

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part XVI. Personally Offsetting Spiritual Darkness By Looking To Scripture Alone (Isaiah 8:19-22)

I. Introduction

- A. There is a constant temptation for Christians to get occupied with a variety of sources that claim to offer spiritual insight and fulfillment aside from the believer's exposure to the written, canonical Scripture.
- B. This has long been a challenge for God's people, one that Judah faced in Isaiah's era, and God's directive in Isaiah 8:19-22 is an invaluable guide to exposing false sources versus the true guide for spiritual fulfillment:

II. Personally Offsetting Spiritual Darkness By Looking To Scripture Alone, Isaiah 8:19-22.

- A. God had told Isaiah in Isaiah 8:11-16 to avoid the fear the people of Judah had about the Aram-Israel alliance that threatened to invade their land and replace their king Ahaz by another puppet king by revering and thus trusting in the Lord, and Isaiah had appropriately applied that message in Isaiah 8:17-18 with Isaiah 7:1-6.
- B. However, since the people of Judah had chosen not to trust in God, they had to offset their fear some other way, so they advised believers like Isaiah to "consult the spiritualistic media . . . spirits and . . . the familiar spirits, which chirp and which mutter," Isaiah 8:19; E. J. Young, The Book Of Isaiah, 1974, v. I, p. 318, 309.
- C. The Lord countered this advice by the faithless, asking, "(S)hould not a people seek unto its god? [On behalf of] the living [(why) should they consult] the dead?" (Isa. 8:19; Ibid., p. 309; Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Isa. 8:19) The people of Judah were not only acting unlike even the pagan Gentiles who at least consulted their pagan gods in times of fear in that Judah's people had failed to consult their true Lord, the men of Judah were also seeking advice by contacting the deceased by way of spirit mediums!
- D. God then advised the right route for believers like Isaiah to take in gaining fulfilling insight in Isaiah 8:20:
 - 1. The phrase, "To the law and to the testimony" referred to one's looking to God's canonical Scriptures for insight (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Isaiah 8:20), "the only absolute and trustworthy standard" of revelation (Ibid.).
 - 2. God thus said that if the people of Judah did not advise, "To the law and to the testimony," akin to our saying of "Let's get back to the Bible!" but instead turned to other sources for spiritual insight, there was "no dawn to them" (Ibid., Young, p. 309).
 - 3. Since the first rays of dawn provide hope for greater light with the rising of the sun, God was indicating that those who are turning to any other source besides His canonical Scriptures for insight did not have even a hope of getting true insight like the dawn offered hope of the sun's coming fuller light. Rather, such folk were hopelessly destined to remain in complete spiritual darkness!
- E. To explain this claim that such people walked in great darkness, God continued in Isaiah 8:21-22, describing what would occur to Judah's faithless people if they kept on seeking spiritual guidance apart from God's authoritative, canonical Scriptures (as follows):
 - 1. First, they would pass through the land of Israel "distressed and hungry" lacking God's agricultural supply for turning from Him as the Mosaic Law had warned, Isa. 8:21a; Deut. 28:15-20; Ibid., Young, p. 320-321.
 - 2. When they became hungry, the people would get angry, and express it "upward" to those over them, i.e., cursing their king Ahaz who was unable to help and God for withholding blessing, Isa. 8:21b; Ibid., p. 321.
 - 3. Getting no help from looking to those over them, the people would frantically look for help even to those below them (Isaiah 8:22a), and the antonymical pair "upward" and "to the earth" implies everything in between, meaning that "(n)o matter where the wicked looks, he finds no hope" of fulfilling insight, Ibid.
 - 4. Indeed, everywhere those in darkness would then turn, they would only find "distress and darkness, dimness of anguish, and [be] thrust out unto darkness," Isaiah 8:22b; Ibid., p. 309. Edward J. Young sums: "Sinners think that they are in the light and that they possess freedom, independence, truth, an unprejudiced mind; actually, they walk in darkness and are the slaves of gloom, subject to falsehood and prejudiced in favor of evil," Ibid., p. 322.

Lesson: *When Judah's faithless people advised that believers in Judah's true God turn to spirit mediums for guidance, God countered, asking why anyone would turn to deceased spirits instead of to their own God as even the pagans did in distress, and added that unless one heeded Scripture, he walked in hopelessly deep darkness.*

Application: *May we resist the lure or advice to turn to any source besides canonical Scripture for insight to avoid winding up in total, hopeless, gloomy spiritual darkness, but may we stay focused on canonical Scripture instead.*