

Isaiah 7 and 8 - the theme is faith

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Preacher: Philip Wells and others

[0:00] We looked this morning at Isaiah 7, 8 and 9. As I say, the key verse is chapter 7, verse 9.

! It's about faith.

Let's see if my pen will work here. And it's about the plans that are made with or without faith.

If you look across at chapter 8, verse 12, it talks... Well, sorry, if you look at chapter 8, verse 10, it talks about strategies and plans.

And some strategies and plans don't stand because Emmanuel, because God is with us. Other plans do stand because they fit with Emmanuel, but some don't.

[1:17] And in chapter 8, verse 12, he is trying to get us to see that there's a way of looking at things which shows up features.

And there's a way of looking at things in which features are diminished. And sometimes it's not right to be over-impressed by something that you can see and over-fearful of it.

So verse 12, do not call conspiracy everything these people call conspiracy. Do not fear what they fear. Do not dread it. It says there is the right look.

There is the right perception, which is the Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy. He is the one you are to fear. He is the one you are to dread. He will be a sanctuary for... etc.

It goes on. And it talks about a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. So the Lord Almighty is, in some contexts and in some ways, the holy place, the refuge, the sanctuary.

[2:31] And yet if he is responded to and related to in the wrong way, he becomes a stone that you can trip over and a stone that actually falls on you.

So... I don't know where I was going with that. We're talking about plans and faith. The faith that sees things as they should be seen.

And I think that this affects us in... So I've made a little list. In work life. So not everybody here is employed, but if you are employed, it will affect your work life.

I think this affects the way we operate as a church. Our church life. So to be very specific, all our plans for appointing an assistant pastor, we started those plans in 2015, have come to nothing.

So far... Well, I say come to nothing. It hasn't resulted in an appointing assistant pastor. So here is an issue which we need to address in faith.

[3:46] I think that is a very important thing. I've put there future. So we all look at the future. It depends a little bit where we're standing, but the future is a big thing for us, isn't it?

So... So... For some of us, the future is... There's an academic future, and then where it goes after that.

Some of us might be thinking we're coming towards the end of a chapter, and where do we go on from there? If we look in terms of church, you might like to imagine everybody in this room ten years older, and then think, what would that be looking like?

Because some people in this room wouldn't be in this room, because they'd be somewhere else. So the future, I think, is very relevant. Crises...

Whoops. So hopefully we don't have a crisis all the time. I suppose it wouldn't be a crisis then, would it? A crisis is something that pops up and gives us sleepless nights and worries.

[4:57] So I could almost immediately think of a couple of people in this room who are, you know, working through crisis, and probably I don't know the half of it.

Depression. Depression. When life sort of clouds over and the colour can't be seen anymore, how do Christian people...

Because Christian people suffer from depression. How does faith operate in that? And then I put here the promised land, because that's a little bit like the future.

And there are promises of the promised land, which are made... My wife is from a family which is an immigrant family into the UK, and I can see in her family the sense that they came here seeking the promised land.

Because that's, in a sense, the offer that is made to emigrants and immigrants. If you move, you'll be in the promised land.

[6:08] Of course, we know that that promise is empty because the promised land is not to be found here on earth, is it?

The promised land is the world to come. And, you know, there is a thing of faith here.

Whose promises are we trusting? Who is offering us the golden future? So, I think all these are about faith.

And all of these are exactly where we're at. And this chapter and these thoughts address those. And if we have time, I would like us...

Now, let's see what's a good way of doing this. I mean, in a minute, but not just at this moment. If we broke up into small groups and discussed that together, perhaps made that a matter of prayer, if I could say how there's any relevance of this to you.

[7:11] Let me just try and move this on. Come on. It worked before, didn't it? Yeah, it did. But it's not going to work now.

Oh, that's a good idea. Oh, you're so clever. Because what's happening is the screen on here is a different size to the screen on there. So, when I put my pen on here, it thinks I'm putting it on there. Let's look at the... Let's look at these three things. Let's look at the story itself. If we have time, we might like to pull some threads of New Testament connections. And then we could perhaps think about the themes that are going on in this chapter.

And then at some point, we'll go and discuss together. So, can we remind ourselves of some of the basic thoughts here?

So, I've got King Ahaz there. And can we remind ourselves what... He reacts to a situation.

[8:22] What's the situation that he reacts to, please? So, you have got to call out and we have to do it fairly quickly. It's in chapter seven and it's really just recapping what we saw this morning.

So, what's the situation that he's... Thank you. So, if I put those as two blobs. So, that one is the Northern Kingdom and I could try and change colour.

And this is Aram, Syria. And these two are allied together and are threatening him.

What's his response to this threat? What is his reaction to this threat? Let's put it that way. What is his reaction? I'm sorry?

He does, yes. If I could take it back one step, what is his emotional response? Fear.

[9:26] Yeah. Fear. Let's... So, let's try and put in here fear. So, that's an emotion that we all know, isn't it?

He feared. And it says, So intense was the fear that the hearts of his people, verse two, were shaken as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind. And he...

Let's see if I can change the colour of that. Don't bother.

Don't go away. So, he goes to Assyria for help. This is like the writing that you do when Amazon deliver a parcel to you and you turn into an incompetent four-year-old when it comes to writing.

So, he actually turns to Assyria, the great power over with the Euphrates River. Steve corrected me, said Nineveh wasn't the capital at that time. Somewhere else was.

[10:40] But anyway, that's where he turned for help. And let's put in the other people here. So, Ahaz and his people.

And let's try and make them quiver with fear. I'm not quite sure how to do that. We'll put some little marks like this.

This is what Tintin used to have. Okay, so that's one group of people. And what they're told to do is, quite specifically, verse 4, be careful, keep calm, don't be afraid, don't lose heart, because of, and he explains the reasons why.

And it's brought again in verse 9, if you don't stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. Just to re-emphasize that, this is the principle of life for the people of God.

If you don't have that, you don't have anything. Let's look at this other group, and they're in chapter 8, verse 18.

[12:00] And they sort of stand as a, as a, as a contrast to Ahaz and the people whose hearts tremble with fear.

So this is 8, 18. Who shall we, who shall I try and draw in this group? Yeah, let's put Mrs. Isaiah. And let's put the children. Of course, it's me and the children that you have given me. Let's. I think there's a number of them, because I think this is the same group as is described in verse 16. Bind up the testimony, seal up the law among my disciples. So whether this is family group plus, you know, Olivet students who happen to be staying with you, or theological students who happen to be on placement or something like that.

There seem to be a little community. And please could somebody tell me, well, tell me something about the children. So what are the names of the children?

[13:35] Shier Zashub, which means a remnant will return.

The Shub word is the turn word. If you find Shub, it usually is turn. So a remnant will return, double-edged name. The people will be taken into exile.

That's bad. Some of them will return. That's good. And this one is, no, what is it? Maher Shalal Hashbaz. Quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil.

And these names are significant, as it says in 8:18, here am I and the children the Lord has given me.

We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty who dwells in Zion. So every time the children say, yes, I'm here in class at school, their name is read out and it says something.

[14:49] Every time, I don't know, they're photographed for the Jerusalem Argus. It says prophet Isaiah and children and names them.

Every time it says something, sort of embedded into the social fabric to say, this is what God is saying about this situation.

And the child that we, is rather enigmatic. So I've put him in this group, but whether he really belongs in here is another question.

So Emmanuel, and the meaning of his name is God with us. So, I was actually having a conversation with my son about this at tea time, which was rather encouraging.

Was that meant to be fulfilled at the time of writing? Or is it something that's only fulfilled a long way off?

[16:00] Or is it one of these things that has partial fulfillments and future fulfillments? I think we can afford to say it is not clear in the text.

The text, I think, is allowed to set up questions and not answer them. It sets up a question. So Ahaz himself is going to have a child called Hezekiah and he's going to come up later.

Is he going to be the one of whom we can say the government will be upon his shoulders and he will reign forever? It's a good question to ask. The answer turns out to be no.

But Emmanuel, who has got royalty attached to him, seems to be a key figure in this whole thinking, isn't he?

Because it's Emmanuel's land. God is with us. Propose your plan, it will not stand. chapter 8, verse 10, because Emmanuel, and then we get into chapter 9, which we didn't read this evening, but unto us a son is born, unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, the government will be upon his shoulders.

[17:24] He will sit on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness, those two key things that have always been lacking.

Justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. So here are the, here are the, here I am and the children you have given me.

Now let's pause for a minute. It's actually quite rich, but I'm just thinking how to, how to draw out the richness of this.

New Testament connections. Can you think of any places where the New Testament draws upon this and says, that, or this, is that?

Any New Testament references that come to mind? Emmanuel, Emmanuel, the Gospels.

[18:29] Yes. Matthew, I think, would say that the birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of this. Yeah, shall we look at it? Matthew must be there somewhere.

Matthew 1, verse 22.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

So that thought that God is with us is amplified from just saying God is on our side to God is with us in flesh.

That's who Emmanuel is. That's a wonderful, rich fulfillment there. Thank you very much. Any other New Testament references that come to mind? It is.

[19:36] Thank you very much. Yeah, that I would guess is Matthew as well. Anybody find that?

Matthew. Thank you very much. Matthew 4, verse 13 and 14. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah.

Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, the way to the sea along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people living in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.

And there's Jesus, the preacher, walking along by the sea of Galilee, calling fishermen to follow him and he says, this is the fulfillment of that ancient prophecy.

This is the king who was promised. This is the Emmanuel who, about, who, the whole kingdom thing, it all hinges on him.

[20:53] It's a wonderful insight for Matthew to bring, isn't it? Anything else? Yes, yes, the, the, the preaching, the kingdom of, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God is near.

Yeah, yeah, that, that's the, that's the preaching, that's the declaration that comes, it comes with John the Baptist and it comes with Jesus. That's chapter 4, verse 17, Matthew.

From that time on, Jesus began to preach, repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. And if you can imagine, putting, if you put that into it, all its context, that we have these really powerful prophecies of the kingdom and it's, it's seen as relevant to Ahaz as he wobbles, wondering whether God is able to look after his kingdom or not.

And when we think of it in terms of politics and power and armies and invasions and things and Jesus preaches the kingdom is near.

All these things that have been prophesied are, are, are here and you think, well where is it? What am I looking for? And, and there's Jesus and he's telling people parables of the kingdom and he's telling them the kingdom of heaven is like, and you expect him to say an army, a king that went out for battle and he says the kingdom of heaven is like a farmer sowing seed.

[22:38] Wow. And the seed falls onto a different ground. It's a very sort of radical take on the kingdom and Jesus comes and preaches this.

Thank you very much. Is there, is there another one? There's the, well I'm going to take the Hebrews one because this is, this is, I think this expression is left field, isn't it?

You wouldn't expect this one to be quoted. We're, we're going for Hebrews and we're in chapter two and this is the part of Hebrews where he is defending, if you like, or asserting the humanness of the saviour.

So Hebrews two verse five, it is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come about which we're speaking.

So I guess his, his hearers are probably thinking this gospel about Jesus is, is an inferior thing. It's rather, you know, earthbound.

[23:56] We would like something more spiritual, something perhaps to do with angels and he says that misses the point. the saviour was made human because we're human and it's humans that need rescuing and so Jesus was made human.

So in verse, Hebrews two, 10 he says, in bringing many sons to glory it was fitting that God for whom and through whom everything exists should make the author of their salvation perfect

through suffering.

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same something, the same family and Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, I will declare your name to my brothers in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises which is a quote from one of the Psalms and again, I will put my trust in him and again he says, here am I and the children God has given me.

Since the children have flesh and blood he too shared in their humanity. so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death.

And verse 16, it is not angels he helps but Abraham's descendants. So his point being that the saviour, that was Hebrews two around and about verse 16, is saying there is something glorious about the saviour in that he is one of us.

[25:33] He's family with us. And the quote that the writer of the Hebrews chooses to spell this out is from Isaiah.

Here I am and the children God has given me. So I think that's a little bit beyond me to explain the relevance of that but I can point out the I will put my trust in him bit which is correct me if I'm wrong isn't that the verse before?

Is it the verse before? Yes it is. I will put my trust in him. So if we were to say what characterises this group we would say that they are family that they are a family of faith which is rather interesting because that's the theme of this chapter isn't it?

And we would also say they are a family who are sort of founded upon the law and the testimony. That's what characterises them and I think the writer of the Hebrews is saying at least that's where Jesus is at. He is so part of us that we form community with him we are family with him we are a family marked by faith and we are a family which holds on to the word.

[27:33] Does that make sense? Shall I say that again? In Isaiah chapter 8 verse 16 bind up the testimony seal up the law among my disciples so that's the testimony the word thing is an important feature which contrasts them with the other group the non-believing group and the law and the testimony is then in verse chapter 8 verse 20 to the law and the testimony if they don't speak according to this word they have no light so it's a key decisive thing do they trust the words of God they have the words of God and look to the words of God and then it's specific that verse 17 they wait for the Lord and put their trust in him they're a family of faith right I'm sure I had a very good idea as to go where next but it's completely escaped me so we'll stop there does anybody like to offer any observations

I think I just interrupted you as you were about to say something yeah well said yes yes yes thank you that's well said because these these two are opposites aren't they fear and faith thank you any other observations thank you very much yes it's it's a family given by

God yes so it's a family that God's made in some sense yeah thank you very much for that thank you that's that's right there's a a certain degree of cloudiness about him his family his birth and yet he is the crucial point of all all the logic of it isn't it because it's your land God with us is the key thought to anchor everything yeah this is where I

I have to confess my limitations because I haven't I haven't I haven't got that in the sense I haven't I haven't got I haven't understood it the interesting thing to me is that Isaiah can say I and the family if I put kids because it's easier to write that and then the writer to the Hebrews can say that the I is Jesus so there's a likeness between Isaiah and his group and Jesus and his church so that I would yeah there's a likeness somewhere there thank you thank you for that Ray yes appreciate that yes right let's go back to those things yes carry on why are you confused it's always helpful to know that people are confused yeah I think that's a fair

I think we're all confused because he is talking in this bit about Emmanuel so the Emmanuel is a child that's coming and he's a key child because is he and his family well he's very like Mahershal Al-Hashbaz in that Mahershal Al-Hashbaz it's said in verse four before the boy knows how to something the two kings will be gone and of Emmanuel it says it says verse 16 before the boy knows enough to something the two kings will be the land of the two kings will be laid waste so there's some similarities but if we were to say well does this mean they're the same person the answer no there's more to

[33:50] Emmanuel than there is to just the ordinary child of Isaiah and then we might say well is this Emmanuel prophecy going to be fulfilled in Ahaz's son the next son of David so we might legitimately read on through and say well is this the one and then we find in due course he isn't so we're still looking for a fulfillment and the wonderful thing is that Matthew says when Jesus was born this is the fulfillment does that make any clearer yeah the way the Old Testament promises work you are looking for the fulfillment of them but you're constantly disappointed until

Jesus comes so one example would be Abraham and Isaac where he's told to slaughter Isaac as a burnt offering and you think right here we are we've got the son who is slain as an offering sin is going to be dealt with this will be the last chapter in the Bible but just as it's all going to happen oh stop don't kill Isaac he's not the one slaughter a ram instead which is a disappointment because we're going back to animal sacrifices and it's only when we get to the cross when the beloved son is put on the cross and the anger of God comes and you wait for a voice from heaven to say no don't kill him but no voice comes and he is the one who fulfills all of that yeah yeah

I think I think whatever insofar as I've come to a conclusion to think of this through whatever solution you propose short of it being Jesus is always unsatisfactory whatever intermediate fulfillment you have you think yeah that's good but not good enough yeah well I hope I haven't confused everybody perhaps I have don't know would you be happy to break up into groups of four or five and some Thank you.