

Isaiah Lesson 08

Isaiah Chapter 8

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Introduction: Last week in chapter 7, the prophecy moved closer in time as it relates to Judah. At the end of the chapter, the prophecy then shifted back to the future invasion of Judah by the Assyrians.

This chapter contains a confirmation of the sudden destruction of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel by another sign—a threatening to those that gloried in the kings of those nations with—an invasion of their land by the Assyrians. The chapter concludes with further warnings to Israel and Judah.

I. The Coming Assyrian Invasion

Isa 8:1 Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Mahershalalhashbaz.

Isa 8:2 And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.

Isa 8:3 And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz.

Isa 8:4 For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.

Isaiah begins by recording the unusual events surrounding the conception of another son. “Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man’s pen concerning Mahershalalhashbaz.” The great roll mentioned was a writing tablet in the form of a scroll. The fact that it was great or large indicates that much would be written therein.

The subject of this record would be about Mahershalalhashbaz. That name is untranslated but essentially means ‘swift is booty, speedy is prey.’ Others have considered it to mean, ‘haste ye, haste ye to the spoil.’ Still others render the word, ‘hasten to seize the prey, and to take away the spoil.’ The parabolic sense from the greater context is how that the Assyrians would hasten to the spoil of Damascus and Samaria.

This strange name of Isaiah's next son was a prophecy in itself of the impending doom of the northern kingdom as well as of Syria. These were the two nations of which Ahaz, king of Judah, was worried about in chapter 7. The witnesses of what was to be written are noted here as Uriah the priest and a man named Zechariah. Isaiah writes the record of his son. The significance of this record is noted in what the Lord instructed him to do. "Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria."

This new son of Isaiah was a parable of what was about to happen to the northern kingdom. To hasten to seize and to take away the spoil. That is exactly what the Assyrians were about to do to both Syria and Israel (the northern kingdom). Before Isaiah's new son would be old enough to say "my father and my mother," the Assyrians captured Damascus and became overlords of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. It should be noted that Assyria first imposed themselves upon Samaria before its deportation some years later. That is what is in view here. See II Kings 16:9-17:5.

Isa 8:5 The LORD spake also unto me again, saying,

Isa 8:6 Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;

Isa 8:7 Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks:

Isa 8:8 And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

Isaiah made recorded of what the Lord said to him earlier. Shiloah is what in the New Testament is called Siloam. This was a pool on the southeast side of ancient Jerusalem. God's charge against Judah was that they had rejected the true worship of Jehovah God and sought after the idolatry of northern kingdom (Remaliah's son) and that of Syria (Rezin) instead.

God used the analogy of a powerful river to describe how the Assyrians would come down upon Judah. The flood of the Assyrians would reach to the neck of Judah. Implied is that Judah would not be destroyed by the Assyrians, but they would be in deep water. They were barely able to keep their heads above water, as it were.

The invasion of Assyria into Judah would extend across the entire kingdom, from border to border. This was accomplished by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, in Hezekiah's time. See II Kings 18:13.

2Ki 18:13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

Here, Judah is called Immanuel. This is not to be confused with the prophecy in 7:14. Recall that Immanuel means 'God with us.' Judah was the seat of the Temple and its holy of holies was where the Shekinah presence of God dwelt. With pointed irony, the prophet reminds Judah that this had been their privilege. God had been with them. But now they were on the brink of complete departure from their God.

Isa 8:9 Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

Isa 8:10 Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.

Isaiah's focus now shifts from Judah to her adversaries. The people initially spoken of likely is that of Israel (the northern kingdom) and Syria, its confederate. They would soon be broken in judgment. The "far countries" spoken of likely refers to Assyria. Though they would be used by God to chasten and even deport the northern kingdom, their day was soon coming as well. With divinely inspired sarcasm, the prophet told these nations, far from God, to go ahead and confer amongst themselves and make plans for war but their plans would come to nothing. God was with Judah to protect them at this point. This is clear because of the name Immanuel—God with us.

II. Fear God, Wait for the Lord

Isa 8:11 For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

Isa 8:12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

Isaiah confessed how that the Lord had very clearly impressed upon him that he should have nothing to do with the confederacy between the northern kingdom of

Israel and Syria. He announced to Judah to fear not the confederation of Samaria and Damascus (Israel and Syria) which was threatening them.

Isa 8:13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

Isa 8:14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Isa 8:15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

Rather than fearing the confederacy threatening them, Isaiah admonished Judah to fear Jehovah God and Him alone. If Judah would return to their God, He would be a sanctuary for them. If Judah would not return to their God, making Him their fear and sanctuary, He would become a stumbling block to both houses of Israel— Judah and the northern kingdom. Furthermore, God would become a trap (“a gin”) and a snare for the “inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

Because the testimony of Jehovah God was at Jerusalem to the degree that they were known as having the presence of God with them, they would surely face God’s wrath unless they returned to Him. Truly, to whom much is given, much is required.

Many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. That certainly would happen to both Israel and Judah in the coming captivities. The after effect continues to this day as Israel has been blinded to the gospel.

Isa 8:16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

Isa 8:17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

The prophet now proceeds to the final thought of this section—the darkness in the land because of they ignored the Word of God. Only the faithful among God’s disciples would understand the Law and the testimony, the Word of God. The thought parallels the curse placed upon Israel found in Isaiah 6:9-10. Israel would be blinded spiritually. However, those who were true believers and followers of God’s Word would still have light. This was evident in the centuries to follow.

Though the main part of Israel wandered about in spiritual darkness, there was always a small remnant of godly men and women who remained true to their

God. These would include, for example, men and women such as Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, extending down to Mary and Joseph, Zacharias and Elizabeth, and Simeon and Anna. In recognition of that promise, Isaiah noted, “And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.” Though God would hide His face from the mainstream of Israel, a godly man such as Isaiah would still wait upon Him and look for Him.

III. For Signs and Wonders

Isa 8:18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

Isa 8:19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

Isa 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Before moving on to the final part of this section, the prophet makes clear what has already been noted in the preceding verses. Isaiah was fully aware that he was a prophet of God to Israel. Moreover, he knew that even his sons (Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hashbaz) were given as miraculous signs to Judah and Israel. See Isaiah 6:3-16 and 8:1-4.

Notice how that Jehovah God, the Lord of hosts, dwelt still in mount Zion. (Mount Zion refers to Jerusalem and specifically to the Temple there). Judah still had the distinction of being known as ‘God with us’—Immanuel. Isaiah was cognizant that both he and his family were for signs and wonders to rebellious Israel.

In verse 19, the prophet warns Israel and Judah concerning those that would lead them further astray. The practice of the occult was prevalent in both Kingdoms. During the reigns of such wicked kings as Ahaz in Judah and the unbroken succession of apostate kings in the northern kingdom, the pagan practices of astrology, necromancy, and other forms of the occult prevailed across both houses of Israel.

Isaiah cried out that rather than seek to the incantations (peeping and muttering) of the wizards of the dark arts, “should not a people seek unto their God?” Should they not seek to the Living One rather than to the spirits of the dead through seances. Occultism had overtaken the worship of Jehovah in both Judah and Israel. Therefore, the prophet warned “To the law and to the

testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. “

Rather than seek the spiritual wickedness of the world about them, God’s people were enjoined to return to the Word of God— “To the law and to the testimony.” If one spoke other than from the truth and directives found therein, it was “because there is no light in them.” Spiritual darkness prevailed across Israel and Judah because they had neglected the Word of God. Isaiah warned that any who did not speak according to the Book revealed the spiritual darkness in them. The injunction to seek to the law and testimony remains to this day.

Isa 8:21 And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.

Isa 8:22 And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.

With spiritual darkness prevailing across Judah and Israel, the prophet warned of the dark days ahead. The day was coming when the house of Jacob would pass through their land “hardly bestead and hungry.” The thought is how they would pass through their land hard-pressed and hungry. They would be utterly frustrated (“fret themselves”) and even “curse their king and their God.” In desperation, they would finally look up to heaven, “but thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron” (Deuteronomy 28:23).

As God’s judgment settled over both houses of Israel, even the very earth would only bring forth trouble and dark days. The final thought of them being driven to darkness may refer to despair. The dark days of judgment upon the house of Israel were about to fall. They continue to this day and will not be lifted until Israel in repentance turns to her God and His Messiah.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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