

ISAIAH 8

THE WATERS OF SHILOAH

Chapter 8 opens with an account of the birth of Isaiah's child, whom the Lord sent as an immediate sign to King Ahaz and his people. The name *Maher-shalal-hash-baz* means, "Haste to the spoil; be quick to the prey" – evidently alluding to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, and the rapidity with which he would extend his conquests. And indeed, this prophetic name was fulfilled swiftly – within three short years. The king of Assyria conquered Damascus and killed its king, Rezin; and thus the little kingdom of Syria was finally swallowed up in the large empire of Assyria. The fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel – and of its capital city, Samaria – was not quite as severe as that of Syria. Still, plunder was carried away, and a large number of the inhabitants of the eastern part of the kingdom were taken into captivity.

The waters of Shiloah (mentioned in verse 6) supply the pool of Siloam at Jerusalem, in which Jesus told the blind man to go and wash (John 9:7). The waters of Shiloah flow softly, reminding us of how the Lord leads His own people beside the still waters (Ps. 23:2). The prophet Isaiah was told that since the followers of Israel's King Pekah and Syria's King Rezin were at enmity with Judah and Jerusalem, and refused to enjoy the soft waters of Shiloah; the Lord would therefore bring upon them, like a flood, the waters from the great Euphrates River of Assyria. The army of the Assyrian king, like a torrent, would overflow both Syria and Israel; and then (verse 8) the waters would pass through to Judah, and "reach even to the neck." But they would not rise higher than that, for they would not cover the head. This is evidently a reference to the expedition of the Assyrian King Sennacherib against Judah, some years later, during the reign of Hezekiah. That proud ruler distressed and desolated the land of Judah, but he could not destroy it. The Lord miraculously stopped him, and sent him back to his own country in shameful defeat; for the land which he invaded was Immanuel's land, and neither he nor any other enemy could conquer it unless the Lord first gave permission.

The word *Shiloah* means "sent" (John 9:7); and the waters of Shiloah were a picture of Christ, the living water which is sent and offered freely to all who will accept it. Jesus says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!" (John 7:37) Let us beware that we do not refuse these waters, which are meant for the cleansing and the satisfying of our souls! Let us come simply and immediately – just as we are – to the Fountain which the Lord has opened for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. 13:1).

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ A prophecy of the destruction of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel by Assyria, and of the desolations that Assyria would also bring upon Judah – verses 1-8
- ❖ Encouragement is given to God's people under these troubles – verses 9-18
- ❖ All people are exhorted to heed God's Word, and not witchcraft – verses 19-22



In verses 9 and 10, we have a sentence of holy defiance addressed to the enemies who had combined together against Judah: “Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; for God is

with us!” This last sentence evidently refers to IMMANUEL. We are here reminded of the prophecy in Psalm 2:1-6, in which the kings of the earth are described as uniting against the Lord and His Christ, and in which their utter destruction is foretold. The Word of God teaches us to expect that the enemies of Christ will associate themselves in one great body; and that then, in a remarkable and final manner, they shall be broken in pieces (Rev. 19:19-21).

When man is in trouble, he is always inclined to seek help from anyone and anything except the Lord. The Israelites were tempted to consult with wizards, who pretended to have communication with the spirits of the dead. But what can be more absurd than to go to the dead, in search of life and living comforts? God is the fountain of life (Ps. 36:9). From Him comes every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). He says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find” (Matt. 7:7). So why should we seek help from anyone else?

The Lord has given us His Word as the standard by which we must judge all preaching, teaching, and opinions that we hear from our fellow human beings. However interesting a book or a sermon may be, yet if it does not agree with the Bible, we must firmly and immediately refuse to be influenced by it. It is to the Scriptures alone that we must seek for truth. But in order to do this, one thing is necessary: we must know and study the Bible. In the present day, there are many strange opinions afloat; all kinds of strange doctrines and practices are springing up, and we are often surprised at the number of persons who are ready to take part in them. And why is this? Because people do not study their Bibles as they ought! The poor are occupied with their daily labor, and the rich with their business and amusements and books of human learning; and so both the rich and the poor neglect the Word of God. No wonder that they are tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine! (Eph. 4:14).

How much do we know of our Bibles? Have we made it our business to understand the Book? Have we carefully read through the historical parts? Have we followed out the reasoning in the Epistles? By using the marginal references, have we compared one part of Scripture with another, in order to learn the truth which God intends to teach us? And above all, do we ever open our Bibles with the earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit Himself may teach us out of the inspired Scriptures? (Ps. 119:18) The Bible is a letter from the Lord to us; let us pray and expect that He will bring His Word home to our hearts and make the meaning thereof plain to us!

Lord, thank You for giving us Your written Word as the standard of truth. Help us to never refuse the living waters that You freely send to us in the Gospel! Amen.