

Q1 L04 - **The Hard Way** - 2021-01-23

Jean Ross: Good morning, friends, and welcome to Sabbath School Study Hour, coming to you here from the Granite Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sacramento, California. We like to always mention where we're recording these programs because there are folks watching in the Sacramento area for years and they don't know that we're located right here. So if you are in the Sacramento area and would like to visit us, feel free to do so. We'd like to greet our many friends who are joining us across the country and around the world, as well as our regular church members who are tuning in online and our online members. We're glad that you have chosen to come study with us today.

We have a very important lesson. We've just started it a few weeks ago. It's on the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. Today we find ourselves on lesson number four, and it's entitled, "The Hard Way." And we're going to learn about that as we get into the book of Isaiah.

We do have a free offer we'd like to tell you about. It is a book entitled, "Remember Lot's Wife," and if you'd like to receive this book, we'll be happy to send it to you for free. All you need to do is call the number 866-788-3966 and ask for offer number 108 and we'll get it in the mail and send it to you. If you'd like a digital download of the book, you can text the code "SH054" to the number 40544 and you'll be able to get a digital download of the book that's entitled, "Remember Lot's Wife."

Well, before we get to our study this morning, we have a treat. We're going to be having a special musical item. I'd like to invite Jack Fanselau to come forward.

♪♪

♪ I'll walk with God ♪

♪ from this day on ♪

♪ His helping hand ♪

♪ I lean upon ♪

♪ This is my prayer, ♪

♪ my humble plea, ♪

♪ may the Lord ♪

♪ be ever with me ♪

♪ There is no death, ♪

♪ though eyes grow dim ♪

♪ There is no fear ♪

♪ when I'm near to Him ♪

♪ I'll lean on Him forever, ♪

♪ and He'll forsake me never ♪

♪ He will not fail me ♪

♪ as long as my faith is strong ♪
♪ Whatever road I may walk along, ♪
♪ I'll walk with God ♪
♪ I'll take His hand ♪
♪ I'll talk with God, ♪
♪ He'll understand ♪
♪ I pray to Him, ♪
♪ each day to Him, ♪
♪ and He'll hear the words that I say ♪
♪ His hand will guide my throne and rod, ♪
♪ and I'll never walk ♪
♪ alone while I walk with God ♪♪

Jean: Appropriate song for our study for today. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Dear Father, we are indeed so grateful for Your many blessings. Thank You for bringing us through this past year and here we are at the first Sabbath of the new year. We want to ask Your special blessing to be with those who are joining us online and those who are here in person. And Father, as we open up Your Word, we always pray for the Holy Spirit to come and guide our hearts and our minds. Impress upon us those truths that we need to have and understand and know, for we ask this, in Jesus's name, amen.

Our lesson today is going to be brought to us by our youth pastor, Pastor Luccas Rodor.

Luccas Rodor: It is a joy to be in the house of the Lord this Sabbath, especially after a year where we had a difficult time sometimes coming to church, huh? So it's so good to be here and to study the Word of God, especially the book of Isaiah that is such a beautiful book in the Bible. I'm so glad that we're studying this book, because there are so many lessons to be learned through the study of this Old Testament Gospel. You know that the prophet Isaiah is considered to be the evangelist prophet, and so I'm just so happy that we're studying this lesson and so, welcome to everyone here.

Welcome to those that are watching online. I do want to begin with a word of prayer. I know Pastor Jean just prayed but prayer is never enough, right? So let's say a word of prayer.

Dear Lord God, thank You so much for Your blessings and thank You so much for bringing us here. For those that here-- that are here locally, Father, thank You because they were able to come and those that are watching from home or from wherever, Lord, perhaps someone watching from church, a church service that is streaming us right now, Lord, just please bless them, guide them, fill them with Your Holy Spirit, Lord, and just open our minds and our hearts and our ears to learn the lesson that You have from this difficult lesson. I thank You, in Jesus's name, amen.

The reason why I say this is a difficult lesson, it's not so much in the complex sense but in the message sense. The title of this week's lesson is what? Who studied their lesson and remembers the title of this week's lesson? "The Hard Way." "The Hard Way." And that hard way, unfortunately, it's not something that is exclusive to the children of Israel, but this is something that all of us go through at one point or

another in our life, where we choose the harder way, the more difficult way. Instead of choosing the better way that God provides, sometimes we do choose the harder way. A harder way that might seem simpler and easier at a first glance but that at hindsight we see that it was more difficult. It brought more pain, it caused more suffering. The memory verse for this lesson is Isaiah chapter 8, verse 17, and it says: "I will wait on the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in Him."

So this is a very, you know, at a first glance it can seem kind of contradictory, because it's saying that I'm going to wait in the Lord as He hides His face from the house of Jacob. Now, wasn't Isaiah part of the house of Jacob? He was, and so it's a very deep verse. Now, the way that this lesson is organized is that it studies Isaiah, part of chapter 7 all the way through chapter 8. And so basically, we're going to go through each day as the text that it provides. So on the first day, we're going to go through Isaiah chapter 7, verse so-and-so, and then that's how we're going to study this lesson and emphasize the different things that the lesson brought and taught us this week.

Now, before we start the lesson, I would like to give a little bit of context because, well, you know me by now, I like the context of what we're talking about. And so we're on the fourth lesson. The three lessons up to here have been studying everything that's happening in the times of Isaiah, and you must have read it already in the lesson, but as you read Isaiah, you can kind of go through the same chapters that are mentioned in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, and we can kind of see what's going on: Why is Isaiah saying what he's saying? Why is God revealing what He's revealing to Isaiah? Why is--what is the context that is going on in Judah, especially Judah, and at large in the Middle East in the times of Isaiah? And so you can kind of do that correlation.

But Isaiah is one of the most beautiful books of the entire Bible. Isaiah lived during the 8th century, before Christ, and he is known as the evangelist prophet, as I've already mentioned. Isaiah's considered to be a representation, a symbol, of the entire Bible. You can divide his book into two parts, into two segments. You can divide chapter 1 through 39, and that's kind of like the Old Testament. The message that is coming, the revelations of God, they're very similar. They're representative and symbolic for the Old Testament.

And then from chapter 40 through 66, you'll find the New Testament message, a message that is more focused on a different reality, or it shifts in its message. And then you have 39 books in that first segment for the 39 books of the Old Testament, and then you have the following 27 books as kind of the representation of the New Testament. The portion of the New Testament from verse-- from chapter 40 onward, it starts with four Gospels from chapter 40 through 43.

You kind of find four Gospels where we have referencing to the Savior, the Messiah, the suffering servant, and everything that's entailed in that message. That's where we find the foretelling of John the Baptist as one--as a voice who cries out in the desert. That is where--that is the portion of the Bible where that prophecy is provided. The book ends at chapter 66 with a type of revelation, a type of the book of Revelation where we have a reference of a new heaven and a new earth with an internal--an eternal joy of Zion. So, of course, not every detail is exactly and absolutely adjusted to those proportions, but generally, in general terms, that's kind of what you get from the book of Isaiah and its divisions.

And so this week's lesson is a continuation from what we have seen happening up to now in the previous weeks. As mentioned in last week's lesson, there is a prophecy, right? Isaiah, he provides a prophecy, or God provides a prophecy about someone named Immanuel and it has to do with a problem, with an issue, that is being faced by the king at the time, which was King Ahaz, the son of Jotham. And so the small nation of Judah was facing perilous days, very dangerous days. Assyria was going-- growing stronger by the day and was becoming an even greater threat, day by day, a greater and a greater threat to all of the smaller nations that surrounded it. The nations, the kingdoms, including Judah and the nations around it, they survived on a very-- on a very delicate balance of political power.

And now at this time, Syria and Ephraim, which-- Ephraim was the kingdom of the North, Israel, they attempted to pressure, to you know, leverage, Judah into joining their coalition against the king of Assyria. And Ahaz, he had refused to do so. He refused to join their coalition. He refused to give in to their peer pressure but, unfortunately, not for a good reason. The thing is that he had secretly come to an agreement with the king Tiglath-pileser III, which was, at the time, the king of Assyria. And you can find this parallel in 2 Kings chapter 16, verse 5 through 9. And so the king, he was entertaining political games instead of trusting in the power of God.

That's the problem that we kind of studied last week. You'll see here in verse 6, chapter 7, verse 6, that the king was very worried about what was happening. It says here: "Let us go up against Judah." This is the kingdoms in the north, Syria and Ephraim. This is them saying this. "Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves and set a king over them, the son of Tabeel."

And so, Syria and Ephraim, they were-- they wanted to dethrone King Ahaz, they wanted to put in his place a puppet king, and so Ahaz, he was-- he was just worried. He was in panic. He didn't know what to do and, unfortunately, his decision was to come up and come into an alliance with the king of Assyria. And in this context, this is the context where God, He orders Isaiah to take his son, Shear-Jashub, which literally means "a remnant shall return." And again, this is what we saw last week. And to meet the king at a well in Jerusalem.

Now, we know here that Ahaz, he was unsettled. The entire people were unsettled. Everyone was in a panic. No one was knowing very well what's going to happen. Look, we don't have to go very far to relate to what's-- to what was going on. This last year that we went through there was so much unsettlement-- unsettlement? Unsettlement? Everyone was unsettled. Everyone was worried, right? There was a sort of panic in people's minds and hearts, especially those that don't really believe that there is a God that is in charge, that is in control. People were fearful, people were afraid. No one knew very well what was going to happen politically, what was going to happen socially, what was going to happen health-wise, in the health world. And so we can sort of-- of course, we don't have an impending army coming in to invade our country, and that's exactly what was happening here with Ahaz and the children of Israel in Judah. But we can kind of understand their worrying.

Now, multiply that by a lot, and that's what they were going through. Verse 2, chapter 7, verse 2, does provide a little bit of what they were going through. It says here: "And now it was told to the house of David, saying, Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim. So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind." And so they were--they were on shaky grounds. No one knew what was going to happen, no one knew what they could do. No one was in control, apparently. The king was a very weak king. Interestingly, King Ahaz, when he died, he was, I believe, the only king not to be-- or one of the only kings, not to be buried in the tomb of his fathers, because the people simply didn't respect him. And so they didn't have confidence in their leader, in their king. They didn't have confidence in what was happening. And the people, they were wayward, away from God. They weren't trusting in God. And so when you have no foundation, it's very easy to become afraid and scared.

However, in the middle of all this chaos, in the middle of all this fear and doom and gloom, Isaiah comes with a very tranquil message, with a comforting message, and verse 4 says: "Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted." This is another text in the Bible where we see God coming and saying, "Don't worry. Trust in Me. Don't be fearful. Be courageous."

You know, I was surprised-- I mentioned this in a sermon a couple of weeks ago, that I was surprised to find that the most repeated, the most frequent command of God is to, first of all, is to rejoice. Don't be fearful-- rejoice, be thankful. And secondly, don't fear. Don't be afraid. So when I heard this, I was thinking, you know, what is the most frequent command of God, I was thinking, "Well, you know, the most frequent command is probably, you know, 'Don't sin,' or 'Repent,'" you know? That's where my mind was.

And then I was surprised that God's most frequent command and order to us, it's not really something that has to do with my failure. It has to do with something in recognizing who God is. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. And don't be afraid. Do not be fearful. This is God encouraging us. And here, once again, in the middle of the Old Testament, in one of the most classical prophets of the Old Testament, we have this order where God is saying, "Don't be afraid. Don't worry. Be strong. Be courageous."

Have you heard people before saying that the Old Testament is the testament of the harsh God, of the hard God, the disciplinary, severe God, the cruel God? Have you ever heard that before? I've heard that a lot. The Old Testament God is a severe, harsh God that wants to punish His people, and the God of the New Testament is the God of grace, of forgiveness. Friends, that just reveals how little people have read of the Old Testament and how wrong people have read the New Testament. Because the Old Testament is filled with a plethora of texts where God is saying, "Don't be worried. Trust in Me. Don't be fearful. I will lead the way."

The Old Testament is literally the God that opened the waters of the sea to pave the path for his children fleeing from an army. Who could have expected that, that possibility? And here, once again, the same God is trying to tell His people, "Don't worry. How have you not learned this yet? How don't you know yet? Look at everything that I've done for you in the past. Why are you worried right now?" "Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted."

So how could Ahaz find inner peace? Believing in the promises of God, that the enemies of Judah would be defeated. But, verse 9, says: "If you do not believe, surely you will not be established." So here you find the condition, and the condition isn't that God doesn't want to establish His people. The condition isn't that God doesn't want to be there for them and reassure them. The condition is that God will respect everyone's freedom of choice. And so if I choose not to believe, if I choose not to walk on that path of faith and in that path of belief, well, then, what can God do for me? Because there is one place that God only dominates and implants His domain on a condition. And that is in the human heart.

God will only control and only guide and lead and protect when we allow Him to, because God is such a noble God that He respects the freedom that He granted to us. Believing in the Lord's promises, friends, is the only way to find peace in the midst of chaos. It's the only way. There is no other way. If you base your peace, if you base the foundation of your life's contentment and satisfaction on anything other, on any other foundation except this one, then you will become disappointed, simply because there is no other foundation. This is the only one. Isaiah 26, verse 3, the same book, has a similar promise and it says: "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You."

And this is what Jesus is talking about in the book of John when later on He says, "My peace I give you, My peace I leave you, and it is a peace that the world cannot understand," because God's peace has a different definition than the peace of man. Because the peace of men, the peace of humans, is a peace that is circumstantial, it is based on a circumstance. If there is no war, if I have money, if I have work, if I have contentment, if my family is healthy, if, if, if, if, if, if, then I will be in peace.

But the thing is is that the definition of God's peace is absolutely and entirely different. God's peace is incircumstantial. It transcends circumstance. The peace that comes from God is a peace that is most prevalent here in this world amidst chaos. Isn't that ironic? God's peace is a peace that is most prevalent when things are going contrary to what someone would deem peace-like. And that's because it's in the middle of the darkness that light shines the most, and shines the brightest. And this is what God is calling the children of Israel to go through.

In God's eyes, the two threats, these two kings in the north, Syria and Ephraim, they were nothing but two stubs of smoking fire brands, according to verse 4, that would exit the scene very shortly. And true enough, both perished just two years-- a couple of years later. What's more, in the span of about 25 years, the kingdom in the north of Israel would cease to exist, wouldn't even be in the equation anymore. This

year, the year in which Isaiah is giving this prophecy of Immanuel, is the year 734 BC and, sure enough, all these things that he had foretold occurred in the following two years. Assyria was defeated by Syria. So don't mix the two names: Assyria defeated Syria in the year 732 BC and then 12 years later, and we're going to see why these 12 years are so significant, 12 years later they invaded Israel in 722 BC, with their capital in Samaria. And what happened is that the Assyrians, they deported many of the Israelites, they took them away and they implanted them in another place and they imported many Gentiles. So much so that the people lost their identity.

So 1000 years later almost, 800 years later, when you come to the times of Jesus and we find those people called the Samaritans, that's what was left of Israel. They were hybrid Jews, hybrid Israelites. And that's why they were so hated by those that considered themselves to be the pure lineage, the original lineage, because they had become hybrid. Instead of having their holy mountain on Mount Zion, now their holy mountain was Mount Gerizim. And while they considered, you know, the well-- the springs of David to be their main springs, or main source of water, the Samaritans considered the well of-- sorry, the well of Jacob to be their main well.

And so there were many of these small differences that made them so different and so hated and it all began here in 722 BC. In the year 6-6-9, 669 BC, 65 years later, the nation did not exist at all anymore. They had been--they had been sucked in to another nation. From verses 10 through 16 of chapter 7, we find that if Ahaz had believed in the promises of God, he would have broken his treaty with Assyria, he would have broken everything that he had-- that he had said that he would do with them, he would have called on his people to pray and to worship God, but the king, King Ahaz, he persisted in his unbelief.

And noticing, and this is where we say the greatness of Isaiah, because when Isaiah notices that the king had become weak and unfaithful, Isaiah, he offered a sign of encouragement. He said, "Look, King, choose something." And this is God speaking through Isaiah. He says, "Look, choose any sign." How many of us wouldn't love an offering like this? What if God came to you and said, "Look, you can ask for anything as a sign that I am with you"? Isn't that kind of what God did to Solomon? And Solomon answered wisely, "Lord, give me wisdom." But Ahaz, he chooses to tempt the Lord, exactly by saying not to tempt the Lord. Verse 12 says: "Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!'" And this is a moment of false modesty, false piety. Knowing that he was secretly allied to the king of Assyria, how could he honestly ask a symbol, or a sign, from God? How could he honestly do that? And so instead of asking for a sign that any of us would love to ask God for a sign.

How many of us haven't done that already? I know that as a child, I did that a lot. I remember, "Lord, if You're with me right now, then do this." And I remember being disappointed a lot, simply because we can't really force God's hand. Doesn't work that way. But here, this is God saying, "Look, you can ask for a sign, anything, anything." There are no limits to what God had provided for him to ask for, and yet the king, weak-minded and weak-hearted, he decides not to. And so instead of speaking privately to the king, which he had already tried, Isaiah, now he speaks to the whole nation. He speaks to the children of Israel and then in verse 13 and 14, this is what he says: "Then he said, 'Hear now, O house of David!'"

So Isaiah stops speaking to the king, and he starts speaking to the people. "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary God also?" And this is in reference to the king's false piety. God becomes tired of our false piety.

There's this story. There's this story of a small-town church, and every so often, every year, there would be an evangelistic series, you know, one of those series, about a month, where a pastor would come and he would teach about revelation and similar to what we had here in "Revelation Now." And there was this older gentleman that every time the pastor would make an altar call, the old man, he would go up, and he would say, "Fill me up, Lord. Fill me up. Fill me up, Lord. Fill me up." Every time, every year, year after year, and he would say, "Fill me up, Lord."

In one of the later years, he was doing it again and someone heard an older lady in the church that had known that man for a very long time, and the thing is that that man, after he said, "Fill me up, Lord, fill me up," he would go back to his old ways, to his old life. Nothing would really change. And so that older lady, she said-- she was heard saying, "Don't do it, Lord. He leaks."

Friends, that is true about us many times. We--our false piety, our false modesty, we're here saying, "Lord, fill me up, fill me up," but we're leaking and the Lord grows weary and tired of that. Who wouldn't? And this is a message for me too, but God does grow weary. God has a very long patience. God has a lot of patience, but it's not infinite. That aspect about God isn't infinite. God becomes tired of our false piety and modesty, and this is what we have here: "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you now also weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

Without a doubt, the fulfillment of this prophecy in its complete sense is in Jesus Christ, who truly is "God with us." And we find this in the book of Matthew. We find this in the book of Luke. We find this, generally, in the Gospels. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. The virginal birth of Jesus is a key doctrine because if He did not come sinless, in flesh and blood, then we would have no Savior. It was essential for Jesus to be born of the virgin. Separate from human generation, because He existed even before His mother.

You remember when Jesus says in the book of John, or the book of Matthew. I think it's the book of John, where Jesus says, "Even before Abraham was, I am." Jesus existed before His mother. But here, in this context of the book of Isaiah, this prophecy had also an immediate fulfillment, an immediate meaning for Ahaz and the people of Judah.

Now, I'm going to say something that you don't have to really remember, because it's a more technical thing, but for full disclosure, there is a technical term in theology that is called "sensus plenior." Sensus plenior. And basically, what sensus plenior means, it's a Latin term and it means the complete sense of-- the complete meaning of a prophecy, right? And so, the sensus plenior of a prophecy, it might have several fulfillments, right? So here, right now, we have one immediate fulfillment, a short-term fulfillment for this prophecy, but the sensus plenior of this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, 800 years later, God with us. Does that make sense?

So there are many-- in many prophecies, you'll find multiple fulfillments, because God is just that big. God might be saying something here right now that makes sense to this immediate context, but in a wider, broader sense, it applies maybe thousands of years down the road. We find this many times in the prophecies of Daniel where there is an immediate fulfillment, but later on, we know 2300 years later, there is another fulfillment. We have the fulfillment of the 70 years where Jerusalem would be destroyed, but then that same prophecy in Matthew chapter 24, you have the fulfillment that is speaking of the end of time. So that is the sensus plenior of a prophecy. It is the full, the entire, meaning of a prophecy that can be fulfilled in stages. Does that make sense?

So here, for Isaiah in his immediate context, there was an immediate fulfillment for this prophecy of Immanuel. A virgin, a young-- and the word here for "virgin" is a young woman of marriageable age. She would be married, and she would conceive and give birth to a son who would be called, or who would live, or fulfill, Immanuel, God with us. Now, last week's lesson, if you studied it, you'll remember that it provided at least four or five different possible interpretations for this prophecy.

Now, I am more--most partial to one of them and, again, this here, it's not a matter of salvation, so it's very well and fine if you have another interpretation that you prefer, but the one that I see that makes most sense is that this is Isaiah's second wife. The first wife most likely died at the birth of Shear-Jashub, and there are a lot of texts that give evidence to this in the book of Isaiah, and that his second-- that his second son received two names. The first name is a very difficult name that I don't want to butcher, but I'm going to try it. It's Maher-shalal-hash-baz and that's his name. So the lesson said can you imagine

playing soccer with that kid? It wouldn't be very easy. But that he received this name and he received a prophetic name: Immanuel.

And you'll remember that names are very significant in the Bible. God Himself has more than 100 names in the Bible. Jesus is called so many-- He's called Immanuel. He is called Michael. We have Yahweh. We have El Shaddai, El Shaddai-- There are just so many names for God. It's because names are very significant. You'll find that many of the main characters in the Bible, their name is changed, or switched, to provide more meaning to what they would become. We have Abram that becomes Abraham. We have Jacob that becomes Israel. We have Sarai that becomes Sarah. And so you have many of these names that are changed to emphasize a reality in the life of that person.

And so here we find a very specific name, which is Maher-shalal-hash-baz that we'll get to the meaning of that, but then we have Immanuel also. And the reason why I prefer this interpretation is because in chapter 8, verse 1 through 4, referencing this second son, this boy Maher-shalal--I'm going to call him Maher. I'm going to call him Baz, okay? So when I say "Baz," you know that I'm speaking of this boy, because the name's just too big. And in speaking of him, so you have from verse 1 through 4 in chapter 8, you have the reference of this boy, and then speaking of him in verses 8 and 10 of chapter 8, the name Immanuel is used in verse 8, and its meaning is applied in verse 10. So here in verse 8 you will have, "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." And then in verse 10 you have, "Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak the word, but it will not stand, for God is with us." And so in any case, in any case, both of these boys, they became true sons of the law.

When a Hebrew boy, when an Israelite boy, he came of age, and that was-- how old was he when he came of age? Twelve. Twelve years old. Then he was called a true son of the law, all right? He was called a true son of the law. So both of these boys at the age of 12 became true sons of the law. And this is a--this special son was a reminder that by the time he became a true son of the law, by the time he became of age, Syria and Israel, the kingdom in the north, Ephraim, would disappear. So in the next 12 years, the kingdom of these two kingdoms, they wouldn't be in the scene anymore. Isaiah transmitted this prophecy-- he provided this prophecy coming from God in the year 734 as we've already mentioned and, sure enough, by 732, Syria was defeated and 12 years later, in 722, Assyria invaded the kingdom of the north, Israel fulfilling this prophecy.

God is precise. God is exact. The Bible says that at the right time, in the plenitude of time. The word "plenitude" is at the right moment. When the times were fulfilled. And the thing about God is that the time-- the time is never on our timeline. We have this--humans have this innate desire to control everything. I'm sure you can relate to this, because I can. We like to be in control. The problem is that we can't control God. It's not much of a problem when you trust and believe in God, but if we let our emotions get a, you know, get a hold of us, then we want to control God. And the thing is that God is not a tame God. You can't really put Him in your pocket or blackmail him. He's going to do things the way that He wants to do things.

So God here is a precise God and things happen when He wants them to happen. But here, instead of trusting in the Lord, Ahaz continue to trust in the king of Assyria, even though Isaiah warned him that Assyria would eventually turn on Judah. The Assyrians invaded Judah. They did indeed invade Judah, and they destroyed the land to the point where the agriculture ceased and the people had to depend on only dairy to survive. So it would be very difficult for you to be vegan back then, or even vegetarian. Here we find, chapter 7, verse 15, that says: "Curds and honey, he shall eat that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good."

And then verse 21, 22, and 23 says: "It shall be in that day that a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep; so it shall be, from the abundance of milk that they give, that he will eat curds; for curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the land. It shall happen in that day, that wherever there could be a thousand vines worth a thousand shekels of silver, it will be for briars and thorns."

So here we see that the whole agricultural system--and they were an agricultural people, it was so destroyed by the Assyrian invasion, it would be so destroyed by the Assyrian invasion, that they would need to eat milk and honey or from the production of milk and honey. Their rich crops would be devastated, the people would be forced to hunt wild animals for food. It would be a time of great humiliation and suffering. Verse 20 says: "In the same day the Lord will shave with a hired razor, with those from beyond the River, with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the legs, and will also remove the beard."

So this terminology, you know, when we read in the Bible that someone shaves his head, it's a sign of humiliation. We find this with Daniel. We find this with Job. Remember, when they shaved their head, they put on sackcloth, it's the same terminology. What happens here is that they're in a moment, in a period, of humiliation. Now, all of this could have been avoided. All of this could have been avoided if only the leaders had placed their trust in God.

But in any case, as we mentioned before, here Isaiah, he marries a virgin. That is referenced as the prophetess, right? She's called the prophetess in chapter 8, and now we're going to what would be chapter 8, verse 1 through 10, equivalent to Tuesday. So we're still on Tuesday. Let's see how far we'll get. So as we mentioned before, Isaiah, he married a virgin, and she's referenced as the prophetess and the legal documents will record-- were duly recorded and sealed. And he even announced the name of his son before the boy was even born: Maher-shalal-hash-baz, better known, a.k.a. Baz. And his name means, literally, "Speed the spoil and hasten the plunder."

So taking into account that the names of his sons, or that his sons and his own life, they were symbols and signs to the people, and this is according to chapter 8, verse 18. Look at what verse 18 in chapter 8 says. It says: "Here I am with-- here I am 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."

So you see here that Isaiah himself recognizes that him and his family, they are for signs and wonders for Israel. The name was very meaningful. It referred to this future judgment when Assyria would conquer Syria and Israel and Judah and even when Babylon would later take Judah into exile. A child begins to form his first phrases, at least the intelligible phrases, about when he's two years of age. I came later. I was about two and a half, I think, when I started talking. I took a while. My parents were worried. I think they're still kind of worried.

But in any case, a child begins to form his phrases by the time he's two years old and, sure enough, two years after Isaiah's son is born, both Pecca and Rezin, which were the kings in the north, they died. Assyria conquered Syria and invaded Israel, and its army did, indeed, hasten its plunder and speed its spoil. The rest of chapter 8, and this is where we would kind of go into the conclusion of the lesson, and this is me trying to fit it in into ten minutes.

But the rest of chapter 8 is really Isaiah providing three very vivid contrasts that he used to show the leaders in Judah the mistake that they were making by trusting in the king of Assyria rather than in the King of heaven.

So there are three very vivid contrasts, and you'll find this in the lesson of Tuesday, Thursday-- sorry, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, all right? These three very vivid contrasts. The first is that they chose a deluge. They chose a flood instead of a tranquil water, a tranquil stream, or a soft stream. Verse 6, chapter 8, verse 6 and 7 says: "Inasmuch as these people refused the waters of Shiloah that flow softly, and rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold, the Lord brings upon-- up over them the waters of the River, strong and mighty." And so the pro-Assyrian faction in Judah, they rejoiced in the fact that Assyria defeated Syria and Israel. They rejoiced when both Pecca and Rezin died.

These victories seemed to prove that their allegiance with Assyria was the right way to go. I mean, look, if my ally has just defeated my enemies, doesn't that mean that I'm doing pretty good? Yeah, it seemed to

be going well for them, instead of trusting in God. And here, God references Himself as "the waters of Shiloah that flow softly," as we find in verse 6. They sought out the great river, the great chaotic and tumultuous river of Assyria. What they didn't notice, what they didn't really consider, is that this river would later come down and flood them.

God offered His people peace, but in their incredulity they chose war. They lived according to what they could see, not by what they could believe in. And, friends, this is a great temptation for us. We are often tempted to live by what we can see because it's easier, isn't it? If I can see it, if I can touch it, if I can smell it, if I can taste it, well, that means it's real. But the Bible tells us that we should believe rather in what we cannot see, because the things that we cannot see are things from above. It's harder but, boy, is it worthwhile.

Isaiah, however, he did not-- he did not foretell a permanent victory for this invading army. Even though the people were choosing this rather than the better of the choices, Isaiah even then, Isaiah through God, or God through Isaiah, provides a sliver of hope. After all, they were invading the land of Immanuel, and God was with His people and would deliver them for the love of His name. Assyria could plan their strategy, but the Lord would frustrate each of those plans. The army of Sennacherib later on camped around Jerusalem, certain of their victory.

This is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. Letters before the Lord, my first sermon here at Granite Bay, or my second sermon. But the Lord God did eliminate that problem, the problem of Sennacherib with one swift blow, and you could read about it in Isaiah chapter 37. We're going to get there in this lesson. Kind of wish I was the one teaching that one, but we'll see when we get there. The second contrast that we find here that Isaiah provides, this is chapter 8, verse 11 through 15, is that they chose a trap instead of a sanctuary. And you will find this in verse 13 through 15 that says: "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 house of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken away."

God warned Israel not to follow the crowd that believed that Assyria would be the better way out. And even though Isaiah, because of his choice, was considered a traitor, because of what he was choosing here, because of what he was saying, Isaiah, he opposed all the foreign coalitions and called the people out for their unfaithfulness. Even though he was called a traitor, he still was faithful. So here, you find at least one example in time of chaos of someone maintaining his faith. While all these political leaders, they asked themselves--and this is also very modern.

You could apply this to our day. Look at what I'm going to say. While the leaders then were asking themselves, "Is this what the people want? Is this politically correct? Is this safe for me?" Isaiah was asking himself, "Is this the will of God? Is this the right thing to do?" This is a lesson that we have to apply also. It's not about what will save face. It's about what will save. When you fear God, friends, you never need to fear people or circumstances. Much later, the apostle Peter made reference to this passage when he writes in 1 Peter 3:14 and 15. He says: "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed and do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

Isaiah compared the Lord to a sanctuary, the rock that is the refuge to all that believe. But that is a trap to those that rebel, or that rebel. And this is a very frequent comparison to God in the Bible. The Lord God is a rock, one that breaks the unfaithful but one that protects those who place their trust in Him. The third contrast, to use the last contrast used by Isaiah in chapter 8, verse 16 through 22, is that they chose darkness rather than light. The nation of Israel rejected the message of Isaiah but they-- that did not mean that his ministry was in vain. And that is something that I have to remind myself as a pastor a lot.

Sometimes, your words are rejected, but that doesn't mean that your ministry is in vain. And Isaiah, he proved that. The true disciples of God, they receive His Word in their heart, and, by faith, this prophet was willing to patiently await the fulfillment of God's Word. And although the people paid little attention to what he had to say, Isaiah himself and his family, they were living prophecy. Isn't that a great thing to be a living prophecy? That's what the Adventist Church is.

We are a living prophecy, friends. This movement is a living prophecy, and that's exactly what Isaiah and his family was. They were a living prophecy. And no one could ignore the fact. The name of Isaiah means Jehovah is salvation, God saves. And this reminded the people that they should trust in Jehovah to save them. The name of his eldest son, Shear-Jashub, which means literally, "a remnant shall return," a word of promise in a moment where, apparently, the nation was about to be destroyed.

And, in fact, later on when the exiled Israelites returned to Judah, after the exile in Babylon, they were comforted by these words, by the chapters 40 through 66 of Isaiah. The name of his youngest son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, that means, "speed--" I didn't really use his nickname much, did I? I kind of like saying his name. It's catchy. But his name means "speed the spoil and hasten the plunder," and that pointed to the fall of Syria and Ephraim. So in their moments of despair and the moments of crisis, instead of turning to God, the people themselves, they consulted, and this is the darkest moment in this period of the children of Israel, that they went back to consulting occultism, familiar spirits and demons, which only plunged them into a deeper moral and spiritual darkness.

Friends, the growth of occultism in our days is proof that people are deliberately rejecting the Word of God and returning to the lies of Satan. And we see the rise in this in the movies that we have in the world around us, in the series, in the music and the songs, in the live TV. We see it everywhere. It's not even weird anymore. It's not even strange. And this is the symbol of a world that is rejecting the truth of God and falling more and more into the lies of the devil.

The leaders of Judah here, they anxiously awaited the dawn of a new day, but they only spiraled deeper into a deep pit of darkness. The truth, friends, is that the human heart is a very powerful factory of idols, which is why we must be very cautious and very aware of anything that come-- that can come between us and our God. In the case of Israel here, it was fear and doubt that led to unfaithfulness and then to occultism. Consulting spirits that they could see and touch rather than the powerful God of heaven.

Now, the Word of God, friends, and this is-- this is where we leave off. We know that the Word of God is true light. It is the only trustworthy light in this world of darkness. I mean, don't we know Psalm 119:105? "Your word is a--" What is it? "A lamp and a light unto my path." 2 Peter 1:19 through 21 says: "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

I love it where it says that it is a "light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." Who is the morning star? Jesus is the morning star. So may He rise in your heart day by day, friend. I know it might be hard sometimes to live by faith, because that means living by not by what you see but by what you know in God. So may God bless you as you study this lesson of Isaiah. Please remember to study it. Please remember to pray about it. It is a powerful lesson, and I'm sure that God will bless you. I do hope that you can join us next week for our Sabbath School Study Hour. We have a very exciting study next week, and I would like to finish with a word of prayer.

Dear Lord God, thank You so much for Your power. Thank You so much for Your control and for giving us so many lessons in Your Word, in Your light that shines in our heart that allows us to understand that although the darkness may be great out there in the world, we know that the light in the universe is greater because You are there. You are that light, and light shines the brightest while it is dark. Lord, allow us to be that light also, be a reflection of who You are, and like Isaiah, be living prophecy to bring comfort, to

bring knowledge, to bring love and hope to people that are living in a dark world. Please bless us now, I ask in Jesus's name, amen.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the keyword on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen, and be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts wherever and whenever you want, and most important, to share it with others.

Dee: My parents got divorced when I was three or four, and then I was basically unchurched most of my life. I had a girlfriend in high school tell me that she had to break up with me because I wasn't a Christian. I thought, "That's weird. I believe in God. Why would she say that?" Not realizing I was living a horrible life with foul language, was mean, and other stuff. And that kind of challenged me initially. And then my dad, 9/11 woke him up that he wasn't ready to meet his Lord, though he was a man that I valued and knew he loved me. Didn't doubt that. But he just knew he needed more, so he started watching TV ministries first, Baptist preachers and others, and he was kind of intrigued by what he was learning.

And so when he turned me on to this, this television station, first thing that I got access to was Doug Batchelor's "Most Amazing Prophecy" series that he did in Berrien Springs, Michigan. And I remember when I first watched this, my background was Baptist-ish of sorts, but I remember when I first watched this series, I remember thinking, "I've never heard that before about the state of the dead or about the Sabbath or the commandments or the Rapture," or other things. And I remember thinking to myself, "I've never heard that before, but that's what the text says." And that kept happening. And I had this experience of just wondering, like, "Well, what else have I believed that isn't as it is," you know? And the more I watched, the more helpful it became, but again, he kind of took a different perspective on the messages.

It was fresh to me, but I just-- these things I'd never heard before--and I just realized, like, there's so much stuff in the Bible that no one's talking about and that people need to know. And so I ended up in this awkward situation that some of my friends who didn't believe what I was coming to believe, I didn't know how to communicate with them, and so one of the things that helped me initially was the SabbathTruth.com website, TheTruthAboutHell.com and TheTruthAboutDeath and some of those resource websites that Amazing Facts had put together that were just full of resources.

If I needed an answer to something that someone brought up, there would be a 95% chance that Amazing Facts would have something that I could use. It makes witnessing even easier in that sense. The Amazing Facts Prophecy Study Bible was my first real Bible that I had of a more trusted translation. The Bible Study Guides were in the back of it. They had a lot of other resources that were helpful. If you can hand a book to somebody and you can pick up a phone and call Amazing Facts, you have everything you need. And so I was just printing off stuff and handing it to people, you know? Like, "Here's what I'm coming to realize. This is true. It's in the Bible." And it was a huge blessing to me and a real help just to kind of help me to better understand what the message was and understand it for myself and have resources to put in the hands of other people. It was invaluable. Some time went by.

I eventually went to a school of evangelism and was baptized. And then I had this amazing opportunity that after being in ministry for about five or six years, Doug Batchelor was going to be the main speaker at a youth event, and I was actually going to be doing a seminar at this youth event. And it was just this amazing kind of full-circle experience that the first person I came in contact with in Adventism, to hear the message, to have it make sense, to be able to do ministry together with him in whatever role possible, just meant the world to me, and to be able to tell him my story and tell him thank you was invaluable. And so God just gave me a precious gift in affording that opportunity, and I'll never forget that. Dee: My name is Dee. Thank you for changing my life.

Announcer: Amazing Facts, Changed Lives.

Roy: I grew up here in New York City, I guess, dealing with all the temptations that you would have in a big city. Everything that you could imagine that you could run into, drugs, crime, was always here. When I was at a young age, I actually got into trouble with the law, and my only out was to join the military at the time in order to not do time. So I left New York and traveled the world a little bit while I was in the military. Eventually, I came back. Having grown up as a hip hop kid, I eventually found myself working in the music business actually. I worked at a couple of major radio stations, hip hop, reggae. I was at all the big reggae shows, working them.

No matter what I did to try and satisfy myself, nothing really worked. I remember I used to play at this one club in Manhattan. We used to play there every Friday night. So I came home one Saturday morning after leaving the club, and I turned on the video channel like I usually do. So there was this guy in the video channel talking, and he was definitely out of place, but the things that he was saying just totally amazed me. I had never heard anyone speak about the Bible like this before.

So I started coming home early on Saturday mornings just to catch this show. I found the things that he was saying absolutely amazing, to the point where it literally made me stop and start to think about how I was living my life. So I found that all of these things that I had been doing to try and find happiness were actually not making me happy at all. But were really just leaving me empty inside.

When I started reading the Bible and it started to make sense, I started to make changes. I even tried to keep the Sabbath, which I failed at miserably. So I was actually invited by Amazing Facts to go to see a live series at one of the local churches, but after going the first night, I ended up going another night and another night. I stayed for the entire series. That was the day I made a decision that changed the rest of my life forever.

I gave my life to Christ, and everything was different after that. I made a decision to give up the music business, stop hanging out at all of the clubs. I made a decision that was eternal for me and for my family. I started going to church. I got a position in church where I was actually in charge of the personal ministries department. And the same Amazing Facts studies that changed my life, I actually got to share them with people and sit down with them and tell them about Jesus.