

16.01.2021 WHEN YOUR WORLD IS FALLING APART

“If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established” Isaiah 7:9.

Our world can fall apart for two reasons:

1. The consequence of unfaithfulness to God... *Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord... 2 Chronicles 28:20.*
2. When God allows the enemy Satan, to trouble God’s faithful people (e.g. Job), so that they may grow in grace.

This week we study the life of an unfaithful king. We see the extent of God’s grace offered to a rebellious leader of Judah, King Ahaz.

Ahaz was one of the wickedest kings of Judah. Unlike his grandfather Uzziah and his father Jotham, he refused to follow God. He himself was an idolater who sacrificed his children through the fire and led the people of the kingdom of Judah into gross idolatry.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made moulded images for the Baals. He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree. 2 Chronicles 28:1-4

From the time of Moses, God had warned His people that there were consequences if they sinned. Last week, we saw the message God sent to Judah through Isaiah; a message of judgment because of their idolatry and rebellion.

Danger from the North: Isaiah 7:1-9

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it. And 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. Isaiah 7:1, 2

Ahaz’s rebellion had severe consequences. But, despite his wilful rebellion and idolatry, God sent a message to Ahaz that He would protect Judah from the Israel/Syria alliance. The northern kingdom of Israel made an alliance with heathen Syria to take Judah captive and put in a ruler of their choosing. Ahaz did not turn from his wicked ways and so Israel/Syria, Edom and the Philistines had successful campaigns against him (see 2 Chronicles 28:5-15).

Attempted Interception: Isaiah 7:3-9

Then the Lord said to Isaiah, “Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub (‘A Remnant shall Return’) your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller’s Field, and say to him: ‘Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted, for these two tails of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. Isaiah 7:3, 4

The grace of God was extended to this wicked king. God sent Isaiah with a message to Ahaz. Isaiah told him to trust God and not make an alliance with Assyria since God would protect him (Isaiah 7:1-9).

With this message came 2 messages. 1) a message of warning and 2) a symbolic message of God’s covenant faithfulness in the person of Isaiah’s son.

1. A message of warning... *“If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” Isaiah 7:9*

God's grace is available to all, because He loves all. He is merciful to the just and the unjust. His Spirit pleads with all mankind to accept the grace of God and turn from their wicked ways. But because God is a just God, He cannot excuse wilful unbelief, which He calls sin. If men and women persist in rejecting God, they will reap the consequences. In Isaiah 6:9-13, the consequences were clearly laid out.

"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword". For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 1:19, 20

God's message to Ahaz was that He would be faithful to His promise that Jerusalem would not be destroyed. Then came the challenge to Ahaz: God has promised, now the king of Judah must believe. If he will not believe, it will not affect the outcome of the attack against Jerusalem. God has already decreed that their attack would not succeed. But it would affect the course of Ahaz's life and his reign as king ('surely you shall not be established').

2. Isaiah's son, Shear-Jashub

God wanted Ahaz to know that because of the kind of ungodly trust he put in the king of Assyria, Judah would eventually be taken into captivity, and only a remnant would return.

The name means *'a remnant shall return'*. It is a promise of salvation and life for the faithful beyond the imminent doom of the unfaithful. Judah may suffer, but a remnant will remain. It is the gracious promise of our covenant-keeping God, the God who remains faithful to us in our unfaithfulness.

And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God. Isaiah 10:20-22

'In every age, for the sake of those who have remained true, as well as because of His infinite love for the erring, God has borne long with the rebellious, and has urged them to forsake their course of evil and return to Him. "Precept upon precept; line upon line, here a little, and there a little," through men of His appointment, He has taught transgressors' the way of righteousness. Isaiah 28:10.

And thus it was during the reign of Ahaz. Invitation upon invitation was sent to erring Israel to return to their allegiance to Jehovah.' *Prophets and Kings: Ahaz. p 325*

Another Chance: Isaiah 7:10-12

Moreover the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!"

The omnipotent God of the universe reaches out to this rebellious king with a gracious, generous offer. **God offers to provide a sign to give Ahaz a basis for belief.** Ahaz could ask for any sign he wanted; it could be as vast as heavens above or the depths below (nothing is outside God's authority). And Ahaz refuses to ask.

What an outstanding example of false humility and false piety!

Ahaz sounds very spiritual "I will not test the Lord." But his reason was very unspiritual. Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, because when God fulfilled the sign, he would be "**obligated**" to believe. He had already decided to seek the help of heathen nations.

For Reflection:

How often we are like Ahaz. God tells us to 'prove (test) Him now' and we refuse to. He tells us to 'Ask and we shall receive' and we do not.

Why do we refuse to accept God's gracious offers?

Is it because we refuse to believe that He will do what He says?

Do we doubt Him?

Or are we afraid that the best gift God has to offer us, will take us down paths that we do not want to travel? He has promised that His Spirit will lead us in the paths of righteousness. Do we still secretly long for the 'fleshpots of the world'? Are we still planning to get the help of the 'world' to help us achieve our earthly goals of wealth, education, position etc. instead of waiting upon God and seeking His will?

Sign of a Son: Isaiah 7:13, 14

Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you 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.

Here is Spurgeon's comment on Ahaz's unbelief... "Did I not hear someone say, 'Ah, sir, I have been trying to believe for years.' Terrible words! They make the case still worse. Imagine that after I had made a statement, a man should declare that he did not believe me, in fact, he could not believe me though he would like to do so. I should feel aggrieved certainly; but it would make matters worse if he added, 'In fact I have been for years trying to believe you, and I cannot do it.' What does he mean by that? What can he mean but that I am so incorrigibly false, and such a confirmed liar, that though he would like to give me some credit, he really cannot do it? With all the effort he can make in my favour, he finds it quite beyond his power to believe me? Now, a man who says, 'I have been trying to believe in God,' in reality says just that with regard to the Most High."

Ahaz refused a sign. Nevertheless, God Himself ('by Myself I have sworn...') provided the House of David with a sign that indeed encompassed the heavens, the earth and the depths, because the sign was His well-beloved Son, the second person of the Godhead. In sending His Son to earth, God emptied the treasure house of heaven for sinful, idolatrous and rebellious mankind. Every blessing we receive on earth, whether it is a loaf of bread, a spring of water or salvation full and free, is 'stamped with the cross of Christ'. Behold the exceeding generosity of God in the gift of His son, Immanuel.

The New Testament is very clear as to who this Son is... *'Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us' Matthew 1:22, 23.*

God with Us

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel (God with us)...

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Galatians 4:4-7

"In what sense then, is Christ GOD WITH US? Jesus is called Immanuel, or *God with us*, in His *incarnation*; *God with us*, by the influences of His *Holy Spirit*, in the *holy sacrament* (communion), in the *preaching* of His word, in *private prayer*. And *God with us*, through every *action* of our life, that we begin, continue, and end in His name. He is *God with us*, to *comfort*, *enlighten*, *protect*, and *defend* us, in every time of *temptation* and *trial*, in the hour of *death*, in the Day of Judgment; and *God with us* and *in us*, and we *with* and *in* Him, to all eternity." *Adam Clarke.*

Through the eternal ages Christ is linked with us. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfil His word. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the

government shall be upon His shoulder." God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the "Son of man" who shares the throne of the universe. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, "God with us." *Desire of Ages: Ch. 1*

Conclusion:

Does it seem like your world is falling apart?

Ask God to reveal to you the reason. Is it because of personal unfaithfulness to God? Is it the work of the Enemy, trying to deceive you into doubting God's goodness?

'Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified (do not stand the test). But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.' 2 Corinthians 13: 5, 6

Once we have asked God to search our hearts and reveal to us any secret sins of unbelief and rebellion, if we repent and return to Him, He will forgive us and heal us. Then, whatever, the circumstances, because we have put our trust in the Lord, we will not be moved.

And in that day you will say: "O Lord, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid. 'For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.' " Isaiah 12:1, 2
