

Sermon: Darkness & Light

Text: Isaiah 7-10

Introduction:

King Uzziah of Judah died in the year 740BC—after reigning as the king for over fifty years. They were very prosperous years for the nation; however, the spiritual condition was rotting from the inside out. People went through the motions of worshipping God, but there was no real passion or repentance. A young man in his twenties named Isaiah was called by God to speak to the nation in the very same year that Uzziah died (Isaiah 6). His job was not going to be easy. But God was not going to be left without a voice. The Lord continued to give people the opportunity to hear The Truth (God's ways) in the midst of the many lies that were prevalent in the culture (much like today!).

Uzziah's son, Jotham, reigned for sixteen years (747-731BC – note: *he began to reign seven years before Uzziah actually died because Uzziah had leprosy and was unable to leave the palace*). Jotham's son, Ahaz, also reigned for sixteen years (731-715BC). Neither of these men honored God—and as a result Judah was increasingly threatened by the powerful nation of Assyria (think Iran). As things played out, King Ahaz of Judah was presented with a choice. The northern kingdom of Israel, led by King Pekah, had formed an alliance with the nation of Syria (same as today) led by King Rezin in hopes of standing up to the massive kingdom of Assyria (Iran). Pekah (Israel—also called Ephraim) and Rezin (Syria—also called Aram) wanted Ahaz to join their alliance against Assyria. This would NOT have been a good decision, because it was obvious that Assyria was just too powerful. However, since Ahaz rejected Pekah and Rezin's offer—they joined together to attack and destroy Judah. [*You might need to read this paragraph a couple of times to really follow the logic...but it's good to understand this because it helps unlock what Isaiah says in chapters 7-10.*]

What happened next is found in Isaiah 7 and 2 Chronicles 28. The kings of Syria and Israel went to Jerusalem to wage war, but the kings didn't succeed (God prevented it). Though they didn't completely conquer Judah, they still devastated the country. Israel killed 120,000 men, plundered most of Judah, and took 200,000 captives. (See 2 Chronicles 28:6,8.) In the midst of all of this, King Ahaz entered into an alliance with the king of Assyria (Iran)—a huge mistake!!!

Isaiah 7 opens with the armies of Israel and Syria approaching Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Ahaz was terrified. Isaiah and his son, Shear-jashub, gave Ahaz a message from God. "Calm down and be quiet," Isaiah told Ahaz. "These kings are planning to conquer you, but God says this will not happen." God would be Ahaz's ally. All He asked of Ahaz was to trust Him. In other words—STOP trusting all of these other nations! Trust that God will rescue you!

God would give Ahaz a sign: "The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel." Immanuel means "God with us." If God was with Ahaz, what did Ahaz have to fear? Isaiah's prophecy was partially fulfilled immediately with the birth of Isaiah's son. (See Isaiah 8:1-4.) Judah would escape Assyrian captivity because God was with them. Isaiah's prophecy was ultimately fulfilled, though, through Jesus. (Matthew 1:23) Jesus is God with us. He was born of a virgin. He is our faithful ally at all times—protecting, defending, and comforting those who trust in Him. Hope has a name—and that name is Jesus!!!

Examination:

- Read **Isaiah 7**
 - What was King Ahaz's response when he learned that the king of Israel (Pekah) had joined forces with Syria (King Rezin) to attack Jerusalem? (v. 2)
 - God sent Isaiah to speak with King Ahaz—and it's interesting that God tells him to take his son with him. The reason seems to center around the son's name—which is "Shear-jashub" (I know...definitely an odd name). The son's name was very symbolic, as it meant "A remnant shall return". Why do you think God had Isaiah give this name to his son, and what do you think this meant to King Ahaz when he heard it?
 - What was Isaiah's instruction to King Ahaz—what message did he have for him? (v. 4)
 - Verses 7-9 foretell the fate of the northern kingdom of Israel (also known as Ephraim...because the people of the tribe of Ephraim were the most numerous of all of the tribes of Israel). What is that fate? What is Ahaz specifically called to do in verse 9?
 - What does God instruct Ahaz to do in verse 10? Does he do it? What are some possible reasons why people refuse to ask God for a sign or clear direction? Do some folks simply NOT want to hear what God can do? Why?
 - Even though Ahaz refuses to ask God for a sign that God will indeed rescue and deliver Judah—God still gives him a sign. What is that sign in verse 14?
 - Wow...seemingly out of nowhere—we find this incredibly specific prophecy that points to something that God will do. Some bible experts believe that this sign was pointing to a second son that Isaiah and his wife would have that we read about in chapter 8. However—there is an aspect of this prophecy that could ONLY be seen as describing the birth of Jesus. What would that be?
 - What is it about verses 15-17 that indicate that this sign did find some measure of fulfillment in the near-term?
 - What two super-powers (large kingdoms) are going to move into Judah to oppress and terrorize?

- Read **Isaiah 9:1-7**
 - This prophecy builds on the earlier prophecy in Isaiah 7:14—giving much more information regarding the son, born of a virgin, who will be called Immanuel. It begins by indicating something very special coming out of the region of Galilee. What do you think this is referring to?
 - Take some time to discuss the aspects of this "son" who is born (vv. 6-7).
 - How significant is it that Isaiah gives us this much detail regarding the birth of Jesus more than 700 years before He was even born? Does this build your faith? SHOULD this build your faith?

Application:

In the face of the pandemic that we continue to deal with—and the discouraging news that we constantly hear—take time right now to affirm your faith in Jesus. Be still and don't be afraid.