

# To Whom Do You Turn?

## Isaiah Chapters 8 and 9

Let's suppose that you are ill and can't work for quite a while. Unemployment insurance runs out and big medical bills are mounting up. Bill collectors call so often you stop answering the phone, but that soon won't be a problem because your phone service is about to be disconnected. Your family just keeps yelling at you for laying in bed, and you are so discouraged and depressed you feel like giving up. What are you going to do?

When everything goes wrong and you need help of some sort, where do you turn? In today's message, we will hear about three possible directions to turn and learn what God thinks of each of them. We will find that Israel turned to two of those sources, and that God offered them the third alternative.

Isaiah 8:1-22 (NLT):

*1 Again the Lord said to me, "Make a large signboard and clearly write this name on it: Ma-her-shal-lah-hash-baz."*

*2 I asked Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah, both known as honest men, to testify that I had written it before the child was conceived.*

*3 Then I slept with my wife, and she became pregnant and had a son. And the Lord said, "Call him Ma-her-shal-lah-hash-baz.*

*4 This name prophesies that within a couple of years, before this child is old enough to say 'Papa' or 'Mama,' the king of Assyria will invade both Damascus and Samaria and carry away their riches."*

*5 Then the Lord spoke to me again and said,*

*6 "The people of Judah have rejected my gentle care and are rejoicing over what will happen to King Rezin (Syria)<sup>1</sup> and King Pekah (Israel)<sup>2</sup>."*

*7 Therefore, the Lord will overwhelm them with a mighty flood from the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria and all his mighty armies.*

*8 This flood (Assyrian armies)<sup>3</sup> will overflow all its channels and sweep into Judah. It will submerge Immanuel's land from one end to the other.*

*9 "The Assyrians will cry, 'Do your best to defend yourselves, but you will be shattered! Listen all you nations. Prepare for battle—and die! Yes, die!*

*10 Call your councils of war, develop your strategies, prepare your plans of attack—and then die! For God is with us!' "*

*11 The Lord has said to me in the strongest terms: "Do not think like everyone else does.*

*12 **Do not be afraid** that some plan conceived behind closed doors will be*

<sup>1</sup> Parentheses added.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

*the end of you.*

**13 Do not fear anything except the Lord Almighty. He alone is the Holy One. IF YOU FEAR HIM, YOU NEED FEAR NOTHING ELSE.**

*14 He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap that entangles them.*

**15 MANY OF THEM WILL STUMBLE AND FALL, NEVER TO RISE AGAIN.**  
*Many will be captured.”*

*16 I will write down all these things as a testimony of what the Lord will do. I will entrust it to my disciples, who will pass it down to future generations.*

*17 I will wait for the Lord to help us, though he has turned away from the people of Israel. My only hope is in him.*

*18 I and the children the Lord has given me have names that reveal the plans the Lord Almighty has for his people.*

*19 So why are you trying to find out the future by consulting mediums and psychics? Do not listen to their whisperings and mutterings. Can the living find out the future from the dead? **Why not ask your God?***

*20 “Check their predictions against my testimony,” says the Lord. “If their predictions are different from mine, it is because there is no light or truth in them.*

*21 My people will be led away as captives, weary and hungry. And because they are hungry, they will rage and shake their fists at heaven and curse their king and their God.*

*22 Wherever they look, there will be trouble and anguish and dark despair. They will be thrown out into the darkness.”*

Isaiah 8:1-4 (NSV):

*1 Then the Lord said to me, Take a large tablet and write on it in **common characters**, “Belonging to Mahe-shalal-hash-baz,”*

*2 and have it attested for me by reliable witnesses, the priest Uriah and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah.*

*3 And I went to the prophetess<sup>4</sup>, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, Name him Mahe-shalal-hash-baz;*

*4 for before the child knows how to call “My father” or “My mother,” the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria.*

<sup>4</sup> A woman who serves as a channel of communication between the human and divine worlds. In their prophetic behavior and religious functions they are not distinguished from their male counterparts. #

This is a very interesting story. God wants to be sure the people “get” it, that they understand His message. So He uses a dramatic way to communicate. God often used what we might think of as object lessons to get a point across to His people. For instance, Jeremiah once was instructed by God to hide a new linen garment in a hole in the rock. Another time he stood before an assembly of elders and priests and smashed a pot to demonstrate what would happen to Judah. God told Hosea to marry a prostitute and to take her back after she cheated on him as a way of demonstrating God’s love to the people.

So here in chapter eight God gives Isaiah several instructions, which are meant to serve as a visual demonstration to the people. If they cannot hear with words, maybe they will hear with symbols. First Isaiah is to write a message on a large tablet or scroll. He is to write it in “*common characters*” or “*ordinary letters*” which simply means “*Letters that anyone can easily read.*” That message reads “*Maher-shalal-hash-baz*” which means, “*Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey.*” After Isaiah writes this message he is to take it to the priests and have it certified as to the date and what it says. It would be like having something notarized today. After that Isaiah had relations with his wife, who is also a prophetess, and she conceived a child. When the son was born, nine months later, the Lord tells them to name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz and says that before the child is old enough to recognize his mother or father the king of Assyria will have invaded Damascus and carried off the wealth of Samaria. Children are usually able to recognize their parents and call them either “*mama*” or “*dada*” meaningfully somewhere between ten and twelve months of age. So we see that by the time this child is 21 months old, this invasion of Samaria will have occurred, just as was predicted in Isaiah 7:16.

God’s purpose here is so that the people will realize and believe that Isaiah has the ability to foretell or predict the future. He needed to convince an unreceptive audience of his power and authority.

Isaiah 8:5-8:

*5 The Lord spoke to me again:*

*6 Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah;*

*7 therefore, the Lord is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks;*

*8 it will sweep on into Judah as a **flood**, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.*

Here we see another method God uses to try to get His people to understand the message. He uses the illustration of a flood to emphasize what will happen. He likens Himself to gentle flowing waters and contrasts that with the flood of judgment that is about to overtake them. Recently we’ve had a vivid illustration in New Orleans of the damage that

a mighty flood can do, destroying everything in its path. In verse 6 God refers to “*the waters of Shiloah*” which was a pool associated with an important water source in Jerusalem. Throughout Scripture God often compares Himself with water in some way. Jeremiah called God, “*the fountain of living water*” (Jeremiah 17:13) and Jesus also offered living water to those who believe in Him (John 4:10). In Revelation 22:1 we are told that the river of life flows from the throne of God.

Verses 5-8 are a prophecy (prediction) of judgment. The people of Judah followed Ahaz and chose to seek help from Assyria rather than rely on the help of God, which is symbolized by the **gentle waters of the pool of Shiloah**. In unbelief and worldly wisdom rejecting these quiet waters, the disobedient nation was to be inundated by the floodwaters of the Euphrates, symbolizing invading Assyrian armies. These armies would flow over their lands like a great river and would even reach into Judah as well, thus spreading over Immanuel’s land as well. This is the land promised to Abraham by a covenant of God. The promise of the covenant was to “*Abraham and his seed*,” the seed of course is Christ.

Now remember that this is the land that was promised to Abraham by a covenant, or promise, of God. The promise of the covenant was to “*Abraham and his seed*,” the seed being Jesus Christ, the Messiah. God always keeps His promises. So that promise made to Abraham contains the assurance that Israel would not be completely obliterated by this terrible flood. There would be a Messiah, the Immanuel, “God with us,” and Israel and Judah would one day be restored to this land. Indeed, after hundreds and hundreds of years of no Jewish presence in the Promised Land, in 1948 the Jewish state was re-established, but that is getting ahead of ourselves.

Damascus, Syria fell in 732 BC and Rezin was killed. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had to turn over its northern provinces to Assyria (2 Kings 15:29), and not many years later the capital city of Samaria fell (722 BC). Immanuel, the virgin-born child (Isaiah 7:14), is the future glory of the nation and the world, and it is through Him that God’s grace will be made evident to the world and it is through Him that God will be glorified.

Isaiah 8:9,10:

*9 Band together, you peoples, and be dismayed; listen, all you far countries; gird yourselves and be dismayed; gird yourselves and be dismayed!*

*10 Take counsel together, but it shall be brought to naught; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.*

Isaiah reminds Assyria and other foreign countries that if they think they conquered Israel by their own strength they are sadly mistaken. The prophet reminded them that they were only instruments for the Lord’s use and would eventually come to nothing.

Isaiah 8:11-15:

*11 For the Lord spoke thus to me while his hand was strong upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying:*

*12 Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread.*

*13 But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.*

*14 He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over—a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

*15 And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.*

Isaiah states that the Lord's word to him on these matters had come with mighty power. It had also been very specific: don't walk in the way of this people; don't go along with them in thinking that what is happening is a conspiracy of their enemies; and do not fear the people around them. Rather, honor the Lord of hosts as holy and fear only Him because God is your refuge.

Instinctively in times of danger countries think of alliances with other countries as the best means of protecting themselves and their homeland. The people of Judah did it in the eighth century BC and Christians do it today also. We look for alliances to preserve our status quo. Christians have various committees and associations, both of individuals and of churches, which we hope will promote the faith against the growing onslaught of evil in this world. We band together in hope of appearing like a large force against the sin, wickedness, and immorality all around us. Yet over the years all such associations formed by human beings tend to deteriorate as time goes by. Why? Because they gradually put more faith in the alliance than in their God. So subsequent generations give in to the evil that their fathers and grandfathers protested against.

Actually later in the book of Isaiah, we will see how God pronounces "woe" on those who make alliances that God has not directed. God will judge those who relied on other countries and who did not look to the Holy One of Israel for their help. It is a risky thing to make an ungodly alliance or to put our trust in anyone other than the Lord God of heaven.

The only recourse in the day of evil and tragedy is to turn for help to the Lord God Himself. Verse 13 and 14 tell us that when God is given His rightful place He will be our sanctuary. He will keep safe all who place their trust in Him.

But this same God, who is a rock of safety for those who trust in Him, will be the stone that those who don't trust in Him will stumble over. We see this prophecy come true in the New Testament also. The Jews waited for the promised Messiah for 2000 years and when Jesus finally came, the Jews would not accept Him as the Messiah. Consequently they stumbled over Christ as over a stumbling stone. So, as Isaiah predicted in verses 15 and 16, they were broken and scattered by the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD when the Jewish people fled to all parts of the world. Obedience to God's Word is the only sure way of protection.

Isaiah 8:16-18:

*16 Bind up the testimony, **SEAL** the teaching among my disciples.*

*17 I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.*

*18 See, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.*

Apparently, according to verse 16, Isaiah is no longer alone. He is accompanied by “disciples.” He sings a song expressing grief and faith at a time when that faith is being tested. Isaiah affirms that even though the Lord may be hiding His face, Isaiah will wait for Him and hope in Him. In verse 18 Isaiah affirms that God has given him promises and so he is hoping in those promises.

We all struggle with that, don't we? With the times when God seems distant or indifferent to our trials. Yet, God is never indifferent to the trials of His children. Psalm after Psalm in the Bible expresses the determination to believe in God and affirms that He will eventually act on behalf of His children. And that is what Isaiah is doing in these verses. In verse 16 we see the term “*seal*” For whatever reason, Isaiah is not to reveal certain information to anyone. It is to remain secret until Christ returns in the end times. We see this same term used in Daniel 9:24; 12:4, 9 and Revelation 10:4.

Isaiah 8:19-22 NAS:

*19 And when they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?*

*20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.*

*21 And they will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward.*

*22 Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness.*

It is always amazing to me to see how many Christians will consult the daily horoscope in the newspaper. They see no harm in it and apparently are not aware of the several places where God distinctly forbids such activities (Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Leviticus 20:27; 1 Samuel 15:23). Looking to astrology, psychics and other such individuals is not only sinning, it is putting oneself in alliance with the devil and his evil ways. Mediums, or those who claim they can communicate with the dead, are especially to be avoided. But apparently the Jewish leaders to whom Isaiah is writing were doing just that—contacting mediums and so-called spiritists in order to find out what was going to happen. Isaiah calls upon his people to consult God and God alone to find their guidance.

**ISAIAH CHAPTER NINE****Isaiah 9:1-21:**

1 *Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali WILL SOON be humbled, but there will be A TIME IN THE FUTURE (THE MILLENNIUM)<sup>5</sup> when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be **filled with glory.***

2 *The people who walk in darkness will see a great light—a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow.*

3 **Israel will again be great**, and its people will rejoice as people rejoice at harvest time. They will shout with joy like warriors dividing the plunder.

4 *For God will break the chains that bind his people and the whip that scourges them, just as he did when he destroyed the army of Midian with Gideon's little band.*

5 *In that day of peace, battle gear will no longer be issued. Never again will uniforms be bloodstained by war. All such equipment will be burned.*

6 *For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the Lord Almighty will guarantee this!*

8 *The Lord has spoken out against that braggart Israel,*

9 *and the people of Israel and Samaria will soon discover it. In their pride and arrogance they say,*

10 *“Our land lies in ruins now, but we will rebuild it better than before. We will replace the broken bricks with cut stone, the fallen sycamore trees with cedars.”*

11 *The Lord will reply to their bragging by bringing Rezin's enemies, the Assyrians, against them—*

12 *along with Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west. With bared fangs, they will devour Israel. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.*

13 **For after all this punishment**, the people will still not repent and turn to the Lord Almighty.

14 *Therefore, in a single day, the Lord will destroy both the head and the tail, the palm branch and the reed.*

15 *The leaders of Israel are the head, and the lying prophets are the tail.*

16 *For the leaders of the people have led them down the path of destruction.*

17 *That is why the Lord has no joy in the young men and no mercy on even the widows and orphans. For they are all hypocrites, speaking*

<sup>5</sup> Parentheses added.

*wickedness with lies. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.*

*18 This wickedness is like a brushfire. It burns not only briars and thorns but the forests, too. Its burning sends up vast clouds of smoke.*

*19 The land is blackened by the fury of the Lord Almighty. The people are fuel for the fire, and no one spares anyone else.*

*20 They fight against their own neighbors to steal food, but they will still be hungry. In the end they will even eat their own children.*

*21 Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, Ephraim will feed on Manasseh, and both will devour Judah. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.*

Note that God is referred to as the “*Lord Almighty*” three times in this chapter. The Almighty is going to provide a Savior for those who turn to Him and who will trust in Him. This chapter contains one of the best-known Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. Just as the first series of judgment prophecies (chapters 2—4) ended with a prophecy of hope (4:2-6), so now after Isaiah's final predictions of suffering and darkness, in chapter 9 he gives us an astonishing rendition describing the birth of a royal Savior who will establish a kingdom of righteousness and justice.

Isaiah 9:1-3:

*1 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.*

*2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.*

*3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.*

If you like nice orderly writing where everything follows in a logical time line, you will have a great deal of trouble understanding the book of Isaiah. In verse 1, Isaiah refers to two events that occurred in 738 and 733 BC. Those events being the Assyrian invasion and capture of those two cities. These and other events are what sent the nation of Israel into a time of national darkness. But then he refers to the coming of Jesus Christ which would occur some 700 years later, and in just a few more verses to the second coming of Christ in the end times. The bottom line is that even though Israel and Judah will be punished, there is still a great deal of glory for that nation in the end. The coming of Jesus is likened to the coming of light to remove the darkness of captivity. The first part of verse 3 is yet another confirmation of the promise God made to Abraham to multiply his physical descendants as the sands of the seashore (Genesis 22:17). Verse 3 most likely refers to Israel as a restored nation in the end times.

Isaiah 9:4,5:

*4 For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their*



*shoulders, The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.  
5 For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, And cloak  
rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.*

These verses imagine conditions that would apply in the world during the long centuries of Israel's exile from their land and all the suffering they would endure. Isaiah describes here the sad legacy of the nations of the world until Christ returns to establish peace forevermore. You may be familiar with what Matthew wrote, but this would be a good time to listen again to Matthew 24:6,7:

*6 And wars will break out near and far, but don't panic. Yes, these things  
must come, but the end won't follow immediately.  
7 The nations and kingdoms will proclaim war against each other, and  
there will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world.*

These are the conditions that have existed for human beings throughout history. Wars, rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes will continue until Jesus Christ returns to put an end to all the hatred and suffering.

Isaiah 9:6,7:

*6 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.  
7 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.*

Beautiful words! Couldn't you just listen to them over and over again? Not only are they beautiful and comforting, but these two verses also give us one of the most complete prophecies of Jesus to be found in the Scriptures. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given" tells us that Jesus will be both fully human and fully God. He was to come into the world as the Son of a virgin without a natural human father but conceived of the Holy Spirit. He was God in the flesh. How could this be? We won't know that until we get to Heaven. But for now we can understand it to be one of those supernatural capabilities that only God could understand and make happen. Jesus came from Heaven as a free gift of grace for the salvation of all human beings.

"The government will be upon His shoulder" tells us that Jesus is destined to rule over the entire universe. "His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." His name is *wonderful* because He is wonderful. Just look at the things He accomplished and what the Bible tells us He will accomplish in the future. He is *Counselor* because He comes to us and reveals the will of God for us. He reveals to us the only way for a person to travel safely through a world of sin. He gives us all the power of God through the Holy Spirit in order to please Him.

He is also called *Mighty God* because He is God and because He will accomplish all of those things described in verses 1-3. *Everlasting Father* assures us that Jesus Christ will be the Father of His people through all eternity.

*Prince of Peace* promises that one day at His second coming Jesus will provide peace for all the world. Until that time, having made peace with God for mankind by His blood on the cross, all who put their trust in Him have peace with God. As we learn to commit our lives to God, peace fills our hearts and controls our lives.

Verse 7 refers to the covenant (promise) that God made with David. God made a covenant with David that David's Son would sit upon the throne and reign in righteousness forever. When John the Baptist was born, about six months before the birth of Jesus, his father, Zacharias, prophesied that God had raised up a "*horn of salvation*" in the house of His servant David. Luke writes in Luke 1:69:

*69 God has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant.*

Ever since the time of David's reign as king of Israel it was the Lord's promise that the inheritance to that throne would last forever, and there would never be a time when the line of successors to David's throne would be broken.

Although there were years that no one sat on the throne of David, the ancestry was never broken. Jesus, on His mother's side, was from the line of David, and because of her marriage to Joseph, who was heir to the throne, the throne rights passed to Jesus. Jesus, however, has not yet taken His seat upon the throne of David. He will not do that until His Second Coming. Today Jesus is sitting now at the right hand of His Father on the throne of Deity. Soon He will return in glory and will take His own throne, which is really the throne of David, and will reign in righteousness over all the earth. These promises will be fulfilled because the zeal of the Lord will make it happen.

Isaiah 9:8-12:

*8 The Lord sent a word against Jacob (Israel)<sup>6</sup>, and it fell on Israel;  
9 and all the people knew it— Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria—  
but in pride and arrogance of heart they said:  
10 "The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the  
sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place."  
11 So the Lord raised adversaries against them, and stirred up their  
enemies,  
12 the Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west, and they  
devoured Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned  
away; his hand is stretched out still.*

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<sup>6</sup> Parentheses Added.

Though Isaiah was writing to the nation of Judah he often used the Northern Kingdom of **Israel** (also called **Jacob**) as an example of the fact that God **judges His sinful people.** The **message** was one of coming judgment on the North. When these words were written, the Northern Kingdom was already in some danger. The coming **fall of Israel** in 722 B.C. should have warned Judah, the Southern Kingdom, that God is active in the affairs of His people. Judah should have realized that **she too would be destroyed** if she persisted in the same kind of behavior as the Northern Kingdom.

The coming judgment on Israel would be severe, but it would not be enough to turn her back to God. **Ephraim**, one of Israel's largest tribes, often represented the entire Northern Kingdom. **Samaria** was the Northern Kingdom's capital city. Apparently Israel's inhabitants were arrogant enough to be confident that they would experience only a temporary setback and in that proud confidence thought they could **rebuild** whatever was destroyed. In fact they felt that they would be able to make their nation better than ever. But this was not to be the case. Aram, also called Syria, was an ally of Israel as we've already learned, and these people were Arameans. They were **from the east and the Philistines were from the west**. But even this judgment did not appease God's wrath because the people continued to refuse to deal with their sin. So God would continue to discipline them. This section ends with a statement which is repeated three more times in the following verses: "*For all this his anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still*" (12, 17, 21; 10:4). This repetition heightens the effect of God's intense anger and underscores the certainty of continued judgment.<sup>7</sup>

Now I don't know about you, but when I read these verses I can't help but making a side-by-side comparison between the nation of Israel in Isaiah's time and the United States today. I believe we could well have been receiving a number of warning shots from God for the last several years. I remember an occasional major catastrophe when growing up and as a young man but never anything with the growing intensity that we've experienced in the last thirty years.

Beginning in the sixties there was a complete breakdown in government leading up and to the resignation of a president in disgrace. Iran captured and held hostage several hundred Americans for almost a year. Terrorists began attacking various U.S. installations around the world. Another president was almost impeached because he had a little problem with honesty and liked to have sex in his office with young apprentices. Then 9/11 when we lost almost 3,000 people in an attack worse than Pearl Harbor. We've had many severe hurricanes ravage Florida and severe forest fires leveling the beautiful timberlands of the Southwest, West, and Northwest. Droughts ravaged farm crops over much of the country this year. Now Katrina, which has to be one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the United States. The death toll may yet even exceed 9/11. Aids, a disease that came about originally because of homosexual relationships is killing more and more people all the time. Scientists are now worried about the possibility of a worldwide epidemic of bird flu. And there are any number of other things that I could list

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<sup>7</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

here.

And what has the response of the United States been? We're going to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps and do something about it because of our tremendous resourcefulness as a people. We don't need to turn to God, we can do it ourselves. What a big, big mistake. Do you remember what we just said a minute ago about Israel believing they could rebuild and make things better than ever? Well let us say the same thing again and this time substitute the United States for Israel and see if it makes any sense to you.

The coming judgment on the United States would be severe, but it would not be enough to turn her back to God. The Almighty One. **The national media which exerted a great deal of influence in forming national opinion, along with the powerful and wealthy believed they could do almost anything they wanted to do.** Apparently Americans were arrogant enough to be confident that they would experience only a temporary setback and in that proud confidence thought they could **rebuild** whatever was destroyed. In fact they felt that they would be able to make their nation better than ever. But this was not to be the case. Terrorists from the East and terrorists from the West began to squeeze the vise closed on the United States.

But even this judgment did not appease God's wrath because the people continued to refuse to deal with their sin. So God would continue to chasten them.

The repetition of such events emphasizes God's intense anger and underscores the certainty of continued judgment. Let me read for you what God wanted Israel to do and what He wants the United States to do. 2 Chronicles 7:13,14:

*13 When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people,*

*14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

Israel and Judah both ignored God's instructions and because they did so, they were destroyed. If the United States does not do so, there is little doubt in my mind that we too will be destroyed or overrun by some enemy. The other possibility is that God has determined in His infinite wisdom that it is time for the end to come. That might explain why we're seeing so many of these catastrophes all over the world. I pray each one of you will take this seriously and pray seriously every day for God to forgive our country and send leaders that would bring about a revival and a turning to God, because without that commitment to Him, we don't stand a chance.

Isaiah 9:13-17

*13 The people did not turn to him who struck them, or seek the Lord of hosts.*

*14 So the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day—*

*15 elders and dignitaries are the head, and prophets who teach lies are the tail;*

*16 for those who led this people led them astray, and those who were led by them were left in confusion.*

*17 That is why the Lord did not have pity on their young people, or compassion on their orphans and widows; for everyone was godless and an evildoer, and every mouth spoke folly. For all this his anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still.*

Even though the Northern Kingdom of Israel had suffered at the hand of God, they still had not returned to Him. So their continued refusal led to more judgment. Israel was like a child who stubbornly refuses to obey his parents and therefore is punished more severely. Israel's refusal to turn to God would result in the most severe judgment imaginable. The whole nation, from rich to poor and from old to young, would be cast aside. **Elders (the head)** who are wise in their own eyes and **false prophets (the tail)**, who teach lies, and young people, orphans, and widows were all **ungodly and wicked** and therefore would be judged by God.<sup>8</sup>

Isaiah 9:18-21:

*18 For wickedness burns like a fire; It consumes briars and thorns; It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame And they roll upward in a column of smoke.*

*19 By the fury of the Lord of hosts the land is burned up, And the people are like fuel for the fire; No man spares his brother.*

*20 They slice off what is on the right hand but still are hungry, And they eat what is on the left hand but they are not satisfied; Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm.*

*21 Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, And together they are against Judah. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.*

People may think lightly of sin and pay little attention to the solemn warnings that God gives concerning its evil effects, but if they persist in their rebellion against the will of God they will find that wickedness does indeed burn as a fire and that those who refuse to turn to God in repentance will have to endure the judgment that they've brought upon themselves. Famine is then added to their wretchedness and misery. Yet, instead of turning to God and confessing their sin and seeking forgiveness, they blamed one another for the troubles that had come upon them. Instead of turning to the Almighty for strength, help, guidance, and salvation, they court the judgment of the Almighty.

<sup>8</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

We've seen here how God deals with nations who do not trust in Him. But what about you as an individual? When trouble comes, do you seek out some sort of alliance with a group that ignores God? Do you turn to astrology or other psychic means to figure out what to do? Or do you seek the authority of the Almighty, the Lord God of Heaven, the One who is all-powerful and who loves you very much? If you are not sure just how to seek guidance from God be sure to come and speak with one of the pastors. We will be happy to assist you into a relationship with the Lord.