

The Birth of Isaiah's Second Son

Isaiah 8

Isaiah 8 – “Moreover the Lord said to me, “Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man’s pen concerning Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.”² And I will take for Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.”³ Then 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 child shall have knowledge to cry ‘My father’ and ‘My mother,’ the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria.”

Background Notes

What is the longest personal name in the Bible and where is it found? You guessed it! It’s Maher-Shalal-Hash Baz in Isaiah 8. Notice that the Lord had Isaiah write the name of the child even before the boy was born and had two witnesses (v1), emphasizing that the birth of this child was significant.

Isaiah 7 contains the prediction of a sign that would be given to King Ahaz of Judah. The sign was that a son would be born to a virgin, or a young maiden. The fulfillment of the *historical* aspect of that prophecy is found in Isaiah 8. Isaiah’s second son, Maher-Shalal-Hash Baz would be the “sign child.” The birth was a sign that the threat of the coalition forces of Syria and northern Israel would be eliminated.

The “prophetess” was Isaiah’s second wife, who was a virgin when the prophecy of Isaiah’s son was made. Maher-Shalal-Hash Baz and his mother would be a picture, or a *type*, of Jesus and his mother, the virgin Mary, in the *eschatological* or future aspect of the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy.

Although the name “Maher-Shalal-Hash Baz” is not the same as the name “Immanuel,” his birth was a sign that God was with His people. The name “Immanuel” means “God with us.” Notice the phrase “*O Immanuel!*” (“God is with us”) in verses 8 and 10. This assured Judah that God had not forgotten them, even though He had to discipline them.

The name “Maher-Shalal-Hash Baz” actually means “swift as the booty, speedy as the prayer.” This was a comforting sign of God’s presence to Judah, because it meant that the threat of Syria and northern Israel would soon be gone. Assyria was about to conquer these powers.

Isaiah himself and both of his two sons had names that indicated all of them were signs of comfort for Israel (v18). The name “Isaiah” means “God is salvation.” The name “Shear-Jashub,” Isaiah’s first son, means “a remnant shall return.” So the prophet Isaiah and his two sons were all encouraging signs of God’s care and protection for His people.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord is a sanctuary and a stone of stumbling.

Isaiah 8:5-15 – *“The Lord also spoke to me again, saying: ⁶ ‘Inasmuch as these people refused the waters of Shiloah that flow softly, and rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah’s son; ⁷ now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them the waters of the River, strong and mighty— the king of Assyria and all his glory. He will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks. ⁸ He will pass through Judah, he will overflow and pass over, he will reach up to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel.’ ⁹ ‘Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces! Give ear, all you from far countries. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. ¹⁰ Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak the word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.’ ¹¹ For the Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: ¹² ‘Do not say, ‘A conspiracy,’ concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. ¹³ The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. ¹⁴ He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many among them shall stumble. They shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.’”*

In verse 6, *“these people”* most likely refers to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel. They had forsaken the peaceful waters of Shiloah in Jerusalem, the city of God’s Temple, and had turned to Rezin, the king of Syria, for help. Therefore God was going to bring judgment by bringing Assyria, *“the waters of the River [Euphrates],”* as a flood that would wipe out both Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel.

The armies of Assyria would even sweep down into the southern kingdom of Judah. Notice that the waters would reach to the neck of Judah but would not overcome the head (v8). In 701 BC, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah and conquered the outlying cities around Jerusalem, but he never conquered the capital because of the great miracle during King Hezekiah’s reign, when the Lord supernaturally intervened and destroyed the Assyrian army that was besieging Jerusalem. For the account, see Isaiah 37.

In verses 9-15 Isaiah warned the people that they would be broken in pieces if they continued to turn away from the Lord. No matter how much they planned and prepared and made alliances and associations and confederacies with other powers, they would be defeated and broken to pieces if they continued to turn away from the Lord.

However, if they would turn to the Lord and obey Him, He would be a sanctuary for them. They would not have to fear the enemy. How true this is today as well. The Lord is a sanctuary to those who fear Him but a stone of stumbling to those who turn away from His offer of salvation. 1 Peter 2:6-8 quoted Isaiah 8:14 in reference to Jesus Christ: *“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,”* and *“A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”* Notice that the “stone of stumbling and rock of offense” in Isaiah referred to “the LORD of hosts,” and when used in 1 Peter it speaks of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust that you are a believer, and that you have found the Lord to be a true sanctuary - *not* a stone of stumbling. He is either one or the other. Think of the unbelievers in our country (a so-called Christian land), who have a problem with even the mention of Jesus Christ in any public place or display. Increasingly, public prayers to the Lord are banned and public nativity scenes are forbidden. The Lord is a sanctuary – but He is also a stone of stumbling.

2. The Word is a standard and a means of testing.

Isaiah 8:16-22 – *“Bind up the testimony. Seal the law among my disciples. ¹⁷ And I will wait on the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. ¹⁸ Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion. ¹⁹ And when they say to you, “Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,” should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. ²¹ They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. ²² Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness.”*

In verses 16-18 we see Isaiah’s confidence in the Lord, in spite of the opposition surrounding him. Isaiah confirmed the Word of the Lord to the faithful remnant, the true disciples (v16). It is significant that the writer to the Hebrews quoted parts of verses 17-18, and applied them to Jesus Christ. Hebrews 2:13: *“And again: “I will put My trust in Him.” And again: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”*

In verses 19-22, the Word of God was contrasted to the so-called truths of the mediums, or spiritists, or wizards. Mediums, both then and today, claim to get their knowledge from supernatural sources, including “channeling” the spirits of people who have died. Verse 20 is God’s view of such practices: *“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”* The Word of God is the standard. If the pronouncements of a so-called prophet or medium don’t agree with the Word of God, he or she is a false prophet. ***The test of truth is the Word of God.*** Everything we need to know, including knowledge about the future, is contained in the Word of God! Verses 21-22 spoke of the judgment upon those who do not use the Word of God as their standard. They will look to their sources and find no help or relief. They will be sent into eternal darkness because they rejected the light of God’s Word.

It reminds us of what we read in 2 Peter 2:17 concerning the judgment of false prophets and false teachers. They are *“wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”*

God’s Word was the standard and means of testing in Isaiah’s day, and it is the same today. The Word is a standard and a means of testing.

Practical Application

Don’t play around with the occult!

Verse 19 once again: *And when they say to you, “Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,” should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?”*

Just as people turned to the occult in Isaiah’s day, so some people toy with occult practices today. Some Christians read the horoscope out of curiosity or for entertainment, and some even think astrology has a legitimate application in their lives. Some Christians have bought a Ouija Board as a “game” - but it is **not** a toy, even though it is widely sold in toy stores.

These things are not innocent pastimes. They are associated with the occult, and they are **dangerous!** In some cases, playing around with these supposedly “innocent” areas of the occult has been the first step in a downward slide away from the Lord and His Word.

Deuteronomy 18:9-14 says that God is disgusted with anyone who is involved in occult practices - so be careful not to even play around with anything that is possibly associated with the occult!

Don’t play around with the occult - whether it’s the horoscope, or astrology, or Eastern mysticism, or tarot cards, or Ouija boards, or transcendental meditation, or “white magic,” or hypnotism, or any kind of “altered conscious state.” Warn your children and grandchildren about the dangers of these practices. The Bible calls it **sin!**

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