

ISAIAH 8

Sanctuary or Stone of Offense?

The Maher-shalal-hash-baz Sign

1 Then Yahweh said to me [Isaiah],

Take a large placard and write on it with a man's stylus,

Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz ["Speed-spoil-haste-booty"].

2 And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah¹ the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me.

3 And I [Isaiah] went to the prophetess (נְבִיאָה), and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh said to me,

Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz . 4 For before the boy knows how to cry my father or my mother,² the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.

The Assyrian Flood

5 Yahweh spoke to me again:

6 Because this people [Israel] has refused the waters of Shiloah³ 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 [Euphrates] 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,⁴ and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel. 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. 10 Take counsel

¹ Uriah is Ahaz's puppet priest, following his orders whether against Yahweh or not (2 Ki 16:10-11, 15-16).

² **Is 7:16** 16 Before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

³ **Jn 9:7** 7 [Jesus] said to [the blind man], Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

⁴ **Is 30:28** 28 [Yahweh's] breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck—to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray.

together, but it will come to nothing.⁵ Speak a word, but it will not stand, for Immanuel.

Sanctuary or Stone of Offense?

11 For Yahweh spoke thus to me [Isaiah] with his strong hand upon me and warned me not to walk in the way of this people⁶ saying:

12 Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.⁷ 13 But Yahweh of hosts, him you shall honor as holy.⁸ Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he will become a sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ) and a stone⁹ 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.¹⁰

Scripture or Sorcery?

16 Bind up the testimony (תְּעִידָהּ). Seal¹¹ the law (תּוֹרָה) among my disciples (לְמִדְּוָי). 17 I will wait (חָכַה)¹² for Yahweh, who is hiding¹³ his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in

⁵ **Ps 2:1-6** 1 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against his Messiah saying, 3 Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us. 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury saying, 6 As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.

⁶ **Eze 2:8** 8 You, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house. Open your mouth and eat what I give you.

⁷ **1 Pe 3:14-15** 14 Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Messiah the Lord as holy.

⁸ **Nu 20:12** 12 Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.

⁹ **Is 28:16** 16 Thus says Lord Yahweh, Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: Whoever believes will not be in haste. **Ro 9:33** 33 As it is written, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. **1 Pe 2:8** 8 ...A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

¹⁰ **Is 28:13** 13 The word of Yahweh will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, that they may go, fall backward, be broken, snared, and taken. **Mt 21:44** 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. **Lk 20:18** 18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.

¹¹ **Da 12:4** 4 But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end.

¹² **Ps 27:14** 14 Wait for Yahweh. Be strong, and let your heart take courage. Wait for Yahweh! **Ps 33:20** 20 Our soul waits for Yahweh. He is our help and our shield. **Hab 2:3** 3 Still the vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay. See *Patience*.

¹³ **Dt 31:7** 7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that Yahweh has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. **Is 54:8** 8 In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says Yahweh, your Redeemer.

him. 18 Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me¹⁴ are signs and portents in Israel from Yahweh of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. 19 And when they say to you,

Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers¹⁵ who chirp and mutter,

should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law (תּוֹרָה) and to the testimony (תְּעוּדָה)!¹⁶ If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.¹⁷ 21 They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. 22 And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.¹⁸

¹⁴ **He 2:13** 13 And again, Behold, I and the children God has given me.

¹⁵ **Le 19:31** 31 Do not turn to mediums or necromancers. Do not seek them out and so make yourselves unclean by them. I am Yahweh your God. **2 Ki 21:6** 6 [Manasseh] burned his son as an offering, used fortune-telling and omens, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of Yahweh, provoking him to anger.

¹⁶ **Lk 16:29** 29 Abraham said, They have Moses and the Prophets. Let them hear them.

¹⁷ **Is 60:1** 1 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of Yahweh has risen upon you.

¹⁸ **Nah 1:8** 8 With an overflowing flood [Yahweh] will make a complete end of the adversaries and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

Biblical Worldview

1. *Isaiah at a Glance.*

- a. This chapter is entitled “Sanctuary or Stone of Offense?” It breaks into four parts:
 - (1) The Maher-shalal-hash-baz Sign (vv. 1-4).
 - (2) The Assyrian Flood (vv. 5-10).
 - (3) Sanctuary or Stone of Offense (vv. 11-15)?
 - (4) Scripture or Sorcery (vv. 16-22)?

2. **Isaiah’s son is a sign that within two years, Assyria will conquer Syria and Israel.**

- a. **Is 8:1-4** 1 Then Yahweh said to me [Isaiah], Take a large placard and write on it with a man’s stylus, Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz [“Speed-spoil-haste-booty”]. 2 And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me. 3 And I [Isaiah] went to the prophetess (נְבִיאָה), and she conceived and bore a son. Then Yahweh 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.
 - (1) A *gillāyôn* is not a scroll or a stone tablet, but a flat piece of wood (Ezek. 37:16) or metal (Isa. 3:23), appropriate for posting as a sort of placard (J. N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:221). Isaiah’s placard must be public and eye-catching.
 - (2) The name Maher-shalal-hash-baz, the longest personal name in the Bible, means “Speed-spoil-haste-booty” (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 90). Soldiers would shout these words to their comrades as they defeated and plundered their foes (J. A. Martin, *BKC*, 1:1049).
 - (a) Maher-shalal-hash-baz is not Immanuel. His fourfold name of judgment distinguishes him from Immanuel, with his fourfold name of blessing.
 - (b) **Is 9:6** 6 His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 - (3) Uriah and Zechariah, two important persons in Judah, will authenticate Isaiah’s prophecy (Motyer, 90).
 - (a) **Dt 17:6** 6 On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses. . . .
 - (b) That “the writing had been witnessed by men of public stature made it impossible to level a charge of ‘prophecy after the fact’ against Isaiah in coming years” (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:222).
 - (4) Isaiah’s wife is called a prophetess either because she was married to a prophet or because she had the God-given ability to prophesy.
- b. Isaiah has already prophesied the downfall of Syria and Israel. He does so again here, this time with his second son as a sign.
 - (1) Isaiah’s sons serve as time-indicators for the destruction of Syria and Israel. Before Isaiah’s first son reaches the age of accountability and his second son says “Dada” and “Mama,” Syria and Israel will fall.
- c. This interaction will prove whether Isaiah is a prophet or not. For Isaiah, a lot is on the line.
- d. Historically, Isaiah presents this prophecy in 734 bc. It was fulfilled within two years.
 - (1) In 734 bc, Tiglath-pileser marched to the border of Egypt.
 - (2) In 733 bc, he took Galilee, Transjordan, and Megiddo from Israel.

- (3) In 732 bc, he conquered Damascus and ended Aram Syria.
- (4) Shear-jashub doesn't know how tell right from wrong yet (Is 7:16), and Maher-shalal-hash-baz isn't saying "Dada" and "Mama" yet (Is 8:4).
- e. This is when Isaiah is "confirmed as a prophet of Yahweh."
 - (1) **1 Sa 3:20** 20 All Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of Yahweh.

3. When we refuse to be content with what God has given, we invite disaster.

- a. **Is 8:5-8** 5 Yahweh spoke to me again: 6 Because this people [Israel] has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently and rejoice over Rezin [of Syria] and [Pekah] the son of Remaliah [of Israel], 7 therefore behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the [Euphrates] 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.
- b. "This people" refers to the people of Israel, who chose Syria over Judah. When the ten northern tribes of Israel rejected Rehoboam, son of Solomon, they rejected the waters of Shiloah, and thus the Davidic covenant (Martin, *BKC*, 1:1051).
- c. The Gihon spring, the Shiloh stream, and the Siloam pool are Jerusalem's crucial water supply and a place of great importance to the Davidic dynasty.
 - (1) Solomon and later Davidic kings were anointed and crowned king there.
 - (a) **1 Ki 1:33-34** 33 The king [David] said to them, Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. 34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, Long live King Solomon!
 - (2) It was where Isaiah met Ahaz (Is 7:3).
 - (3) It was where the Rabshakeh met Hezekiah (Is 36:2).
 - (4) It was the waters Jesus used to heal the blind man in Jn 9.
 - (a) **Jn 9:6-7** 6[Jesus] spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.
- d. Assyria is likened to a flood and bird of prey. She is the real threat to Judah.
 - (1) "Like Germany in 1939 and 1940, the Assyrians seemed almost superhuman" (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:226).
- e. God is essentially saying, "If you choose not to satisfy your thirst with me, I will bring on a flood, so that you will nearly be destroyed."
- f. Which do you prefer? The seemingly insignificant waters of Shiloah or the mighty river Euphrates? Will you walk by faith or walk by sight?
- g. The return of the name "Immanuel" (cf. Is 7:14) offers a ray of hope.

4. Isaiah turns suddenly to God's supernatural protection of the remnant of Israel.

- a. **Is 8:9-10** 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. 10 Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing. Speak a word, but it will not stand, for Immanuel.

b. *The Remnant of Israel.*

- (1) Remember the meaning of Shear-jashub: “A Remnant Shall Return.”
- (2) **Ro 11:25-26** 25 A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all [the remnant of] Israel will be saved.

c. *Anti-Semitism.*

- (1) **Ps 2:1-6** 1 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against his Messiah saying, 3 Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us. 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury saying, 6 As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.
- (2) International hostility to Israel is nothing new.
- (3) What God really wants is for the nations to voluntarily bow the knee to the Jewish Messiah.
- (4) God will deliver the remnant of Israel in the Great Tribulation, just as he has delivered the remnant of Israel in the past.

5. Believers are to fear neither man nor circumstances, but God alone.

- a. **Is 8:11-13** 11 For Yahweh spoke thus to me [Isaiah] with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people [Judah] saying: 12 Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear [Syria and Israel], nor be in dread. 13 But Yahweh of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

b. Yahweh’s strong hand.

- (1) Like a father to his child, Yahweh places his strong hand on Isaiah and charges him to thinking differently from the crowd. Yahweh gives Isaiah a straight talking to about what he should and should not fear.

c. Conspiracy theories.

- (1) What conspiracy theories are common today? What are New Zealand’s greatest fears? Deep down, what does the everyday New Zealander dread? Global warming? Economic takeover by China?
- (2) Be careful of indulging yourself in conspiracy theories on the left or right. It’s a waste of time and does not befit the Christian. The Christian should instead be focused on God, his attributes, and his plan.

d. *The Fear of God.*

- (1) Isaiah is to remember the vision of five years earlier, recorded in Is 6.
 - (a) **Is 6:3** 3 One [seraph] called to another and said: Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory!
- (2) When we seek to solve the riddles of our times according to human explanations and means, we make God appear insignificant. But God calls upon us to make him the most significant fact of our existence, demonstrating by our attitudes and behavior that he is indeed holy (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:234).
- (3) Believers are to live in constant awareness of God’s holy nature, to rest in “the holy place,” the place where God dwells in all his holiness (Motyer, 95).
- (4) So the New Zealand church must keep fear God by keeping his holiness in view, no matter what direction New Zealand culture chooses to take.

- 6. For some, Messiah will be a sanctuary. For others, he will be a stone of offense.**
- a. **Is 7:14-15** 14 And he [Messiah] will become a sanctuary (שִׁמְרֵן), 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.
 - b. *The Deity of Jesus.*
 - (1) Here is hinted that the Messiah is Yahweh himself. It is Yahweh who will become both a sanctuary and a stone of offense. We know from the gospels that Jesus is the stone of offense. If A = B and B = C, then A = C. Jesus, the Messiah, is Yahweh.
 - (2) **Is 28:16** 16 Thus says Lord Yahweh, Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: Whoever believes will not be in haste.
 - (3) **Ro 9:33** 33 As it is written, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.
 - c. *Faith Alone in Jesus Alone.*
 - (1) Everything depends on one's attitude toward Jesus. One is either for him or against him. He is ready to become our sanctuary. But he also ready to become a rock of offense to us. With our free will, we must make a choice.
 - (2) **Lk 2:34** 34 Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child [Jesus] is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel.
 - d. *Israel's Rejection of Jesus.*
 - (1) This passage is quoted several times in the New Testament in relation to Israel's rejection of Jesus.
- 7. Disciples are to turn to the all-sufficient Scriptures for guidance about the future.**
- a. **Is 7:16-20** 16 Bind up the testimony (תְּעִידָה). Seal the law (תּוֹרָה) among my disciples (לְמִידָה). 17 I will wait (חָכָה) for Yahweh, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. 18 Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are signs and portents in Israel from Yahweh of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. 19 And when they say to you, Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law (תּוֹרָה) and to the testimony (תְּעִידָה)!
 - b. *The Sufficiency of Scripture.*
 - (1) For many believers, the Bible is not enough. They want more. The Bible doesn't work for them. It's boring. It's inadequate. It's out of date. It's not relevant.
 - (2) However, Scripture is sufficient for all matters of Christian life and practice.
 - (3) **2 Pe 1:3-4** 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature.
 - (4) **2 Pe 1:19** 19 We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

- (5) **Jud 3 3** I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.
- (6) The law and testimony are the sufficient resource of true disciples (Motyer, 97).
- c. *Discipleship.*
 - (1) Isaiah leads a discipleship community that exercises corporate faith in the promises of God found in the already-written Scripture. These disciples are a “people within the people,” marked by a deep reverence for the holy God (Motyer, 93). They gather round the written word of God (Motyer, 96).
 - (2) The term disciple is found in two other places in *Isaiah*.
 - (a) **Is 50:4 4** The Lord God has given me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens. He awakens my ear to hear as a disciple.
 - (b) **Is 54:13 13** All your children shall be [disciples] taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.
- d. *Patience.*
 - (1) **Is 40:31 31** They who wait for Yahweh shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.
 - (2) “God’s timing is best and...he will wait for his action, knowing that all other action in defiance of him is futile. This waiting upon God is often a prerequisite to receiving his blessing, for in the act of waiting we confess our own helplessness and our complete dependence upon him” (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:236).
 - (3) The disciples are to hold aloof from popular culture, taking no part in a fear-ridden society. They are to be unmoved by the fears around. They are to enjoy calm in the midst of life’s storms and menaces (Motyer, 95).
- e. Commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture, teachability, and patience are marks of a disciple.

8. The lives of those who refuse to turn to Scripture will become darker and darker.

- a. **Is 7:20-22 20** If they will not speak according to this word [the law and the testimony], it is because they have no dawn [no ultimate salvation]. **21** They will pass through it [darkness], greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward [a downward spiral of rebellion]. **22** And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.
- b. *Light and Darkness.*
 - (1) God is light, and him is no darkness at all.
 - (a) **1 Jn 1:5 5** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
 - (2) God has forever separated the light from the darkness.
 - (a) **Ge 1:2-4 2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. **3** And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.
 - (3) Jesus is the light of men who shines in the darkness.

- (a) **Jn 1:4-9** 4 In [the Word] was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ...9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.
- (4) Most people love the darkness rather than the light.
 - (a) **Jn 3:19** 19 This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.
- c. *The Lake of Fire.*
 - (1) Distress, darkness, gloom, and anguish characterize the lake of fire, where all unbelievers will spend eternity.
 - (2) The gloom of utter darkness has been reserved for unbelievers who persist in their rebellion against God.
 - (a) **2 Pe 2:17** 17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

Notes