



Isaiah 8:1-15

A Son Becomes a Sign ~ A Flood or a Peaceful Stream ~ A Snare or a Sanctuary

This section is closely related to the previous chapter. In fact, it is the continuation of the historical events in chapter 7, the deliverance from the Aram-Israel alliance and the subsequent Assyrian invasion that would eventually extend to Judah. The last chapter included several “negatives”—Ahaz’s rejection of God’s Word through Isaiah, Ahaz’s continued unbelief, and the difficult times that would come to Judah. This section focuses on a somewhat positive note: **the nation would be delivered and this deliverance would picture another Deliverer, who will bring an even greater deliverance.**

Isaiah had already prophesied of the fall of the Aram-Israel alliance (7:4-17). As in chapter 7, this prediction also involves the birth of a baby, this time to Isaiah and his wife, a prophetess. Some have suggested that this birth fulfilled the prediction in 7:14. However, the two accounts have several differences. The child in 8:1-4 was not named Immanuel (cf. 7:14). The child in 8:1-4 was born to Isaiah’s wife. She was not a virgin because Isaiah already had at least one child (7:3), unless the wife in 8:3 refers to a second wife of Isaiah. This, however, seems unlikely. The last section describes the fall-out from God’s people wrestling with fear.

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 7:1 Then the LORD said to me, “Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, ‘Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz.’² And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me.”</p> <p>³ And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz; ⁴ for before the boy knows how to cry ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.</p>	<p>a 8:1 See also Hab. 2:2.</p> <p>b 8:1 Or “in the form of a man” or “with an ordinary stylus.” God can use what is written by man to touch man. Weak, ordinary, frail man has the grace to write and speak for God. It was with the hand of a man that God wrote on the wall for Belshazzar and all his guests to see. See Dan. 5.</p> <p>c 8:1 This is the Hebrew name of Isaiah’s soon-to-be-born son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.</p> <p>d 8:2 See 2 Kings 16:10. Uriah means “Yahweh is my flame of light.”</p> <p>e 8:2 The prophetic act of Isaiah needed to be witnessed by men of stature so that when the fulfillment of the demise of the northern kingdom came to pass it would be impossible to deny Isaiah’s prophetic message. Perhaps this scroll was unfurled like a banner outside Isaiah’s house or placed over an entrance into the temple area. It would have been publicized in some visible fashion. As the people would pass by this sign, they would wonder what it meant. This was a vivid way to make known the prophecy.</p> <p>f 8:3 Isaiah and his wife were a prophetic duo. Isaiah spoke the word of the Lord, then the prophetess “gave birth” to it. She would literally give birth to the word of God! At the birth of their son, God spoke again and told them the symbolic name of the child, the same message Isaiah had received earlier and had engraved for all to see. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz was a walking sign; a son became a sign.</p>	<p>Isaiah 8:1 “The Lord Yahweh said to me, “Take a large tablet a and engrave upon it these words using the stylus of a man: b Quickly—to the Plunder! Hurry—to the Loot! c ² Then summon two reliable men, Uriah the priest d and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah, to act as witnesses.”e</p> <p>³ Then I slept with my wife, the prophetess; f she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Then the Lord Yahweh told me, “You will name him Quickly—to the Plunder! Hurry—to the Loot! ⁴ For before the boy knows how to say ‘my father’ or ‘my mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and Samaria will be plundered and carried away by the king of Assyria!”</p>

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<p>⁵ The LORD spoke to me again: ⁶ “Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, ⁷ therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, ⁸ and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.”</p> <p>⁹ Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered; give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered.</p> <p>¹⁰ Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.</p> <p>¹¹ For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: ¹² “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. ¹³ But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. ¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”</p>	<p>g 8:6 Or “Shiloah.” Although some see this as a possible reference to one of the streams of the Gihon Spring, it is more likely a metaphor for the loving care, presence, and blessing of the Lord that flowed to them via David’s monarchy. The rejected blessing contrasts with the overflowing flood of Euphrates (Assyria) that is about to sweep over the land. Because Euphrates is a figure of speech for Assyria, Shiloah becomes a figure of speech for God’s loving care; a relational God seeks relationship with his people. He longed to be their “fountain” of peace, flowing within them like a gentle stream.”</p> <p>h 8:6 Or “rejoice,” a Hebrew homophone for “melt in fear” or “rejoice.”</p> <p>i 8:7 That is, his vast armies.</p> <p>j 8:8 Or “God with us.”</p> <p>k 8:8 Or “its wings” (a possible metaphor for the Assyrian armies spreading over the land). God once spread out his wings over the Hebrew people and carried them to Sinai. Now the Assyrian armies spread out their wings and overwhelm them with destruction.</p> <p>l 8:9 Or “Unite (assemble) yourselves.”</p> <p>m 8:9 Or “Gird yourselves.”</p> <p>n 8:10 The Hebrew is immanu el.”</p> <p>o 8:11 Or “He turned me aside” (Dead Sea scroll 1QIsaa).</p> <p>p 8:11 Or “walk in the way of.”</p> <p>q 8:13 Or “dread.”</p> <p>r 8:14 Or “a noose.”</p>	<p>⁵ The Lord Yahweh spoke to me again: ⁶ “Because these people have rejected the gentle flowing stream of my loving presence g and melt in fear h before Rezin and the son of Remaliah, ⁷ now, therefore, the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty, massive flood of the Euphrates. The king of Assyria and all his glory i will overflow on you like a river flooding its channels and running over all its banks! ⁸ It will flood into Judah, swirling over it, overflowing and reaching up to your neck, O Immanu El, j and spread out its wings k over your entire land!</p> <p>⁹ “You will be broken, l O nations, and will be shattered. Listen, all you distant nations. Prepare for war, m though it will backfire on you! Prepare for war, yet you will be shattered! ¹⁰ Go ahead, hatch a plot, but it will be foiled! Go ahead, speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us!” n</p> <p>¹¹ The Lord’s mighty hand rested on me, and he warned me o with these words not to act like p these people:</p> <p>¹² “Don’t believe their every conspiracy rumor. And don’t fear what they fear—don’t be moved or terrified. ¹³ Fear nothing and no one except Yahweh, Commander of Angel Armies! Honor him as holy. Be in awe before him with deepest reverence! q ¹⁴ He will become for you a holy sanctuary but for them a stone people trip over. He is a rock that causes the two houses of Israel to stumble—a trap r and a snare for the people of Jerusalem.s ¹⁵ Many will stumble and fall and be broken. Yes, they will be snared and taken away captive.</p>

- Bible Knowledge Commentary ~ John A. Martin

• THE COMING DELIVERER

- a. The coming fall of Israel and Aram (8:1-4)

- 8:1. Isaiah was to use a visual aid to help secure the prophecy in the minds of his audience. On a large scroll Isaiah was to record the name of a son to be born to him soon. The son's name was to be announced even before he was conceived, thus pointing to the certainty of the birth. The name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, the longest personal name in the Bible, means "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil." Soldiers would shout these words to their comrades as they defeated and plundered their foes. Isaiah's listeners, remembering his prophecy of the fall of the Aram-Israel alliance (7:4-17), would have understood the significance of his son's name as they continued to listen to his prediction of impending doom for Aram and Israel.
 - 8:2. God said He would call in two witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15), who could confirm that His words were true. Uriah the priest is mentioned later in an unfavorable light (2 Kings 16:10-16) when he complied with Ahaz's order to change the temple worship after the Aram-Israel alliance had been broken. Apparently he was an influential priest. Zechariah son of Jeberechiah is nowhere else mentioned by that full title. He may have been a prophet during the time of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:5) or a Levite who helped cleanse the temple in Hezekiah's day (2 Chron. 29:12-13).
 - 8:3-4. The prophetess, Isaiah's wife, is unnamed. She was called a prophetess either because she was married to a prophet or because she had the God-given ability to prophesy. The latter seems preferable. Isaiah's son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, was a sign of the coming break in the Aram-Israel alliance against Judah. In about a year and nine months (nine months for the pregnancy and one year of the child's life), Assyria would plunder both Damascus (Aram's capital city) and Samaria (Israel's capital). This happened in 732 B.C., which confirms the date of 734 for Isaiah's prophecy. When Damascus and Samaria fell, Judah should have turned to God as Isaiah had told them to. Unfortunately Uriah, one of the two witnesses (v. 2), followed Ahaz's orders after 732 B.C. and changed the temple worship to conform with the [Vol. 1, p. 1051] pagan worship practiced at Damascus.
- b. **The coming Assyrian invasion (8:5-8)**
- 8:5-6. This people could refer to the Northern Kingdom of Israel since she was the nation that rejected Judah in favor of aligning with Aram, under its king Rezin (cf. 7:1). The gently flowing waters of Shiloah, also called Siloam, then would refer by metonymy to the city of Jerusalem. These waters were a spring that fed a small reservoir within Jerusalem's walls. This gentle pool contrasted with the "mighty floodwaters" (8:7) which would destroy the people. On the son of Remaliah see comments on 7:4. Others interpret "this people" to refer to Judah (the house of Ahaz and his people). They had rejected God ("the gentle waters") and therefore the mighty flood (Assyria) would come and engulf them. This of course happened in 701 B.C. when the Assyrians invaded Judah.
 - 8:7-8. Because Israel allied with Aram, she would be swept away by the mighty floodwaters from the River, a normal designation for the Euphrates River, which ran through the Assyrian Empire. The king of Assyria (cf. 7:17) would sweep down on the Northern Kingdom like a river in flood stage overflowing its banks. Amazingly this "floodwater," that is, Assyria, would continue on into the land of Judah (701 B.C.). Assyria would cover Judah up to the neck, meaning that Judah would be almost but not quite drowned.
 - Isaiah changed figures of speech and pictured Assyria as a giant bird whose wings would cover the entire land, ready to devour it. This message was given to Immanuel ("God [is] with us"). Isaiah had used that word (7:14) when he told Ahaz that a boy, soon to be born, would be a sign that the nation would not perish at the hands of Aram and Israel. Now the Assyrians would try to "drown" the land of Judah. But the word Immanuel assured the hearers that God had not forgotten His covenant people and would be with them (cf. 8:10). The next verses (vv. 9-15) discuss that fact.

- c. **The coming victory from God (8:9-15)**

- Though Judah would be almost defeated by the Assyrian invasion (vv. 1-8), Isaiah noted that Judah should not fear because she would experience victory.
- 8:9-10. The great truth of chapters 7-9 is that God was with Judah. Isaiah uses the same term Immanuel to close verse 10—God is with us. Even though the nations would raise a war cry and prepare for battle against Judah, they would not succeed. They would be shattered, a fact stated three times in verse 9 for emphasis. Even though they would carefully work out a strategy and a plan for battle they would not succeed because God was with Judah (“Immanuel” in Heb.; cf. 7:14; 8:8). That great truth separated Judah from all other nations of the world. Because God has promised to be with His people they were to have faith in Him no matter how bad their circumstances. He would not desert them. Thus God and Isaiah were proved right, and Ahaz was rebuked for his lack of faith (cf. 7:9).
- 8:11-15. The Lord had promised to be with His people (v. 10), but many in both Israel and Judah refused to believe He would keep His promise. The LORD warned Isaiah not to be like many of those people (v. 11). Again Isaiah emphasized that the people of Judah should not be afraid of the Aram-Israel alliance or of the Assyrian threat looming on the horizon (v. 12). Rather they were to be afraid of the LORD Almighty. He is the One they should fear and dread (v. 13; cf. fear and dread in v. 12 and see the comments on “fear” in Deut. 4:10). The Lord will be a sanctuary, a place of safety, for those who believe in Him, but for those who do not believe Him, He will be the means of destruction (a stone ... a rock. ... a trap, and a snare). Peter quoted part of Isaiah 8:14 (1 Peter 2:8), referring to those who reject Jesus Christ. Isaiah’s message follows an emphasis in the Old Testament. God promised that those who believe in and obey the Lord will be blessed but those who refuse to believe in and obey Him will be disciplined.

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. The Lord instructed Isaiah to write a name down on a “tablet” as a prophetic sign, even calling for witnesses (Uriah the priest and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah), attesting to what Isaiah had written down. What is the significance of the name (Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz) God instructed to Isaiah to write down? What did that name reveal to Ahaz regarding the impending battle?
2. The plundering of Damascus and Samaria by Assyria were prophesied through the child that was born to Isaiah and his wife. How would this prophecy have impacted Ahaz? Do you think he saw the significance of God’s hand in the defeat of his attackers through the birth of this child?
3. Embracing and trusting God’s presence appears to be very important in our relationship with Him as Lord. Because Judah had rejected the “gentle flowing stream” of His “loving Presence,” Judah would be overtaken by the overwhelmingly destructive “flow” of the Assyrian army into Jerusalem. How has walking in fear at times caused you, personally, to struggle personally? How would “flowing with God in the Peace of His Presence” effect your ability to trust Him?

4. Isaiah's prophecy in v. 9 and 10 seems to mock Judah's attempt to prepare themselves for the battle they see coming from Aram/Israel. When you consider the things we see play out in book of Revelation (7-seals, 7-trumpets, 7-bowls), how do you think our nation might be foolishly protecting itself from an inevitable move of God in the near future, i.e., global leadership, financial institutions, cultural morals, the environment, caring for the poor and vulnerable, etc.? Where should we be putting our energy in preparation for what's coming?

5. How could you apply 1 Peter 2:8, where Peter quotes Isaiah 8, to your life? What separates those who "stumble" from those who don't? For those who find a "sanctuary in the Rock, that are they protected from and how is this sanctuary a life-giving environment?