judah were waiting on the armies of Israel and Syria because they were under attack as they heard of the danger from the Assyrians. They would be tempted to put their focus on them, but their focus wasn't to be on the armies. Their focus was to be on the Lord.

Isaiah is saying this to them. Do you want to battle against the Israelites? Do you want to battle against the Syrians? Do you want to battle against the Assyrians? Then focus on the Lord. Prepare for the coming attack by waiting on the Lord instead of on your enemies.

And that's how you put the focus, you know, like so many things. Jesus just no knew how to how to put it. Now, I'm not trying to imply for a moment that the words of Jesus are more inspired than other words in the Bible.

Now, the Gospels aren't more inspired than the book of Isaiah, all of the word of God is inspired. But I will say this. There is something wonderful about the words of Jesus.

You know what that is? Because when God spoke through Isaiah, it was the word of God through the personality of Isaiah. I mean, it was totally the word of God, but God also used Isaiah's personality. And you see that in the writings of Paul and writings of Peter and the writings of John.

Now, what's wonderful about the words of Jesus is that it's the words of God through the personality of God. Through the personality of Jesus. And so you could boil down all of what Isaiah has been saying so far about focus on the Lord, wait on the Lord with how about this? Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness or its righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you.

You got the armies of Israel and Syria and Assyria to worry about. You know what God's word is to you? Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you. You know what I'm saying? I got all these financial troubles and all these things bother me and all these things overwhelm me.

I got all this trouble at work and I got all this trouble in my family. I got all this trouble here and I got to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Wait on the Lord.

Wait on him. Put your focus there. You say, well, what is that all I'm supposed to do? No, probably not, but that's where it starts.

What else are you going to do until you're doing that? What is he going to do until you're waiting on the Lord? Now, there's something else involved in waiting on the Lord, though, take a look at verse 16. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. You see, waiting on the Lord is connected with his word, with his testimony, with his law.

We can wait on the Lord by waiting upon his word. Now, I love how Isaiah puts it here in verse 18. Did you notice this? He says, Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me.

We are for signs and wonders in Israel. Now, Isaiah had been called to prophesy, and he was also called to use his children in his prophetic messages. One of his sons, he named Mahershala Hashbaz.

Speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder. I'd like to meet my son. Speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder.

Nice to meet you. And that son's name was a witness. And then he had another son.

We saw this son back in Isaiah chapter seven. Shir Jashab, which means a remnant shall return. And here's his brother.

A remnant shall return. Now, Isaiah, it's like he's got his two kids with him and he goes, Here I am and the children whom the Lord has given me. We're for signs and wonders in Israel.

Each one of us has a word for Israel. Mahershala Hashbaz says, Speed to the spoil, hurry to the plunder. The coming attack on Syria, Israel and Judah by Assyria.

And the Assyrians are coming and they're ready to come. And then here's my other son. A remnant shall return.

Well, God's going to bring restoration. God's going to bring hope. You can trust in that.

And then Isaiah says, And I'm Isaiah. You know what they would hear when they said Isaiah? The name Isaiah means salvation is of the Lord. I like that name, too.

And this spoke of the attitude and the hope Judah needed to have. So here's this message. I mean, my kids were the message.

Here we are. We're testifying to you. Now, I want you to notice this.

Keep your finger here in Isaiah chapter eight. Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter two. Interesting how the Bible quotes itself.

Hebrews is in the New Testament towards the end of your Bible. Hebrews chapter two, beginning at verse eleven. For both he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one.

For which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I would declare your name to my brethren in the midst of the congregation. I will sing praise to you. And again, I will put my trust in him.

And again, here am I and the children whom God has given me. Now, Isaiah didn't even probably know it at the time. Here he is standing for the king of Judah.

With his two kids, he's saying, here am I and the children God has given me. We're the message to you. He probably didn't even know that he was also speaking words that would be put in the mouth of the Messiah.

And here is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. And you know what he's saying? He's saying, here are my and the children that the Lord has given me. And you know who the children are? You.

Now, I think that Jesus means it in the same way that Isaiah meant it. Isaiah meant it like this. Here I am, the children the Lord's given me, and we're a message to you.

That's what the Lord Jesus Christ says to the world. Here I am, the children that the Lord has given me, by the way, isn't that precious? You're part of his family. You're his child.

He says, here I am, the children the Lord's given me and we are a message to you. Just as much as Isaiah's children were living witnesses of the truth of God's word. So are we as God's children.

These guys were living letters. Well, there he is, speed to the spoil, hasten to the blunder. He's a walking message from God.

That's what the Lord wants you to be, a walking message, a living letter. People you go out and rub shoulders with every day, you know, how many of them are going to pick up a Bible? Not very many. But they'll read your life like a Bible.

Your life is the only Bible a lot of those people ever see. You're God's message. And that's what Jesus, here I am and the children the Lord has given me and we are a message from the Lord.

Back to Isaiah 8, verse 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 to the law and to the testimony? If they do not speak according to this word, it's because there's no life in them and they will pass through it hard pressed and hungry. And it shall happen when they are hungry and they will be enraged and curse their king and their God and look upward. Then they will look to the earth and see trouble and darkness and gloom and anguish and they will be driven into darkness.

And do you notice this? How do you prepare for the coming invasion? Well, number one, you put your fear on the Lord, not on Assyria. Number two, you wait on the Lord, not focus on your enemies. And then number three, you prepare by seeking his light and the word, not the darkness of the occult.

Verse 19 says, seek those who are mediums and wizards in the present danger from Syria and Israel and in the coming danger from Assyria. Judah would be tempted to seek guidance and comfort from those who are mediums and wizards. By the way, do you know what a medium is? You say, well, halfway between small and large.

Well, kind of. In biblical speaking or time in spiritual things, a medium is someone who supposes that they can make contact with the dead and they are a medium because they stand between. They supposedly stand between the living and the dead and make the connection there in between.

So they call them a medium. Now, you shouldn't do that. God says it's wicked.

And Isaiah exposes the foolishness of this when he says in verse 19, should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? Listen, when you're in trouble, shouldn't you seek your God? If you can't rely on your God when you're in trouble, what good is your God? And get a different God. If the Lord God in heaven isn't there for you in a time of trouble, if you've really sought him and God has turned his back on you and you've really sought him and you really laid out your life before him and God's not there for you in trouble, I don't know. You should seek your God.

He's going to be there. He will be there. When you're in a time of trouble, don't turn to something else.

Turn to your God. Should not a people seek their God? Then again, what sense does it make to seek the dead on behalf of the living? The dead are the dead. The living are the living.

The living God speaks through his living word and his living people to guide us. There's no reason to seek the dead. Now, I never saw this passage this way before.

I have to just lay this on the line. Doesn't this really speak to the Roman Catholic practice of praying to the saints? What's that? Very plainly, should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? Isn't that exactly what people do when they pray to the saints? They seek the dead on behalf of the living. God says, don't do it.

That's not what I want you to do. Trust me and turn to me instead. And I love verse 20 to the law and the testimony.

Forget about mediums and wizards and the dead. Forget about seeking the dead on behalf of the living. Instead of all that deception, instead of all that foolishness to the law and the testimony.

Go to God's word. It's like Isaiah is pumped up. I bet he's like frothing at the mouth, spittle coming out of his mouth.

To the law, the testimony. That's where you should go. Law and testimony, they each refer to God's word.

Now, some people are, well, the law refers to his holy commandments. Testimony refers to his dealings with his people as it's recorded in the word. But that might be just slicing it too thin, because often similar terms for God's word are repeated, not for the sake of distinction, but for the sake of emphasis.

Law, testimony, word, you know, revelation, whatever you want to call it, it's his word. And how it needs to be proclaimed in our pulpits today to the law and the testimony. Go there.

Enough with your overuse of anecdotes and jokes. Enough with your emphasis on entertainment and sappy stories. Enough with your catering to itching ears.

Enough with your hobby horses and pet peeves to the law and the testimony. Go there. That's what God's people need.

That's what the ungodly need. They don't need all that other stuff. Give them God's word.

Charles Spurgeon said, let us remember as minister of the gospel what McShane beautifully said. Depend on it, said he. It is God's word, not man's comment upon God's word that saves souls.

And I have marked that if ever we have had a conversion at any time in ninety nine cases out of a hundred, the conversion is rather traceable to the text or to some scripture quoted in the sermon than to any trite or original saying by the preacher. It is God's word that breaks the fetters and sets the prisoners free. It is God's word that instrumentally that saves souls and therefore let us bring everything to the touchstone.

That's where it belongs. Oh, you have your thoughts. Oh, you have your feelings.

Oh, you have your passions. Bring it back to God's word, to the law and to the testimony. That's where it belongs and that's where we need to go.

Let God's word do its work. In one of his sermons, Spurgeon related an incident where a guy was reading publicly in the book of Genesis and he fixed on the scripture about the death of Methuselah. And it said something effective, you know, in it.

However, old Methuselah at the end of nine hundred or whatever thousand, whatever it was, years, Methuselah died. And it says, and he died. And that was it.

What possible edification could there be in that text? But a guy in the audience was saved from the reading of that scripture. Because the words and he died and he died and he died just kept ringing in his ears and he died. This is a guy who lived longer than anybody else, but he died.

Everybody dies. I'm going to die. I'm going to die and be facing the Lord.

I have to get right with God. And even that passage of scripture led a man to conversion. Friends, the Lord can work through his word if we will just go to it, to the law, to the testimony, forget about those other things.

And he goes on and he says, verse 20, to the law and to the testimony, if they do not speak according to this word, it's because there's no light in them. Friends, if there's a disagreement between God's word and the word of the messenger, it isn't hard to figure out who's wrong. The messenger's wrong.

The word judges the messenger. The messenger doesn't judge the word. Sadly, it says in verse 22 that they will be driven into darkness when people forsake God's word, when they trust in mediums and wizards and the dead, they are courting darkness, not light.

And if Judah was to do this, which sadly they did, they trusted in these things. They turned away from God's word and they were overwhelmed. Look at it.

Verse 22, it's terrible. It says, and they will look to the earth and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish, and they will be driven into darkness. That's what you get when you look to the earth.

That's when you get when your gaze is horizontal instead of vertical, looking up to the Lord and his word, gloom and darkness and anguish. And you're driven into darkness. And normally I would just end off here because it's the end of chapter eight.

But I can't leave you in the gloom of darkness. And I'll also say that in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Old Testament, what we call Isaiah chapter nine, verse one is actually the last verse of Isaiah chapter eight in the Hebrew Bible. So based on the Hebrew Bible, let's conclude just by taking a look at verse one.

We'll discuss it in greater length next week. I'll start at verse 22 and read, then they will look to the earth and see trouble and darkness and gloom of anguish, and they will be driven into darkness. Nevertheless, the gloom will not be upon her who is at distress as when he was first lightly esteemed at the land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan and Galilee of the Gentiles.

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. And you know who that's talking about? Jesus Christ.

And his ministry. Friends, God wants you to put your focus on him. Seek first his key.

And that's a word that applies to every Christian every hour of the day, every day of their life. Keep your focus on Satan will try to throw you a thousand curve balls to get your focus on anything else. But you keep it on him.

You keep it on his word, because that's where God wants to speak to you from. And God will guide you to the law and to the testimony, not in any of those other distractions. And God will make it plain to you by writing it with a man's pen and make it plain.

So let's just pray and ask that God would give us that focus. I don't know what you're facing this week or the previous week. But I'm assuming that it isn't worse than having the hostile armies of two nations right in your own backyard.

And the threat of a world superpower going to come upon you and flood you up to your neck in destruction and devastation, probably not that bad. And if God would see Judah through all that, he'll see it through what you're going through this week. Father, we lay it before you.

We lay it before you right now. And we ask, Lord, that you give us hearts that will trust in you and look to you. We're so happy, Jesus, that you call us your children and you put your arms around us and you say, here am I and the children that the Lord has given me.

We want to trust in you, Lord. We want our faith and our confidence to be in you, not in ourselves, not in anyone else or anything else. We want to love you more and trust you more.

Help us to do that, Lord, to bring you glory and honor in Jesus' precious name.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/10/SID10757.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-guzik/isaiah-how-to-prepare-for-gods-judgment/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net