

Now reread Isaiah 8:1-4 and note down what Isaiah was told to do.

Instructions to Isaiah (v1-4)

Assyria to Plunder Damascus, Samaria and Judah (8:1-8)

- 8:1 **Then the LORD said to me, "Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters: Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey."**
- 8:2 **"And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah."**
- 8:3 **So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz;**
- 8:4 **for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."**

"This section (*The Coming Deliverer [8:1-9:7]*) is closely related to the previous chapter. It concerns the same event, namely, the deliverance from the Aram-Israel alliance and the subsequent Assyrian invasion that would eventually extend to Judah. Isa 7:1-25 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 positive note: the nation would be delivered and this deliverance would picture another Deliverer, who will bring an even greater deliverance.**

Isa 8:1 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 (Isa 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.

Isa 8:2 God said He would call in two witnesses (Num 35:30; Deu 17:6; 19:15), who could confirm that His words were true. Uriah the priest is mentioned later in an unfavorable light (2Ki 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 (2Ch 26:5) or a Levite who helped cleanse the temple in Hezekiah's day (2Ch 29:12-13).

Isa 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 (Isa 8:2), followed Ahaz's orders after 732 B.C. and changed the temple worship to conform with the pagan worship practiced at Damascus. (BKC)

The word tablet is the Hebrew גלילון gillayon, ... (and is) not a roll or volume: but may very well signify a polished tablet of metal, such as was anciently used for a mirror... The mirrors of the Israelitish women were made of brass finely polished, Exo 38:8... The prophet is commanded to take a mirror, or brazen polished tablet... a large one; large enough for him to engrave upon it in deep and lasting characters, בחרט אנוש becheret enosh, with a workman's graving tool, the prophecy... of the destruction of Damascus and Samaria by the Assyrians; the subject and sum of which prophecy is here expressed with great brevity in four words, מהר שלל הש בז maher shalal hash baz; i.e., to hasten the spoil, to take quickly the prey; which are afterwards applied as the name of the prophet's son, who was made a sign of the speedy completion of it; Maher-shalal-hash-baz; Haste-to-the-spoil, Quick-to-the-prey. And that it might be done with the greater solemnity, and to preclude all doubt of the real delivery of the prophecy before the event, he calls witnesses to attest the recording of it.

"The prophet is commanded to take a great roll, and yet four words only are to be written in it, מהר שלל הש בז maher shalal hash baz, Make haste to the spoil; fall upon the prey. The great volume points out the land of Judea; and the few words the small number of inhabitants, after the ten tribes were carried into captivity.

"Concerning this child, who was to be named Immanuel, the prophet was commissioned to declare, that notwithstanding the present scarcity prevailing in the land from its being harassed by war, yet within the space of time wherein this child should be of age to discern good and evil, both these hostile kings, viz., of Israel and Syria, should be cut off; and the country enjoy such plenty, that butter and honey, food accounted of peculiar delicacy, should be a common repast....

"To this it may be objected that Isaiah's son was not named Immanuel, but Maher-shalal-hash-baz; the signification of which bore a threatening aspect, instead of a consolatory one. To this I think a satisfactory answer may be given. Ahaz, by his unbelief and disregard of the message of mercy sent to him from God, (for instead of depending upon it he sent and made a treaty with the king of Assyria), drew upon himself the Divine displeasure, which was expressed by the change of the child's name, and the declaration that though Damascus and Samaria should, according to the former prediction, fall before the king of Assyria, yet that this very power, i.e., Assyria, in whom Ahaz trusted for deliverance, (see 2Ki 16:7, etc.), should afterwards come against Judah, and 'fill the breadth of the land,' which was accomplished in the following reign, when Jerusalem was so endangered as to be delivered only by miracle. The sixth and seventh verses of chap. 8 indicate... that the kings of Syria and Israel had many adherents in Judah, who are said to refuse the peaceful waters of Shiloah or Siloam, *him that is to be sent*, who ought to have been their confidence, typified by the fountain at the foot of Mount Zion, whose stream watered the city of Jerusalem; and therefore, since the splendor of victory, rather than the blessings of peace, was the object of their admiration, compared to a swelling river which overflowed its banks, God threatens to chastise them by the victorious armies of Asshur. **The prophet at the same time addresses words of consolation to such of the people who yet feared and trusted in Jehovah, whom he instructs and comforts with the assurance (Isa 8:10) that they shall prove the fulfillment of the promise contained in the name Immanuel.**

"But it may still be objected, that according to this interpretation of the fourteenth verse of chap. 7 nothing miraculous occurs, which is readily admitted; but the objection rests upon the supposition that something miraculous was intended; whereas the word **אֵימָן oth, 'sign,'** does by no means generally imply a miracle, but most commonly an emblematic representation, (see Eze 4:3-12; 11: 20:20; Zec 6:14), either by actions or names, of some future event either promised or threatened. Exo 3:12; 1Sa 2:34; 2Ki 19:29; Jer 44:29, 30, are all examples of a future event given as a sign or token of something else which is also future. **The birth of Isaiah's son was indeed typical of him whose name he was, at first, appointed to bear, viz., Immanuel, even as Oshea the son of Nun had his name changed to Jehoshua, the same with Jesus, of whom he was an eminent type.** Hence the prophet, in the ninth chapter, breaks forth into a strain of exultation: 'To us a child is born;' after which follow denunciations against Rezin and the kingdom of Israel, which are succeeded by declarations, that when Assyria had completed the appointed chastisement upon Judah and Jerusalem, that empire should be destroyed. The whole of the tenth chapter is a very remarkable prophecy, and was probably delivered about the time of Sennacherib's invasion." (Clarke)



Mac - 8:1 large tablet. Isaiah was to prepare a large placard for public display. That placard reiterated, from another perspective, the prophecies just concluded in 7:18–25.

8:2 faithful witnesses.

After the prophecy's fulfillment, the respected leaders Uriah and Zechariah verified to the people that Isaiah had spoken it on a given date before the Assyrian invasion. This verification accredited the Lord's word and upheld His honor (Dt 18:21, 22; Jer 28:9).

8:3 prophetess. Isaiah's wife was called a prophetess because the son to whom she gave birth was prophetic of the Assyrian conquest. **Maher-shalal-hash-baz.** *Maher-shalal* ("swift is the booty") told the Assyrian invaders with no doubt as to who was to win the battle. *Hash-baz* ("speedy is the prey") told them to reap the benefits of the conquered land quickly (5:26).

8:4 before the boy. The time before the plunder of Aram, or Syria, and the northern kingdom of Israel began was very short. The Assyrians initiated their invasion before Isaiah's child learned to talk. That prophetic limit resembled the one set in 7:16, but there the prophecy was more far-reaching. Fulfillment of the closer prophecy verified the one relating to the distant future.

Watts - G. R. Driver in *Semitic Writing* (2d ed. [London: Oxford UP, 1954] 80, 229) suggests a **large placard**. In *JSS* 13 (1968) 40, he describes a wax-covered wooden board that was found in Nineveh. This would fit the description here very well. (Cf. also D. Leibel, *BMik* 15 [1963] 50–55.)

The stylus that writes disaster may well be the intention of the phrase. (Cf. also D. Leibel, *BMik* 15 (1963) 50–55.)

The verse is narrative: "And so I took witnesses."

The pericope is first-person narrative of the type called prophetic autobiography. The passage is composed of two parts, vv 1–2 and vv 3–4. The first half tells of instruction received from God to write on a large board the words *למהר שלל חש*, "To 'Swift Plunder Hastening Booty.'" The second tells of the birth of a son who is given this name and of the meaning the name carries. Although the explanation is directly related to the son, it explains the entire passage and unifies it.

The pericope uses the formulas of narratives of symbolic actions: cf. Hos 1:2; Ezek 4:1; 4:9; 5:1; 1 Kgs 11:31; Jer 13:4; 25:15; 36:2, 28; 43:9; Zech 11:15. The closest parallel is undoubtedly Ezek 37:16. (Cf. Hayes, *OTFC*, 172.) The outline of such a report should contain the command to perform the act, the report of its performance, and a statement of its meaning. This account reports a command to write and a statement of compliance with an expansion concerning witnesses; then it reports further actions that continue the symbolic act: the conception, birth, and naming of a son. It closes with the usual explanation.

Steck (TZ 29 [1973] 161–78) recognizes vv 8:6–8a as an illustration of "the hardening" of the people and their judgment in 6:9–10. Blenkinsopp (138–39) compares the structure of 7:10–17 and 8:1–4. He finds them to be two "sign-acts," the first addressed to the dynasty, the second to the Judean public. The two "represent different aspects of the divine intervention in human affairs at that critical juncture." Steck's interpretation is the more cogent.

2 The reason for witnesses undoubtedly lay in confirming the date of the prophecy. Months, even years, would pass before its completion. The political situation would have changed drastically. The written words and the sworn witnesses alone could confirm the prophecy and when it had been prophesied.

The practice of taking witnesses is regulated by law (Deut 17:6; 19:15), which requires two. They are called "faithful witnesses" here because it was important that they be trusted by the public as well as by Isaiah. Wildberger comments that the men's names fit Isaiah's times and demonstrate how well the leaders of his day represent the piety of the Psalms. Both men's names include "YHWH." Uriah probably means "YHWH is light" (cf. Isa 10:17 and Ps 27:1; M. Noth, *Personennamen*, 168). Zechariah means "YHWH has remembered" (cf. Ps 74:2, 18; Lam 3:19; 5:1). *Jeberekiyah* means "May YHWH bless" (cf. Pss 67:6–7; 115:12–15). 2 Kgs 16:10–16 tells of a priest named Uriah who, at the command of King Ahaz, had a new altar built in the temple. He was apparently the chief priest. If Zechariah is the man mentioned in 2 Kgs 18:2//2 Chr 29:1 as the father-in-law of King Ahaz and grandfather of Hezekiah, the witnesses are drawn from the highest levels of Jerusalem's leadership.

Watts - 3 After the sign was written, Isaiah approached his wife. Although YHWH's specific instructions applied only to the message to be written on the board, the narrative's structure leads the reader to understand that the entire process followed God's instructions and served his purpose. *קרב*, "draw near," is used often to describe sexual relations (Gen 20:4; Lev 18:6, 14, 19; 20:16; Deut 22:14; Ezek 18:6)... Isaiah must have known the meaning of the name from the beginning (contra T. Vriezen, "Prophecy and Eschatology," in *Congress Volume*: Copenhagen, VTSup 1 [Leiden: Brill, 1953] 209 n. 2), and he must have understood the name on the board to be that for the son yet to come (so also Vogt, *Bib* 48 (1967) 57–74; Wildberger). The people knew Isaiah's stand on current policy. They would also have understood the general direction indicated by the announcement on the board even before the birth occasioned repetition and emphasis of it.

הנביאה, "the prophetess," is used of Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22), and Noadiah (Neh 6:14). But only here does it refer to a prophet's wife. Though there is no record that she was an active prophet in her own right, Wildberger is right (contra Duhm and Procksch) that the title does not simply mean "a prophet's wife." Rather it is understood that she, like Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), served as a prophet in the temple and also participated in the sign by birthing a son (cf. the discussion and literature in Wildberger, 318; A. Jepsen, *ZAW* 72 [1960] 267–80; E. Vogt, *Bib* 48 [1967] 57–74; Z. Falk, *BMik* 14 [1969] 28–36). The entire episode and its narration confirm Isaiah's message.

4 The statement of the reason for the strange and meaningful name begins with the same words as in 7:16, *כי בטרם ידע הנער*, "for before the lad shall know." But the specific ability is different: "to say 'my father,' 'my mother.'" A child can do this at a younger age than one could expect him to turn away from evil and do good.

The implication of the inscription is that booty is to be taken from Damascus and Samaria. The plunderer is the king of Assyria. *לפני מלך אשור*, "before the king of Assyria," pictures a parade of triumph before the king's throne (cf. ANET, 274; ANEP, vol. 1, fig. 100a–b). The prediction was fulfilled. In 733 B.C.E. Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria invaded Israel (MBA, 147). He reported, "Bit-Humria [= Israel] with all its inhabitants and its goods, I led to Assyria. They overthrew their king Paqaha [= Pekah], and I crowned Ausi [= Hoshea] king over them" (ANET, 284). Israel's territories were made Assyrian provinces (cf. MBA, 148; 2 Kgs 15:29; Isa 9:1) except for a very small area in the highlands of Ephraim. In 732 B.C.E. Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria conquered Damascus. That event brought to a close a two-hundred-year period in which the Aramaean kingdom played a leading role.




Pulpit - Vers. 1-4.—The Sign of Maher-shalhash-baz. The sign of Immanuel was recon-dite. In its more spiritual sense it appealed to faith in an event far distant. Even in its literal import, it was not calculated to cheer and encourage more than a few, since neither the maiden nor the child was pointed out with any distinctness. A fresh sign was therefore given by God's goodness to reassure the mass of the people—a sign about which there was nothing obscure or difficult. Isaiah himself should have a son born to him almost immediately, to whom he should give a name indicating the rapid approach of the spoiler, and before this child should be able to utter the first words which childhood ordinarily pronounces, "Father," "Mother," Damascus and Samaria should be despoiled.

Ver. 1.—Take thee a great roll; rather, *a large tablet*. The word is the same as that used for "mirror" in ch. 3:23. **Write in it with a man's pen;** *i. e.* "write upon it with the pen used by ordinary men"—in opposition to the implements of an engraver. The tablet was probably to be hung up to view in a public place (comp. ch. 30:8), so that all might read, and the writing was therefore to be such as was in ordinary use. Concerning **Maher-shalhash-baz.** These were the words which were to be written on the tablet, which was to be otherwise left blank. They would naturally excite curiosity, like the strange names placarded in modern streets. The name is literally, "Plunder speeds, spoil hastens." It has been imitated by Goethe in his "Habebald-Eilebeute" ('Faust,' act iv. sc.3).

Ver. 2.—And I took unto me; rather, *and I will have taken for me.* It is still God who is speaking. **Uriah the priest.** Probably the high priest of the time, mentioned in 2 Kings 16:10-16, as the ready tool of Ahaz at a later date. Though a bad man, he may have been a trustworthy witness to a fact. **Zechariah.** Perhaps the father of Abi or Abijah, Ahaz's queen (2 Kings 18:2; 2 Chron. 29:1). It would serve to call public attention still more to the tablet, if it bore the names of two such eminent persons as witnesses.

Ver. 3.—The prophetess. It is not necessary to suppose that the wife of Isaiah must have uttered prophecies because she is called "the prophetess" Titles were given in the East to the wives, daughters, etc., of officials, which merely reflected the dignity of their husbands, fathers, etc. Even Miriam seems to be called a "prophetess" (Exod. 15:20) from her close relationship to Moses, rather than from any supernatural power that she had. In the Mishna, a priest's wife or daughter is called "priestess" (Cheyne). **Call his name.** There is no reason for doubting that the name was actually given. Other Israelites had such names as Jushabhesed (1 Chron. 3:20), Haah-ashtari (1 Chron. 4:6), Romanti-ezer (1 Chron. 25:4), Machnadebai (Ezra 10:40), and the like. Assyrian names were even longer; *e. g.* Asshur-bel-nisi-su, Asshur-kinat-ili-kain, etc. In ordinary parlance, names of this type were commonly shortened, "Shalman-eser" becoming "Shalman" (Hos. 10:14), "Sennacherib" "Jareb" (Hos. 10:6), and the like.

Ver. 4.—My father ... my mother. "Abi," "Immi," would have been among the first utterances of childhood—simple sounds, combinations of primary vowels with labials, corresponding in easiness of utterance to "Pappy," "Mammy," rather than to the expressions of the text. A child commonly utters such sounds when it is about a year old. **The riches of Damascus.** The position of Damascus lay in the direct path of the main trade that was carried on between the West and East, which was conducted by the merchants of Tyre chiefly, and passed from the Syrian coast by way of Damascus and Tadmor to Nineveh and Babylon. This commerce greatly enriched the cities lying upon its route. "Damascus," says Ezekiel, addressing Tyre, "was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, *for the multitude of all riches;* in the wine of Helbon, and white wool" (27:18). The "palaces of Benhadad" seem to have been noted for their magnificence (Jer. 49:27; Amos 1:4). The spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria. Scripture does not record the fulfilment of this prophecy, which makes the same Assyrian king carry off the spoil of Samaria and the spoil of Damascus, fixing also the time of the carrying off as within a few years of the time when the prophecy was given. But the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser himself supply the deficiency. They state that this monarch "sent the population, the goods of the people of Beth-Omri, and their furniture to the land of Assyria;" after which he "appointed Husih (Hoshea) to the dominion over them," and fixed their annual tribute at two talents of gold and a thousand talents of silver (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 52).

The People		Isaiah
<u>Their Choice</u>		<u>His Choice</u>
Refuse to trust in God but chose to trust in man (v6) Refuse to fear or dread Yahweh or regard Him as holy (v13) Would not consult God but consult the dead on behalf of the living (v19) Do not speak according to the law & the testimony (v20) Will curse their king and their God (v21)		Chose to obey God (v10) & not walk in the way of this people (v11) or call this a conspiracy (v12) Chose to regard Yahweh of hosts as holy & to fear & be in dread of Him (v13) Chose to wait & look eagerly for Yahweh (v17) Refuse to consult mediums & spiritists & the dead (v19) Goes to the law & the testimony (v20)
<u>Their Judgment</u>		<u>His Reward</u>
Adonai will bring Assyria to destroy them (v7-8) God will shatter the nations, their plans & proposals (v10) Fear and are in dread of their enemies (v12) Yahweh becomes to Israel & Judah a stone to strike & a rock to stumble over (v14) and they will fall & be broken (v15) Yahweh becomes a snare & a trap to Jerusalem (v14), will be snared & caught (v15) Many stumble over them (v15) Yahweh hides His face from them (v17) Have no dawn (v20) Will be hungry (v21) will have distress, darkness, the gloom of anguish & be driven away into darkness (v22)		God is with the righteous (v10) Yahweh of hosts becomes a sanctuary (v14)
<u>Those Who Stand with the People</u>		<u>Those who Stand with Isaiah</u>
The Majority		The Minority (The Righteous Remnant)
		Isaiah's wife, the prophetess (v3) the righteous (v10) His disciples (v16) His children (v18)
Penalty for Consulting Mediums and Spiritists		
Lev 19:31 - Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them Lev 20:6 – God will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people Lev 20:27 - a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.'		Deut 18:10-14 – no one is to make his son or his daughter pass through the fire, no divination, no witchcraft, no interpreting of omens, no sorcery, no casting of spells, no mediums, no spiritists, no calling up the dead = all these are detestable to the LORD = the LORD your God will drive them out of their land = not allowed to do so by the LORD
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The Sin & Judgment of the People (v5-8)

Assyria to Plunder Damascus, Samaria and Judah (8:1-8)

- 8:5 And again the LORD spoke to me further, saying,
- 8:6 "Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah,
And rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah;
- 8:7 "Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant
waters of the Euphrates,
Even the king of Assyria and all his glory;
And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks.
- 8:8 "Then it will sweep on into Judah,
it will overflow and pass through,
It will reach even to the neck;
And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

Mac - 8:6 these people. Lit. "this people" (the Heb. is sing.). These were the people of Judah (cf. 6:9), but perhaps secondarily the whole nation of Israel. Ahaz had called on Assyria for help rather than relying on the Lord. **waters of Shiloah.** This was the stream from the Gihon Spring outside Jerusalem's city wall flowing to the Pool of Siloam inside the city which supplied the city's water (see 7:3). It symbolized the city's dependence on the Lord and His defense of the city, if they were to survive. First, the northern 10 tribes refused that dependence; later, King Ahaz of Judah in the S did the same.

8:7 waters of the Euphrates. In place of the waters of Shiloah, the waters of the River Euphrates were to overflow its banks and flood all the way to and including Judah. In other words, the King of Assyria was to sweep through the Land with his devastating destruction. Though outwardly Ahaz's submission to the Assyrians brought peace to Judah (2Ki 16:7-18), Isaiah saw the reality that David's throne was merely a hollow sham.

8:8 O Immanuel. Because of the Assyrian onslaught, the land of Immanuel (7:14) was to be stripped of all its earthly glory. What a pity that He who owns and will someday possess the land must see it in such a devastated condition!

8:9 Be broken. Lest Assyria and other foreign powers think they conquered in their own strength, the prophet reminded them that they were only instruments for the Lord's use and would eventually come to nothing.

8:10 God is with us. The Heb. is *Immanuel*. The name of the virgin's child (7:14) guaranteed the eventual triumph of the faithful remnant of Israel.

Watts - The prophet relates an oracle received from YHWH in vv 5-8. The first lines (vv 5, 6, 7a) are prose. The rest of the oracle is preserved in tight parallel lines of poetry. The prophet is the speaker throughout vv 5-8b as he relates what God has said to him in indirect quotation.

The speech is a threat. V 6 gives the reason. V 7ab announces the act of God. Vv 7c-8b interpret the results of God's action. V 8c adds a comment that changes the metaphor and is only loosely related to the preceding lines. The last stich of v 8 belongs with the following lines. Its first person plural indicates the beginning of the choral speech that continues through v 10. It opens and closes with עִמָּנוּ אֵל *Immanuel*, "God (is) with us." The passage fits the genre of the "challenge to battle" (Saebø, ZAW 76 [1964] 132-44; R. Bach, *Die Aufforderung zur Flucht und zum Kampf im alttestamentlichen Prophetenspruch*, WMANT 9 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962]). Parallel forms are found in Jer 46:3-6, 9 and Joel 3:9-12. **Overtones of the belief that Jerusalem will be kept unharmed** may be noted like those in Pss 46, 47, 76 (cf. Kaiser). *Immanuel* has a parallel in Ps 46:8, 12: עִמָּנוּ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, "YHWH of Hosts (is) with us." Here elements of holy war thought are mixed with those of Davidic kingship and Zion's sanctity (cf. Wildberger).

6 הָעַם הַזֶּה, "this people," continues to echo the covenant identification (cf. 1:3b) of the people without understanding who are destined to destruction and exile (6:9, 10). The earlier passages speak of the whole people, but particularly the claims of the northern kingdom to represent them all. Note that it refers directly to the kingdom of Israel (contra Young). הַשִּׁלּוֹחַ, "Shiloah," is a noun from the common root שָׁלַח, "to send"; cf. Akkad. šālḫu, "watering pipe," and šīlḫtu, "water course." The verb in piel means to "send water" (Ps 104:10; Ezek 31:4). A parallel word is הַשִּׁלּוֹחַ (Neh 3:15), which means an aqueduct or conduit for water. מִי הַשִּׁלּוֹחַ occurs only here in the OT. It is unlikely that the reference is to the tunnel of Shiloah, first built by Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:30). **The "waters of the Shiloah" are those diverted from the spring of Sihon southward from the east of the city** (M. Burrows, ZAW 70 [1958] 226). The waters of the aqueduct flow softly and gently... The spirit of rebellion has no time for the slow processes to work but demands action now.

7 מִי הַנְּהַר, "the waters of the river," contrasts with "the waters of Shiloah." The simple metaphors relate irrigation ditches with rushing river water. But "the river" inevitably also implies the Euphrates and the nations beyond. This contrasts with the policy of Jerusalem's "waters of Shiloah"...

8 עִמָּנוּ אֵל *Immanuel* is the name of the child who is a sign (7:14). It means simply "God—with us." It may imply an indicative "God is with us," like the name of the child or the clause in 8:10c. Or it may be an imperative, "God be with us," as here in misguided confidence on the part of a chorus of Jerusalemites voicing their belief that God will not allow Jerusalem's destruction.



Protection for the Righteous (v9-10)

Believing Remnant Preserved, Others Judged (8:9-18)

8:9

**"Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered;
And give ear, all remote places of the earth.
Gird yourselves, yet be shattered;
Gird yourselves, yet be shattered.**

8:10

Watts - 9-10 The conviction of these verses is that events follow the determined will of God. He has promised that Jerusalem will survive. No effort of the enemy—even the swirling waters of the Assyrian—can change that. Judah's villages may suffer, but God's city will survive. This confidence, while accurate in the short run, proved in the long run to have fundamentally misunderstood God's plan for Jerusalem, as the Vision of Isaiah will show.

**"Devise a plan but it will be thwarted;
State a proposal, but it will not stand,
For God is with us."**

Explanation
The second word spoken "to me" speaks of "this people." In the book of Isaiah YHWH expresses his love and compassion to "my people." When he uses the abrupt impersonal "this people," it indicates his distance from them, his impatience toward them.

The reason for his displeasure is clear. They have "refused the waters of Shiloah which flow gently," a way of peace and acceptance. Instead, they have chosen a policy that pleases the king of Aram and Pekah, whose name the writer cannot bear to pronounce. He calls him "Remaliah's son," as he had in 7:5. They have promoted a policy of active rebellion against Assyria, a rebellion that they wanted Ahaz to join (7:1-2). Because of this rebellion against Assyria and against YHWH's will for them, YHWH is bringing an Assyrian invasion that will flood the land, including Judah.

The people respond with a chant on the name Immanuel, the name given by the prophet in 7:14. They do not believe it can happen to them for, after all, "God is with us." They have taken the promise to Ahaz to mean that Zion is invulnerable. It cannot be touched. God will not let it or them be harmed. They ignore the word "Swift-Plunder, Hastening-Booty" (8:1-4).

Pulpit - Refuseth the waters of Shiloah. The "pool of Siloah" (Neh. 3:15) was the tank or reservoir at the south western foot of Ophel, which is supplied with water by a narrow conduit cut through the limestone rock for a distance of 1750 feet from the "Pool of the Virgin" on the opposite side of Ophel, in the Kedron valley. This pool itself is fed from reservoirs under the temple area, which have not yet been fully explored. It is probable that Isaiah uses the expression "waters of Shiloah" in a general sense for the streams, springs, reservoirs, conduits, which supplied the temple, and were connected with its service. "Refusing the waters of Shiloah" would then be, without any violent metaphor, refusing the temple service and worship, which was exactly what the Israelites had done from the time of Jeroboam. That go softly. In contrast with the "waters of the river, strong and many," of the next verse. They who refused the mild and gentle government of Jehovah should experience the impetuous and torrent-like rush of the Assyrian armies. Rejoice in Rezin; rather, *rejoice with Rezin*; i.e. sympathize with him, rejoice when he rejoices.

Ver. 7.—The waters of the river, strong and many. "The river" is, of course, the Euphrates, as in ch. 7:20. In its lower course the Euphrates often overflows its banks, and inundates the adjacent districts, causing vast damage to crops, and sometimes threatening to break down the walls of cities (Loftus, 'Chaldea and Susiana,' p. 7). It is scarcely likely, however, that Isaiah had any acquaintance with this fact. His experience would probably have been limited to the "swellings of Jordan" (Jer. 12:5; comp. Josh. 3:15). **All his glory** (comp. ch. 10:12, 16, 18, etc.). He shall come up over all his channels. A graphic description of the swelling of rivers in the East. These, when they are low, contract their waters from the many channels, in which they ordinarily flow, into some one or two, leaving the others dry. The first effect of a flood is to fill all the channels, after which it may proceed further and overflow the banks.

Ver. 8—And he shall pass through Judah; rather, *he shall pass on into Judah* ("He shall sweep onward into Judah," Revised Version). The Assyrians will not be content with invading Syria and Samaria; they will "pass on into Judaea." It is not clear whether this is to be done immediately by Tiglath-Pileser, or by one of his successors at a later date. There is reason to believe from Tiglath Pileser's inscriptions that he used the territory of Ahaz for the passage of his armies as those of a vassal king, but did not ravage them. He shall reach even to the neck. The Assyrian attacks on Judaea shall stop short of destroying it. The flood shall not submerge the head, but only rise as high as the neck. This prophecy was fulfilled, since it was not Assyria, but Babylon, which destroyed the Jewish kingdom. The stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land. The Assyrian armies shall visit every part of the land. The sudden change of metaphor is in the manner of Isaiah (see ch. 1:30, 31; 5:24, 30, etc.). **O Immanuel.** On the importance of this address as indicating the kingly, and so (probably) the Divine character of Immanuel, see the notes on ch. 7:14. Isaiah could not speak of the land as belonging to his own infant son.

Ver. 9.—Associate yourselves. It is impossible to obtain this meaning from the existing Hebrew text, which must be translated, "Be angry," or "Rage" ("Make an uproar," Revised Version). The prophet passes from the consideration of the opposition offered to Jehovah by Israel, Syria, and Assyria, to a general consideration of all the nations of the earth. He challenges them to the combat against Jehovah, and confidently predicts their defeat. O ye people; rather, *O ye peoples* (compare the corresponding expression in the next clause, "All ye of far countries").

Ver. 10.—Take counsel together; literally, *devise a device*; i.e. form some plan, even the cleverest possible, against God's people, and the result will be utter failure. **It shall not stand** (comp. ch. 7:7). **For God is with us.** In the Hebrew, *ki'immanu-El*, "for with us (is) God," words declarative of the true meaning of the name which God had made a sign to his people (ch. 7:14). It was his being "with them" that could alone save them from their enemies.

Pulpit - Vers. 5-10.—The Flood of Assyrian Invasion will pass from Syria and Samaria into Judaea, but will there be arrested. Syria and Samaria were barriers, breakwaters, so placed as to stem the tide of invasion, and be a defence to Judaea against Assyrian attack. When once they were overwhelmed, the waters would have free course, and the submersion of Judaea was certain. It might be delayed by the Divine favour, and would be, so long as the people, or even a remnant of them, remained faithful, but only through the might of the name Immanuel, "God with us."

Ver. 6.—Forasmuch as this people. It is a question which people is intended, Judah or Israel. Ewald supposes Judah, and draws the conclusion that there was a strong party in Jerusalem which favoured "the son of Tabeal." Dr. Kay does the same, but understands the charge against Judah to be, not that it sympathized with Rezin, but that it fell into the same sins. Other commentators suggest that Israel is the people intended (as in ch. 9:16), the sense being carried on from ver. 4, where the word "Samaria" is suggestive of the Israelite people.



Believing Remnant Preserved, Others Judged (8:9-18)

8:11 For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,

8:12 "You are not to say, 'It is a conspiracy!'

In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy,

And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.

8:13 "It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy.

And He shall be your fear,

And He shall be your dread.

Judgment on the People (v14b-15)

8:14 "Then He shall become a sanctuary;

But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,

And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

8:15 "And many will stumble over them,

Then they will fall and be broken;

They will even be snared and caught."

Mac - 8:11 with mighty power. God inspired Isaiah with compelling power to speak a message that by its nature distanced him from the people he ministered to.

8:12 conspiracy. Many in Israel considered Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets to be servants of the enemy when they advocated a policy of nonreliance on foreign powers and complete dependence on the Lord alone (see Jer 37:13–15).

8:14 sanctuary ... rock to stumble over. Isaiah found encouragement in the Lord as his holy place of protection from his accusers. The NT applies this verse to corporate Israel in her ongoing rejection of Jesus as Messiah (Lk 2:34; Ro 9:32, 33; 1Pe 2:8). **both the houses of Israel.** They will be collapsed until the return of the Messiah to the earth restores them.

8:15 Many will stumble. Another prediction anticipated the stumbling of Israel, which included her rejection of her Messiah at His first advent (Lk 20:18; Ro 9:32; cf. 28:16).

Vers. 11–16. - The Grounds of Isaiah's Confidence. Having declared his absolute confidence, not only that the attack of Pekah and Rezin will fail (vers. 1–4), but that Assyria also (ver. 8), nay, that all the nations of the earth (ver. 9) will fail, and bring destruction upon themselves, if they "devise devices" against God's true people, the prophet explains the ground of his confidence by relating a special "instruction" which he had received from God some time previously. He had been bidden to separate himself from the mass of his countrymen in thought and feeling, and to cling only to Jehovah, who would "be for a Sanctuary" (ver. 14) to his own, but "for a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence" to all others.

Ver. 11. - For the Lord. Mr. Cheyne regards this passage as "a short oracle, complete in itself," and entirely unconnected with what has preceded. But the initial *ki*, "for," is in that case inexplicable. **Spake thus to me with a strong hand;** literally, *with strength of hand* - i. e. laying a strong grasp upon him; and, as it were, constraining him to attend (comp. Ezek. 1:3; 3:14, 22, etc.). **That I should not walk in the way of this people.** Isaiah was bidden not to "follow a multitude to evil" (Exod. 23:2). It was not merely idolatry against which he was warned, but the whole spirit and tone of the society of his day. He was not to entertain their suspicions, or to hope their hopes, or to fear their fears. He was to take a line of his own, to fear God and him only; then God would be "for a Sanctuary" to him.

Ver. 12. - Say ye not. The transition from the singular to the plural is noticeable. It implies that Isaiah did not stand alone, but had followers - a "little flock," it may be - but still enough to give him the support of sympathy (comp. ver. 16). **A confederacy;** rather, *treason, or conspiracy* (see 2 Sam. 15:12; 1 Kings 16:20; 2 Kings 11:12; 12:20; Jer. 11:9; Ezek. 22:25, etc.). The command is, not to call a course of conduct treasonable simply because the people generally so call it. Jeremiah was charged with treason for preaching the hopelessness of offering resistance to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 20:1; 26:8–11). Those who opposed an Assyrian alliance were probably now taxed with treason. **To all them to whom;** rather, *everything which*. Translate the entire clause thus: *Call ye not conspiracy everything which this people shall call conspiracy*. Neither fear ye their fear. They feared man (ch. 7:2). Isaiah and his disciples are commanded to fear no one but God.

Ver. 13. - Sanctify the Lord of hosts. God was sanctified by being believed in (Numb. 20:12). They who feared Rezin and Pekah, despite of God's assurances that their design should fail, did not believe in him, and so did not "sanctify" him.

Ver. 14. - He shall be for a Sanctuary (comp. Ezek. 11:16, "Yet will I be to them as a little Sanctuary"). A sanctuary is "a refuge" (Ps. 90:1; 91:9), and something more. **It is a holy refuge, a place which is a refuge because of its holiness.** Its material counterpart in the Mosaic system is, not "the city of refuge," but the altar (1 Kings 1:50; 2:28). **Both the houses of Israel;** i. e. "the two reigning houses of Samaria and Judæa," both of which were Israelite. Both the "houses" would ultimately forsake Jehovah, and find in him a "Snare" and a "Rock of offence."

Ver. 15. - Many among them (so the Vulgate, Ewald, Delitzsch, and Knobel). But most others translate, "Many shall stumble thereon," i. e. on the stone and the rock (Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Vance Smith, Kay, Cheyne). **Fall, and be broken.** The effect of stumbling against a stone (Matt. 21:44; Luke 20:18). Be snared, and be taken. The effect of being caught in a gin (Ps. 9:15, 16).

Ver. 16. - Bind up the testimony, etc. The words are still those of Jehovah, addressed to his servant Isaiah. **God commands that the prophecy shall be written in a roll,** which is then to be carefully tied with a string and sealed, for future use. **Seal the Law;** rather, *the instruction* - the advice given in vers. 12–15 (comp. Dan. 12:4).



Isaiah, His Disciples & Children (v16-18)

Believing Remnant Preserved, Others Judged (8:9-18)

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

8:17 And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

8:18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

Ver. 16. - Bind up the testimony, etc. The words are still those of Jehovah, addressed to his servant Isaiah. God commands that the prophecy shall be written in a roll, which is then to be carefully tied with a string and sealed, for future use. Seal the Law; rather, *the instruction* - the advice given in vers. 12-15 (comp. Dan. 12:4).

Vers. 17, 18. - Isaiah defines his own Attitude and that of his Children. It is questioned whether something has not fallen out between vers. 16 and 17. The transition is exceedingly abrupt, undoubtedly; but perhaps not more abrupt than elsewhere in Isaiah and the prophets contemporary with him. The Divine "instruction" comes to an end in ver. 16; and Isaiah might have been expected to comment on it, or enforce its teaching; but he does neither. He simply states what his own attitude will be under the coming calamity (ver. 8). He will "wait for the Lord and look to him" (ver. 17), and consider himself and his children as doing a work for God in being "signs" (ver. 18) - signs to which the rest of Israel may look, and from which they may derive sufficient hope and confidence to carry them through the dark time which is approaching.

Ver. 17. - I will wait upon the Lord; rather, *I will wait for the Lord*; i.e. "await the time of his relenting" (see ch. 30:18; 64:4, etc.). That hideth his face from the house of Jacob (compare the threats in Deut. 31:17; 32:20). The light of God's countenance is to the spiritual what that of the sun is to the material world. All life, health, joy, happiness, proceed from it. This light was now to be withdrawn for a time on account of the people's sins. But Isaiah would "wait" for its reappearance.

Ver. 18. - I and the children ... are for signs. Isaiah's children seem to have been "for signs," especially in respect of their names. Shear-Jashub meant "A remnant shall return" (ch. 10:21), and thus held out two hopes; one that a remnant of Israel would return to God and become his true servants, another that a remnant would return from the captivity that had been prophesied (ch. 5:13). Maher-shalal-hashbaz - "Plunder speeds, spoil hastens" - was a "sign" of a different kind. Primarily, his name referred to the spoiling of Damascus and Samaria (vers. 3, 4); but it may further have indicated a time of general disturbance, plunder, and ravage. It is not quite clear in what respects Isaiah was a "sign." Perhaps he, too, in his name, which meant "(Our) salvation is Jehovah" - certainly also in his symbolical acts (ch. 20:3), and possibly in the firmness of his faith, which never wavered. From the Lord of hosts; literally, *from by the Lord of hosts* - an expression like the French *de chez*. God had supernaturally appointed the sign in one case (vers. 1-4), but in the other two had merely brought them about by the secret working of his providence. But the prophet treats all three as coming equally from him. Which dwelleth in Mount Zion. Here, again, is encouragement. God has not quitted Zion. The Shechinah still rests between the cherubim in the holy of holies. While this is so, God is still *with* his people (Immanuel). [Pulpit Commentary]

Mac - 8:16 my disciples. These were God's faithful remnant, and hence disciples of Isaiah in a secondary sense. They had the responsibility of maintaining written records of his prophecies so that they could become public after the prophesied Assyrian invasion (see 8:2).

8:17 I will wait ... look eagerly. The speaker is Isaiah whose disposition was to await the Lord's deliverance, the national salvation promised to the faithful remnant (40:31; 49:23)....

8:18 I and the children. In their historical setting, the words refer to Isaiah and his two sons, whose names had prophetic significance (i.e., as "signs and wonders")....

Isaiah's brief appearance, which began in 7:1, is brought to an end by his own act and decision. The Vision records his next activity in the year that Ahaz died. In the meantime, Assyria's invasions of 732 and 724-21 B.C.E. will have brought the northern kingdom to an end. Only the submissive policies of Ahaz will have spared Judah a similar fate.

Isaiah speaks of "testimony" and "instruction," descriptions of the word of God revealed. He speaks of "binding" and "sealing," that is, recording and preserving teachings through a difficult time until a time of better hearing and understanding. They are committed to his "disciples" who have listened and learned the precious words.

The times are dark because YHWH is "hiding his face" from the northern kingdom. The decision about the fate of the people of the northern kingdom has already been reached (10:22b), and God does not entertain further entreaty on their behalf. The prophet sets an example of the proper attitude for the believer in such a time. He will "wait for YHWH," and he will "hope for him," expecting a day when his countenance will turn toward his people, when his spirit will once again move among them. In the meantime Isaiah is aware that he and his children with their meaningful names are signs and symbols reminding Judah and Jerusalem that God has spoken, warned, and encouraged them before and during those dark hours. For YHWH of Hosts, God of history and of judgment, continues to make his home on Zion's ridge. [John Watts]



The People (v19-22)

Despair of those who Consult Mediums and Spiritists (8:19-22)

- 8:19 And **when** they say to **you**, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their **God**? *Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?*
- 8:20 To the law and to the testimony! **If** they do not speak according to this word, it is **because** they have no dawn.
- 8:21 And they will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that **when** they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their **God** **as** they face upward.
- 8:22 **Then** they will look to the earth, and **behold**, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and *they will be driven away into darkness.*

Barnes - sa 8:19 And when they shall say - When the people, instead of putting confidence in God, shall propose to apply to necromancers. In the time of Ahaz the people were, as they were often, much inclined to idolatry; 2Ki_16:10. In their troubles and embarrassments, instead of looking to Yahweh, they imitated the example of surrounding nations, and applied for relief to those who professed to be able to hold converse with spirits. That it was common for idolatrous people to seek direction from those who professed that they had the power of divining, is well known; see Isa_19:3; 29:4. It was expressly forbidden to the Jews to have recourse to those who made such professions; Lev_20:6; Deu_18:10-11. Yet, notwithstanding this express command, it is evident that it was no uncommon thing for the Jews to make application for such instructions; see the case of Saul, who made application to the woman of Endor, who professed to have a familiar spirit, in 1Sam_28:7-25. Among pagan nations, nothing was more common than for persons to profess to have contact with spirits, and to be under the influence of their inspiration. The oracle at Delphi, of this nature, was celebrated throughout Greece, and throughout the world. Kings and princes, warriors and nations, sought of the priestess who presided there, responses in undertaking any important enterprise, and were guided by her instructions; see the Travels of Anacharsis, vol. ii. 376ff.

That hath familiar spirits - Hebrew, אבות 'oboth. The word 'familiar,' applied to spirit, is supposed to have been used by our translators to imply that they were attended by an invisible spirit that was subject to their call, or that would inspire them when they sought his direction. The Hebrew word is used to denote a necromancer, a conjuror; particularly one who was supposed to have power to call up the dead, to learn of them respecting future events; see 1Sa_28:7-19; Deu_18:11. The word is most commonly applied to women; as it was almost entirely confined to women to profess this power; Lev_19:31; 20:6; 1Sam_28. The idea was, that they could call up the spirits of the dead who were supposed to have seen objects invisible to the living, and who could, therefore, inform them in regard to things which mortals on earth could not see. The Vulgate renders this by 'Pythons and diviners.' A Python, among the Greeks and Romans, denoted one that had the spirit of prophesying, and was particularly applied to the priestess of Apollo at Delphi. The Septuagint renders the place thus: 'And if they say to you, Seek the "ventriloquists," ...engastrimouthous, and those speaking from the earth, and speaking vain things, who speak from the belly;' ...hoi ek tes koilias phonousin. From this it is evident, that the art of the ventriloquist, so well known now, was known then; and it is highly probable that the secret of the art of soothsayers consisted very much in being able to throw the voice, with various modifications, into different places, so that it would seem to come from a grave, or from an image of a dead person, that was made to appear at the proper time.

And unto wizards - The word used here - ידענים yidde'oniyim - is derived from the verb ידע yada' to know; and means a wise man, a soothsayer, a magician, or one possessed with a spirit of divination. The arts of the magician, or soothsayer, were often the arts of one skilled in natural magic; acquainted somewhat with the laws of chemistry; and able, therefore, to produce appearances among an ignorant people that would surprise them; see Brewster's Natural Magic, where this art is fully explained.

That peep - This word is properly used of young birds, and means to chirp, to pip; and also to make a small noise by the gentle opening of the mouth. It is then applied to the gentle whispering which the ancients ascribed to departed spirits; the small, low, shrill voice which they were supposed to use, and which, probably, those attempted to imitate who claimed the power of raising them to the earth. It was believed among all the ancient nations, that departed spirits did not speak out openly and clearly, but with an indistinct, low, gentle, suppressed voice....

And that mutter - The word used here - חגגה hagah - usually means to meditate, to consider; and then to speak, to utter. It also means to sigh, to mourn, Jer_48:31; Isa_16:7; to coo, as a dove, Isa_37:14; 59:11; and then to roar like a lion; not the loud roar, but the grumbling, the suppressed roar (Bochart); Isa_31:4. The idea here is, probably, that of gently sighing, or mourning - uttering feeble, plaintive lamentations or sighs, as departed shades were supposed to do; and this was, probably, imitated by necromancers. By thus feigning that they conversed with the dead, they imposed on the ignorant populace, and led them to suppose that they had supernatural powers.

Should not a people seek ... - Is it not proper that a people should inquire of the God that is worshipped, in order to be directed in perplexing and embarrassing events? Some have understood this to be a question of the idolaters, asking whether it was not right and proper for a people to seek counsel of those whom they worshipped as God. I understand it, however, as a question asked by the prophet, and as the language of strong and severe rebuke. 'You are seeking to idols, to the necromancers, and to the dead. But Yahweh is your God. And should not a people so signally favored, a people under his special care, apply to him, and seek his direction?'

For the living - On account of the affairs of the living. To ascertain what will be their lot, what is their duty, or what will occur to them.

To the dead - The necromancers pretended to have contact with the spirits of the dead. The prophet strongly exposes the absurdity of this. What could the dead know of this? How could they declare the future events respecting the living? Where was this authorized? People should seek God - the living God - and not pretend to hold consultation with the dead.



K&D - Isa 8:19 ... The circumstances of the times were very critical; and the people were applying to wizards to throw light upon the dark future. Ob signified primarily the spirit of witchcraft, then the possessor of such a spirit (equivalent to *Baal ob*), more especially the necromancer. *Yidd'oni*, on the other hand, signified primarily the possessor of a prophesying or soothsaying spirit (πυθων [*python*] or πνευμα του πυθωνος [*pneuma tou pythonos*]), Syr. *yodua'* (after the intensive from *pa'ul* with immutable vowels), and then the soothsaying spirit (L_{ev} 20:27), which was properly called *yidda'on* (the much knowing), like δαιμων [*daemon*], which, according to Plato, is equivalent to δαημων [*daemon*]. These people, who are designated by the LXX, both here and elsewhere, as εγγαστρομυθοι [*eggastromuthoi*], i.e., ventriloquists, imitated the chirping of bats, which was supposed to proceed from the shadows of Hades, and uttered their magical formulas in a whispering tone. [1]

What an unnatural thing, for the people of Jehovah to go and inquire, not of their own God, but of such heathenish and demoniacal deceivers and victims as these (*darash 'el*, to go and inquire of a person, Isa 11:10, synonymous with *sha'ar b'*, 1Sa 28:6)! What blindness, to consult the dead in the interests of the living!... Necromancy, which makes the dead the instructors of the living, is a most gloomy deception.

[1] Note: The Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 65a gives this definition: "*Baal'ob* is a python, i.e., a soothsayer ('with a spirit of divination'), who speaks from his arm-pit; *yidd'oni*, a man who speaks with his mouth." The *baal ob*, so far as he had to do with the bones of the dead, is called in the *Talmud oba' temayya'*, e.g., the witch of Endor (b. *Sabbath* 152b). On the history of the etymological explanation of the word, see Böttcher, *de inferis*, §205-217. If *'ob*, a skin or leather bottle, is a word from the same root (rendered "bellows" by the LXX at Job 32:19), as it apparently is, it may be applied to a bottle as a thing which swells or can be blown out, and to a wizard of spirit of incantation on account of this puffing and gasping.

Mac - 8:19 consult the dead. People of Isaiah's day were using spiritualists to communicate with the dead as King Saul did through the medium at Endor (1Sa 28:8-19). The law strictly forbade such consultations (Lv 19:26; Dt 18:10, 11).

8:20 law ... testimony. See 8:16. Light came through the prophecies of God's spokesman, Isaiah.

8:21, 22 This is a dismal picture of those who were frustrated, desperate, and angry even to the point of cursing God, all because they refused to accept the truthfulness of what Isaiah had predicted regarding the nation's future hardships.

Pulpit - Vers. 19-22. - **Isaiah recommends looking to God and the Revealed Word rather than to Necromancy.** Affliction will bring Israel to God. Isaiah returns, in ver. 19, to the consideration of his disciples. In the terrible times impending, they will be recommended to have recourse to necromancy; he urges that they should look to God and the Law. He then further suggests that, in the coming affliction which he describes (vers. 21, 22), men will generally turn for relief to the same quarter (ver. 20).

Ver. 19. - **Seek unto them that have familiar spirits.** In times of great distress the Israelites seem always to have been tempted to consult those among them who pretended to magic and divination. So Saul in the Philistine war resorted to the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:7-20); Manasseh, threatened by Esar-haddon, "used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards" (2 Kings 21:6). Israel generally, oppressed by Syria and Assyria, "used divination and enchantments" (2 Kings 17:17). There was the same inclination now on the part of many Jews... **Wizards that peep, and that mutter;** rather, *that chirp and mutter.* Tricks of the ventriloquists, probably, who disguised their voices, and represented that they were the voices of ghosts (comp. ch. 29:4). The natural speech of some tribes has been compared to the "chirping of birds" (Herod., iv. 183; Hornemann, 'Travels,' p. 119). **Should not a people,** etc.? Very abrupt and elliptical. Isaiah means to say, "Do not attend to them; but answer, **Should not a people,**" etc.? **For the living.** This may either mean "instead of the living," or "on behalf of the living." The latter meaning is preferable. The full phrase would be, "Should a people on behalf of the living seek to the dead?" or, Would not that be plainly preposterous?

Ver. 20. - **To the Law and to the testimony.** A sort of watchword or battle-cry, to be used by the faithful when God's enemies assailed them. Compare Gideon's cry (Judg. 7:18), "For the Lord and for Gideon." **If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;** rather, *Surely they will speak according to this word, when there is no dawn for them;* i.e. when they are plunged in darkness (ver. 22) and distress, and see no prospect of better days, surely they - the people generally - will rally to this cry, and repeat it, "For the Law and for the testimony." They will not always trust in necromancy....

Ver. 21. - **They shall pass through it.** "It," which is feminine, must mean "the land." The Jews left in it shall wander about it (comp. ch. 7:21-25), seeking pasture for the remnant of their cattle. **They shall fret themselves;** rather, *they shall be deeply angered* (Cheyne). **And curse their king and their God.** As the causes of their sufferings. And look upward. Not in hope, but in rage and defiance.

Ver. 22. - **They shall look unto the earth.** For necessary nutriment or simply as the place to which downcast and despairing eyes are turned naturally. **They shall be driven to darkness.** So Kay, who thinks the Captivity is meant; but it seems better to render the whole passage, with Mr. Cheyne, "They shall look to earth, and behold, distress and darkness, gloom of affliction, and thick darkness driven (upon them)." The darkness is spoken of as if it were a thing palpable, like rain or snow (comp. Exod. 10:21). [Pulpit Commentary]

Watts - 19 דרשו, "seek out the fathers," is a reference to the cult of the dead and the practice of receiving oracles from the spirits of those who had gone before. **Spiritualist mediums flourished throughout the ancient Near East.** (Cf. the experience of Saul with the medium from Endor in 1 Sam 28:7-20.) הידענים המצפצים, "diviners who chirp and mutter," is a derisive reference to practices of necromancy such as were common in the area. Israel's prophets were undoubtedly put on a level with Canaanite fortune-tellers by the unbelieving. המתים, "the dead," is again a reference to the cult of the dead. Ancient saints are sought out to help the living.

The ancient Near East (including Israel) was as inclined to fortune-tellers as any other people and time. Mosaic legislation forbids such (Deut 18:10-11)....

21-22 Vv 20b-21 warn of the potential result from Isaiah's words of warning, leading to panic and chaos. V 22 calls attention to the reality already abroad in the land.



Birth & Reign of the Prince of Peace (9:1-7)

9:1 **But** there will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish; **in earlier times** He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, **but later on** He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, **Galilee of the Gentiles.**

9:2 The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.

9:3 Thou shalt multiply **the nation,**
Thou shalt increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Thy presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice **when** they divide the spoil.

9:4 **For** Thou shalt break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, **as** at the battle of **Midian.**

9:5 **For** every boot of the booted warrior in the **battle** tumult,
And cloak rolled in blood, **will** be for burning, fuel for the fire.

Barnes - Isa 9:1 - He lightly afflicted -

The word used here, *לָקַח qalal*, means properly, to be, or make light of, small; and in Hiphil, the form which occurs here, it often means to "esteem lightly, to despise, to hold in contempt;" 2Sa 19:43; Eze 22:7.... "he exposed them to contempt and derision." The time to which reference is made here, was probably the invasion of the land by Tiglath-pileser; 2Ki 15:29; 1Ch 5:26. In that invasion, the parts of Zebulun and Naphtali were particularly afflicted. "Tiglath-pileser took Ijon, and Gilead, and Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria;" 2Ki 15:29. This region had also been invaded by Benhadad two hundred years before the time of Isaiah; 1Ki 15:20, and there might have been a reference to these various invasions to which this northern part of the land of Palestine had been subjected.

The land of Zebulun - The region occupied by the tribe of Zebulun. This tribe was located between the sea of Tiberias, or the lake Gennesareth, and the Mediterranean. It extended entirely across from the one to the other, and as it was thus favored with a somewhat extended seacoast, the people were more given to commerce than the other tribes, and hence, mingled more with surrounding nations.

And the land of Naphtali - The region which was occupied by this tribe was directly north of Zebulun, and of the sea of Galilee, having that sea and the tribe of Zebulun on the south and southeast, Asher on the west, and a part of the tribe of Manasseh, on the east.

And afterward - That is, in subsequent times; meaning times that were to come after the prophecy here delivered. The previous part of the verse refers to the calamities that had come upon that region in former times. The expression here refers to what was seen by the prophet as yet to occur.

Did more grievously afflict - *הִקְבִּייד hakebbiyd*. This verb has very various significations. It properly means "to be heavy, to be grievous, to lie or fall heavy on anyone, to be dull, obstinate; also, to be honored, respected;" that is, of weight, or influence in society. It means, in Hiphil, the form which is used here, "to make heavy, or grievous;" 1Ki 12:10; Isa 47:6; "to oppress," Neh 5:15; and it also means to "cause to be honored, or distinguished, to favor." - Gesenius. The connection requires that it should have this sense here, and the passage means, that the land which he had made vile in former times, or had suffered to be despised, he had purposed to honor, or to render illustrious by the great light that should rise on it....

A. R. Fausset - Isa 9:1 - when at the first, etc. - rather, "as the former time has brought contempt on the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (namely, the deportation of their inhabitants under Tiglath-pileser, 2Ki 15:29, a little before the giving of this prophecy); so shall the after-coming time bring honor to the way of the sea (the district around the lake of Galilee), the land beyond...Jordan (Perea, east of Jordan, belonging to Reuben, Gad, and half-Manasseh), the circle...(that is, region) of the "Gentiles"... Galil in Hebrew is a "circle," "circuit," and from it came the name Galilee. North of Naphtali, inhabited by a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles of the bordering Phoenician race (Jdg 1:30; 1Ki 9:11). Besides the recent deportation by Tiglath-pileser, it had been sorely smitten by Ben-hadad of Syria, two hundred years before (1Ki 15:20). It was after the Assyrian deportation colonized with heathens, by Esar-haddon (2Ki 17:24). Hence arose the contempt for it on the part of the southern Jews of purer blood (Joh 1:46; 7:52). The same region which was so darkened once shall be among the first to receive Messiah's light (Mat 4:13, 15, 16). It was in despised Galilee that He first and most publicly exercised His ministry; from it were most of His apostles. Foretold in Deu 33:18, 19; Act 2:7; Psa 68:27, 28, Jerusalem, the theocratic capital, might readily have known Messiah; to compensate less favored Galilee, He ministered mostly there; Galilee's very debasement made it feel its need of a Savior, a feeling not known to the self-righteous Jews (Mat 9:13). It was appropriate, too, that He who was both "the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of His people Israel," should minister chiefly on the border land of Israel, near the Gentiles.

By the way of the sea - The sea of Galilee, or Gennesareth. All this region was in the vicinity of that sea. The word "way" here, *דֶרֶךְ derek*, means toward, or in the vicinity of. The extensive dark region lying in the vicinity of that sea. Both those tribes bordered on the sea of Tiberias, or had that as a part of their boundary.

Beyond Jordan - This expression - *עַבְר הַיַרְדֵן eber havaredden* - means in the vicinity of Jordan; the land

by the side of the Jordan, or perhaps that large region through which the upper part of the Jordan passed. It does not mean strictly on the east of Jordan, but rather the northern portion of the land. It is such language as a man would use who was describing the upper and imperfectly known regions of the country - the dark, uncivilized region through which the upper part of the Jordan flowed, and the word *עַבְר eber*, rendered here "beyond," means "side" - by the side of the Jordan.

Galilee of the nations - This was sometimes called upper Galilee. It was called 'Galilee of the nations,' or of the Gentiles, because it was surrounded by them, and because the pagan were extensively intermingled with the Jews. In this region, Solomon had given to Hiram, king of Tyre, twenty cities; 1Ki 9:2. Adjacent to this region were the countries of Phoenicia, Tyre, and Sidon; and the people would naturally mingle much with them in commerce. The country abounded with hills and caverns, and, consequently, it was never possible completely to dislodge from the fortresses the former inhabitants of the land. Strabo enumerates among the inhabitants of Galilee, Arabians and Phoenicians. The inhabitants of this country are represented as having been bold and courageous, but as seditious, and prone to insolence and rebellion. If it be asked here, in what way this land had been made contemptible, or why it was regarded as an object of contempt? we may reply,

- (1) The district in which these two tribes dwelt constituted the border-land toward the pagan nations.
- (2) The Galileans not only dwelt in the vicinity of the pagan, but a large number of them had actually remained in the country, and it had been found impossible to expel them from it; Jdg 1:30-35.
- (3) The Phoenicians, with whom they held commercial contact, and with whom they dwelt intermingled, were among the most corrupt of the pagan nations. To this may be added,
- (4) They were far from Jerusalem, and, consequently, the influence of religion may be supposed to have been less felt among them than among the other Jews. The true religion was, in a great measure, lost upon them, and ignorance and superstition took its place. Hence, in the New Testament, they are spoken of as almost proverbially rude and ignorant.



Messiah's First Coming

Micah 5:2

Birth Place: Bethlehem Ephrathah in Judah

Who: One whose goings forth are from long ago/the days of eternity

Purpose: to be ruler in Israel

John 3:16-17

Motive: God's love for the world (v16)

Purpose: sent by the God to save the world (v17), that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life

1Timothy 3:16 – The Mystery of Godliness

= His Humanity, His Vindication, His Witnesses, The Proclamation, The World's Ground of Faith, His Glorious Ascension

Titus 2:11-14 – The Salvation of God

Fact: Christ gave Himself for us (v14) = the grace of God

Purpose: to redeem us from every lawless deed & purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (v14)

Result: those who receive God's salvation are taught to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age (v12), looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus

Ephesians 2:11-18 – Before & After Salvation

Past: called Uncircumcision, separate from Christ, excluded from commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope & without God in the world (v12), far off (v13)

Present: brought near by the blood of Christ

Facts: Christ is our peace (v14)

14 made both groups into one

14 broke down the barrier of the dividing wall

15 abolished in His flesh the enmity between Jew & Gentile

15 made the two into one new man, thus establishing peace

15 reconciled them both in one body to God through the cross

17 came & preached peace to Gentile & Jew

18 we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father through Him

Messiah's Second Coming

Luke 1:32-33

32 will be great & will be called the Son of the Most High

32 given the throne of David by the Lord God

33 will reign over the house of Jacob forever & His kingdom will have no end

Daniel 7:13-14

13 One like a Son of Man was coming on the clouds of heaven to be presented with dominion, glory and a kingdom by the Ancient of Days

14 His dominion is an everlasting dominion, His kingdom is indestructible

Isaiah 59:15b-21

15-16 the LORD saw and was displeased that there was no justice, and no intercessor so His own arm brought salvation to Him

20 a Redeemer will come to Zion, & to those who turn from transgression in Jacob

17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head, garments of vengeance for clothing, & wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle

18 He will repay His enemies according to their deeds, wrath to His adversaries & recompense to His enemies/the coastlands

19 He will come like a rushing stream driven by the wind of the LORD

Result: they will fear the name of the LORD from the west and His glory from the rising of the sun (v19)

Fulfillment of God's covenant with them = His Spirit is put within them & His words shall not depart from Israel from now and forever (v21)

Psalms 2:1-6

1-3 the nations, peoples, kings of the earth & rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed in order to tear their fetters apart & to cast their cords away from them

4-5 The Lord's Response: He laughs & scoffs at them & will speak to them in His anger & terrify them in His fury

6 His Decree: "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

Revelation 19:11-21 – The Battle of Armageddon

His Names:

11 the Rider on a white horse, is called Faithful and True

12 He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself

13 His name is called The Word of God

16 on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

His Description:

12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems

13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood

15 from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations

The Battle of Armageddon:

11 He judges & wages war in righteousness

14 the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white & clean, were following Him on white horses

15 He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty

His Opponents:

19 the beast & the kings of the earth & their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army

20-21 The Aftermath

20 the beast & false prophet were seized & thrown alive into the lake of fire & brimstone

21 the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse

17-18, 21 all the birds were filled with their flesh

15 He will rule them with a rod of iron



9:6

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
 And the government will rest on His shoulders;
 And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

9:7

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
 On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
 From then on and forevermore.
 The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Barnes - Isa 9:6 A child – (יָלֵד *yeled*). This word usually denotes a *lad, a boy, a youth*. It is commonly applied to one in early life... A son – בֶּן *ben*. This word does not differ materially from the word translated *child*....

Is given – The Messiah is often represented as having been given, or sent; or as the rich gift of God; ...Act_4:12; Joh_3:16; Eph_1:22; Joh_17:4. The Messiah was pre-eminently the gift of the God of love. Man had no claim on him, and God voluntarily gave his Son to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

And the government shall be upon his shoulder – The sense of this passage is, that he shall rule, or that the government shall be vested in him.

And his name shall be called – That is, his attributes shall be such as to make all these applications appropriate descriptions of his power and work. *To be called, and to be,* in the Hebrew, often mean the same thing. The word ויקרא *vayiqra* may possibly mean, Yahweh shall call him; or it may be regarded as taken impersonally....

Wonderful – פלא *pele*. This word is derived from the verb פלא *pala*, *to separate, to distinguish, or to make great.* It is applied usually to anything that is great or wonderful, as a miracle; Exo_15:2; Lam_1:9; Dan_12:6. It is applied here to denote the unusual and remarkable assemblage of qualities that distinguished the Messiah. Those are specified more particularly in the other part of the verse; such an assemblage of qualities as to make proper the names Mighty God, etc. 'The proper idea of the word,' says Hengstenberg, 'is miraculous. It imports that the personage here referred to, in his being and in his works, will be exalted above the ordinary course of nature, and that his whole manifestation will be a miracle.' Yet it seems to me, that the proper idea of the word is not that of miraculous. It is rather that which is separated from the ordinary course of events, and which is suited to excite amazement, wonder, and admiration, whether it be miraculous or not.... Anything which is suited to excite wonder and amazement, from any cause, will correspond with the sense of the Hebrew word. It is a word which expresses with surprising accuracy everything in relation to the Redeemer. For the Messiah was wonderful in all things. It was wonderful love by which God gave him, and by which he came; the manner of his birth was wonderful; his humility, his self-denial, his sorrows were wonderful; his mighty works were wonderful; his dying agonies were wonderful; and his resurrection, his ascension, were all suited to excite admiration and wonder.

Counselor – This word has been sometimes joined with 'wonderful,' as if designed to qualify it thus – 'wonderful counselor;' but it expresses a distinct attribute, or quality. The name "counselor" here, יועץ *yu'ets*, denotes one of honorable rank; one who is suited to stand near princes and kings as their adviser. It is expressive of great wisdom, and of qualifications to guide and direct the human race. The Septuagint translates this phrase, 'The angel of the mighty counsel.' The Chaldee, 'The God of wonderful counsel.'

The mighty God – Syriac, 'The mighty God of ages.' This is one, and but one out of many, of the instances in which the name God is applied to the Messiah; compare Joh_1:1; Rom_9:5; 1Jo_5:20; Joh_20:28; 1Ti_3:16; Heb_1:8. The name 'mighty God,' is unquestionably attributed to the true God in Isa_10:21....

The everlasting Father – The Chaldee renders this expression, 'The man abiding forever.' The Vulgate, 'The Father of the future age.' Lowth, 'The Father of the everlasting age.' Literally, it is the Father of eternity, אבי עד *'eby ad*. The word rendered "everlasting," עד *'ad*, properly denotes "eternity," and is used to express "forever;" see Psa_9:6, 19; 19:10. It is often used in connection with עולם *'olam*, thus, עולם ועד *va'ed olam*, "forever and ever;" Psa_10:16; 21:5; 45:7. The Hebrews used the term father in a great variety of senses – as a literal father, a grandfather, an ancestor, a ruler, an instructor. The phrase may either mean the same as the Eternal Father, and the sense will be, that the Messiah will not, as must be the case with an earthly king, however excellent, leave his people destitute after a short reign, but will rule over them and bless them forever (Hengstenberg); or it may be used in accordance with a custom usual in Hebrew and in Arabic, where he who possesses a thing is called the father of it.

Thus, the father of strength means strong; the father of knowledge, intelligent; the father of glory, glorious; the father of goodness, good; the father of peace, peaceful. According to this, the meaning of the phrase, the Father of eternity, is properly eternal. The application of the word here is derived from this usage. The term *Father* is not applied to the Messiah here with any reference to the distinction in the divine nature, for that word is uniformly, in the Scriptures, applied to the first, not to the second person of the Trinity. But it is used in reference to durations, as a Hebraism involving high poetic beauty. He is not merely represented as everlasting, but he is introduced, by a strong figure, as even the Father of eternity, as if even everlasting duration owed itself to his paternity. There could not be a more emphatic declaration of strict and proper eternity. It may be added, that this attribute is often applied to the Messiah in the New Testament; Joh_8:58; Col_1:17; Rev_1:11, 17-18; Heb_1:10-11; Joh_1:1-2.

The Prince of Peace – This is a Hebrew mode of expression denoting that he would be a peaceful prince. The tendency of his administration would be to restore and perpetuate peace. This expression is used to distinguish him from the mass of kings and princes who have delighted in conquest and blood. In contradistinction from all these, the Messiah would seek to promote universal concord, and the tendency of his reign would be to put an end to wars, and to restore harmony and order to the nations; see the tendency of his reign still further described in Isa_11:6-9; ...2:4; see also Mic_5:4; Hos_2:18....

The expressions used here imply that he would be more than human. It is impossible to believe that these appellations would be given under the Spirit of inspiration to a mere man.... The ancient Jews incontestably referred it to the Messiah. Thus the Targum of Jonathan renders it, 'His name shall be called God of wonderful counsel, man abiding forever, the messiah, משיח *mashiyach*, whose peace shall be multiplied upon us in his days.' Thus rabbi Jose, of Galilee, says, 'The name of the Messiah is שלום *shalom*, as is said in Isa_9:6, "Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace." Ben Sira (fol. 40, of the Amsterdam Edition, 1679) numbers among the eight names of the Messiah those also taken from this passage, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace. The later Jews, however, have rejected this interpretation, because the Messiah is here described as God.

BKC - f. The future deliverance of the nation (Isa 9:1-7)

Isaiah 9:1: In these verses Isaiah spoke of the coming Deliverer who will effect the changes in the nation of which the prophet had been speaking. The Messiah's coming will lead the nation into joy and prosperity, which had been lacking for years. His coming will fulfill the promises to Abraham and David about the prosperous kingdom. The "child" motif again is evident (Isa 9:6; cf. Isa 7:14-16; Isa 8:1-4; Isa 8:18). The Child will grow up to be the Deliverer (Isa 9:7); not a sign (Isa 8:18) of deliverance but the Deliverer Himself. He will effect the changes necessary for prosperity and spirituality to come to the nation.

A time will come when **gloom and darkness** (Isa 8:22) will be a thing of the past. The gloom on the northern section of Israel came because of discipline. God **humbled... Zebulun and... Naphtali** for a while. Though Isaiah was probably using these two tribal names to represent the Northern Kingdom, it is striking that Jesus' upbringing and early ministry was mostly in that very area near the Sea of Galilee. His presence certainly "honored" that area. In 732 B.C. this northern portion of Israel became an Assyrian province under Tiglath-Pileser III, thus humbling the people there and putting them in gloom. Under Gentile domination, that area was called Galilee of the Gentiles.

The way of the sea describes a major international highway running through this region. This is the only place where the Bible used this phrase, but it appears often in Assyrian and Egyptian records. The invading Assyrian soldiers took that route when they invaded the Northern Kingdom. From that area the Messiah will arise and will wipe away the gloom and darkness brought on by Gentile domination.

Isaiah 9:2: With typical Hebrew parallelism the prophet described the effect of the Messiah on this northern part of Israel. The people were in darkness (cf. Isa 8:22) and in the shadow of death. Then they saw a **great light** and light... **dawned** on them. Matthew applied this passage to Jesus, who began His preaching and healing ministry in that region (Mat 4:15-16).

Isaiah 9:3-5 You probably refers to God the Father, who will lead the people from spiritual darkness into light (Isa 9:2) by sending the Child (Isa 9:6), the Messiah. The light will increase their joy like the joy at harvestime or the joy of winning a battle and dividing the plunder. "Joy" is another emphasis of Isaiah's, mentioned more than two dozen times in the book. This will be a supernatural work of God much like the nation's deliverance when Gideon defeated Midian (Jdg 7:1-24; Isa 10:26). It will be like taking a burden off one's back (Isa 9:4). At that time, after the Child-Messiah will come, the implements of warfare will be destroyed (Isa 9:5) because in His reign of universal peace implements of war will not be needed (cf. Isa 2:4).

Isaiah 9:6-7 Here Isaiah recorded five things about the coming Messiah.

1. He was to be **born a Child**. The implication, given in parallel style, is that this Child, a **Son**, was to be born into the nation of Israel (to us) as one of the covenant people.

2. He will **rule over God's people** (cf. Mic 5:2) and the world (Zec 14:9). The government will be on His shoulders figuratively refers to the kingly robe to be worn by the Messiah. As King, He will be responsible to govern the nation. In Isaiah's day Judah's leaders were incompetent in governing the people. But the Messiah will govern properly.

3. He will have four descriptive names that will reveal His character. He will be the nation's **Wonderful** (this could be trans. "exceptional" or "distinguished") **Counselor**, and the people will gladly listen to Him as the authoritative One. In the kingdom many people will be anxious to hear the Messiah teach God's ways (Isa 2:3). He is also the **Mighty God** (cf. Isa 10:21). Some have suggested that this simply means "a godlike person" or hero. But Isaiah meant more than that, for he had already spoken of the Messiah doing what no other person had been able to do (e.g., Isa 9:2-5). Isaiah understood that the Messiah was to be God in some sense of the term.

This Deliverer will also be called the **Everlasting Father**. Many people are puzzled by this title because the Messiah, God's Son, is distinguished in the Trinity from God the Father. How can the Son be the Father? Several things must be noted in this regard. First, the Messiah, being the second Person of the Trinity, is in His essence, God. Therefore He has all the attributes of God including eternity. Since God is One (even though He exists in three Persons), the Messiah is God. Second, the title "Everlasting Father" is an idiom used to describe the Messiah's relationship to time, not His relationship to the other Members of the Trinity. He is said to be everlasting, just as God (the Father) is called "the Ancient of Days" (Dan 7:9). The Messiah will be a "fatherly" Ruler. Third, perhaps Isaiah had in mind the promise to David (2Sa 7:16) about the "foreverness" of the kingdom which God promised would come through David's line. The Messiah, a Descendant of David, will fulfill this promise for which the nation had been waiting.

The Messiah is also called the **Prince of Peace**, the One who will bring in and maintain the time of millennial peace when the nation will be properly related to the Lord. Together, these four titles give a beautiful picture of the coming Messiah's character (Isa 9:6 includes the first of Isaiah's 25 references to peace.)

4. The Messiah, seated on **David's throne** (Luk 1:32-33), will have an **eternal rule of peace and justice**. His rule will have **no end**; it will go on **forever** (cf. Dan 7:14, 27; Mic 4:7; Luk 1:33; Rev 11:15). Following the kingdom on earth, He will rule for eternity. He will maintain **righteousness** (cf. Jer 23:5), as His rule will conform to God's holy character and demands.

5. This will all be accomplished by the **zeal of the Lord Almighty**. The coming of the millennial kingdom depends on God, not Israel. The Messiah will rule because God promised it and will zealously see that the kingdom comes. Without His sovereign intervention there would be no kingdom for Israel.

Apparently Isaiah assumed that the messianic Child, Jesus Christ, would establish His reign in one Advent, that when the Child grew up He would rule in triumph. Like the other prophets, Isaiah was not aware of the great time gap between Messiah's two Advents (cf. 1Pe 1:10-12; and see comments on Isa 61:1-2).

Pulpit - I. The name of "wonderful." 1. Wonderful is the Son in his eternal relation to the Almighty Father, an unchanging relation of mutual love and tenderness, differentiated by the fact of derivation, and the sense on the one hand of bestowal, and on the other of acceptance and dependence. Wonderful, wholly transcending our utmost reach of thought, is that eternity of pre-existence which he enjoyed with the Father and the Holy Spirit, not only before the world was, but before it had pleased the Divine Nature to bring into existence any other being besides itself. 2. Wonderful, again, is he in that repeated act of creation, so clearly assigned to him (John 1:31; Heb. 1:2), whereby he brought out of nothing (Heb. 11:3) the entire existing universe - angels and archangels, principalities and powers, cherubim and seraphim; matter arranged and unarranged; sun, moon, stars, planets, satellites, nebulae; man, animals; - all of them "the work of his hands," created by him out of non-existence. 3. Even more wonderful is he in his dealings with the children of men - in his patience with them, his regard for them, his mediatorial office towards them, his inward revelation of himself to them, his constant presence with them, his sacramental communication of himself to them, all unworthy as they are. 4. Wonderful is he in his life on earth, which even unbelievers cannot but admire; wonderful in his triumph over death and the grave; wonderful in his ascension into heaven in the sight of men; wonderful in his appearances to St. Paul and St. Stephen; wonderful in the might wherewith he still sustains his Church, so that even the very "gates of hell" cannot prevail against it.

II. The name of "Counselor." As the "Logos," or "Reason," no less than the "Word" of God, the Son was identified by the ancient Fathers with the "Wisdom" of the Book of Proverbs, of whom it is said, "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge... Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding... The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was... When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (Prov. 8:12-30). He was thus, in some sort, the Counsellor of the Triune Synod which presided over the world and directed all its affairs. But, further, he was the Counsellor of man. The Logos was "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). Our natural reason and conscience come from him, for he has implanted them in us, to counsel us aright. All revealed light is also from him, for he is the Word and the Truth. He counsels us from within, by the inward monitor who tells us what is right; he counsels us from without, by his apostles, his evangelists, his Church, his living ministers. Do we lack wisdom generally? let us ask of him and he will pour light into our souls. Do we need counsel on any special matter? let us take it to him, and he will show us the wisest and best course.

III. The name of "Mighty God." The Son of God is himself God, and if God, then certainly "mighty" - nay, "almighty." What the Messiah was to do, could be done by none less than God. He was to redeem mankind; he was to vanquish death and sin; he was to triumph over Satan; he was to be a meritorious Sacrifice. "God with us" had already been declared to be one of his names (ch. 7:14). Now he is announced as "God the Mighty One." It is to the last degree uncritical to compare this assignment of so august a name, coming from the mouth of an intense theist, with the ascription of Divine titles to the Egyptian kings by themselves, or by their subjects, when both king and subjects were polytheists. Isaiah could not have intended to call a mere man "God;" he must have recognized, as David had done (Ps. 45:6), that the Messiah would be more than man, would in some way or other be a partaker of the Divine nature. Jeremiah did the same when he announced the Messiah as "Jehovah our Righteousness." The prophets may not have been aware of the doctrine of the Trinity, but they could conceive an incarnation of God. The name of "Mighty God" in Isaiah's list must be accepted as a distinct announcement of the true Divinity of the Messiah, just as the words "child" and "son," which had been previously applied to him (ver. 6), were announcements of his true humanity.

IV. The name of "Everlasting Father." When the Messiah is called a "Father," we must understand the word as meaning primarily "Protector." So Job was a "father to the poor" (Job 29:16), and Eliakim a "father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (ch. 22:11). The idea of protection, however, implied in "Father" does not exhaust the connotation of the word. It contains also the notions of "Creator" and "Preserver," of one whom we are bound to love, honour, and obey. "Have we not all one father?" says Malachi. "Hath not one God created us?" "If I be a Father," says Jehovah by his mouth, "where is my honour?" The Messiah was to be "Father" in all these senses. As the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, he created man; as "God with us," he preserves him; as the typical Man, the Head of the redeemed human race, he will ever keep and protect him. The prophet calls him "Everlasting Father," first, to show that he is no mere human protector, like Job or Eliakim; but also, further, to indicate by an additional phrase his Divinity, since God alone is "everlasting," or "eternal." His people are assured by the epithet that he will never cease to be their Protector, will never desert them, or weary of interposing for them. No; "he ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). He is "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last" (Rev. 1:8). He "will not fail us, nor forsake us" (Deut. 31:6).

V. The name of "Prince of Peace." So long as there is evil, there must be war between good and evil. The Messiah is "Prince of Peace," especially, because he comes to convert the world; to "turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," to destroy sin, and "bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24). When there is universal righteousness, there will be universal peace. Certainly, the time is not yet come. The Prince of a peaceful kingdom, whose servants may not seek to advance his kingdom by violence, has not annihilated evil, has not swept all the wicked from the world. And so the fight goes on; evil men still stir up wars and tumults, and good men are forced to resist them. But the "Prince of Peace" shows his power and justifies his name. (1) in the peace that he introduces into the hearts that love him; (2) in the peace found wherever the Spirit of Christ prevails, as in pious households, in brotherhoods and sisterhoods, in assemblies of Christian men like our convocations, etc.; (3) in the comparative peace that obtains in Christian lands, the growing desire for peace and hatred of war, the readiness to resort to arbitration, and the like.

Taken in connection, the five names would seem to teach (1) the mysteriousness of Christ's nature, which lies at the very basis of Christianity, and upon which all else is built; (2) the wisdom of his teaching, which makes him our only safe "Counselor;" (3) the power which he has, as "Mighty God," to accomplish all his designs in his own good time; (4) the love which leads him to exert this power continually in the protection of his Church; and (5) the peaceful condition to which he will in the end bring his Church, when its probation is accomplished and he comes to reign over it as its visible King. The names begin in the past, advance to the present, and end in the far future. They first bespeak our reverence and awe, the foundations of religious feeling. They then call forth our trust, showing Christ to us all-wise, almighty. They end by eliciting our love towards him as a protecting "Father," who will at last conduct us to perfect peace.



God's Anger with Israel's Arrogance (9:8-21)

- 9:8 The Lord sends a message against Jacob,
And it falls on Israel.
- 9:9 And all the people know it,
That is, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,
Asserting in pride and in arrogance of heart:
- 9:10 "The bricks have fallen down,
But we will rebuild with smooth stones;
The sycamores have been cut down,
But we will replace them with cedars."
- 9:11 Therefore the LORD raises against them adversaries from Rezin,
And spurs their enemies on,
- 9:12 The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west;
And they devour Israel with gaping jaws.
In spite of all this His anger does not turn away,
And His hand is still stretched out.

Judgment on Israel's Pride (9:8-12)

BBE - 9:8-12 Again the prophet turns back to the thunders of judgment, dividing his message into four stanzas, each ending with the refrain, "For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still" (vv. 12, 17, 21, Isa. 10:4).

Unmoved by previous punishment, Israel threatens in pride and arrogance to rebuild more gloriously than ever. But the Lord promises that they will be attacked by the Syrians from the east and the Philistines from the west.

9:13-17 He further warns of the wholesale destruction of the population, from the honored elder to the prophet who teaches lies. Because ungodliness prevails, the Lord's anger is not turned away and His hand is stretched out still - in judgment, not in mercy.

9:18-21 Because of general wickedness, the land is consumed with the fire of civil war, anarchy, famine, looting, and cannibalism.

BKC - Exile for The Northern Kingdom (9:8-10:4)

After giving a glorious description of the coming Messiah, who will usher in the kingdom for the nation and whose reign will last forever, Isaiah focused on the nation in his day. Some have questioned why Isaiah placed these verses here. But, characteristic of this great prophetic writer, he alternated the message of judgment with the message of blessing. In contrast with the Messiah's future reign of justice and righteousness (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:4; 16:5; 28:6; 17; 32:16; 33:5; 42:1, 3-4; 51:5), the nation in Isaiah's day was ruled by leaders who did not care about the people under them (cf. Isa. 5:7).

a. Israel judged because of arrogance (Isa. 9:8-12)

Isaiah 9:8 Though Isaiah was writing to the nation of Judah he often used the Northern Kingdom of Israel (also called Jacob) as an example of the fact that God judges His sinful people. The message was one of coming judgment on the North. When these words were written, the Northern Kingdom was already in some disrepair (Isa. 9:10). The coming fall of Israel (in 722 B.C.) should have warned Judah that God is active in the affairs of His people. Judah should have realized that she too would be destroyed if she persisted in the activities that characterized the North.

Isaiah 9:9-12 The coming judgment on Israel would be widely known, but it would not be enough to turn her back to God. Ephraim, one of Israel's largest tribes, often represented the entire Northern Kingdom (cf. Isa. 7:2, Isa. 7:17). Samaria was the Northern Kingdom's capital city. Apparently Israel's inhabitants felt that they would experience only a temporary setback (the bricks have fallen) and in proud confidence thought they could rebuild. In fact they felt that they would be able to make their nation better than ever. But this was not to be the case. They were going to be squeezed by Rezin's foes (Rezin was the king of Aram, Isa. 7:1, an ally of Israel). Those foes were from the east (other Arameans; Rezin was king of part of Aram) and Philistines from the west (cf. Isa. 2:6). This was the Lord's doing. But even this judgment did not appease God's wrath because the people continued to refuse to deal with their sin. So God would continue to chasten them. This section (Isa. 9:8-12) ends with a refrain which is repeated three more times in the following verses: **Yet for all this His anger is not turned away, His hand is still upraised** (Isa. 9:12, Isa. 9:17, Isa. 9:21; Isa. 10:4). This repetition heightens the effect of God's intense anger and underscores the certainty of continued judgment.



Barnes - Isaiah 9:8 The Lord sent - Not Yahweh here, but "Adonai." It is apparent that this verse is the commencement of a new prophecy, that is not connected with that which precedes it. The strain of the preceding prophecy had respect to Judah; this is confined solely to Israel, or Ephraim. Here the division of the chapter should have been made, and should not have been again interrupted until Isa_10:4, where the prophecy closes. The prophecy is divided into four parts, and each part is designed to threaten a distinct judgment on some particular, prominent vice.

I. "Crime" - their pride and ostentation, Isa_9:8-9. "Punishment" - the land would be invaded by the Syrians and the Philistines, Isa_9:11-12.

II. "Crime" - they had apostatized from God, and the leaders had caused them to err, Isa_9:13, 16. "Punishment" - Yahweh would cut off the chief men of the nation, Isa_9:14-15, 17.

III. "Crime" - prevalent wickedness in the nation, Isa_9:18. "Punishment" - the anger of Yahweh, consternation, anarchy, discord, and want, Isa_9:19-21.

IV. "Crime" - prevalent injustice; Isa_10:1-2. "Punishment" - foreign invasion, and captivity; Isa_10:3-4.

The poem is remarkably regular in its structure (Lowth), and happy in its illustrations. At what time it was composed is not certain, but it has strong internal evidence that it immediately followed the preceding respecting Judah.

A word - A message, or prediction; Note,

Into Jacob - Jacob was the ancestor of the nation. But the name came to be appropriated to the ten tribes, as constituting the majority of the people. It was at first used to denote all the Jews Num_23:7, 10, 23; 24:17, 19; Deu_32:9; 1Ch_16:13; Psa_14:7; 20:1; but it came, after the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, to be used often to denote them alone; Amo_6:8; Mic_1:5; 3:1; 5:8. The word or message which was sent, refers undoubtedly to that which immediately follows.

And it hath lighted upon - Hebrew 'It fell.' This is but a varied expression for, he sent it to Israel.

Israel - The same as Jacob the ten tribes - the kingdom of Ephraim.

Isaiah 9:9 And all the people shall know - Shall know the message; or shall know the judgment which God denounces against their crimes. The Chaldee renders this, 'All the people have exalted themselves, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, in their magnitude, and in the pride of thee heart.'

Ephraim - This is another name for Israel, as Ephraim was the principal tribe; Note, Isa_7:2.

And the inhabitants of Samaria - The capital of Ephraim or Israel; Note, Isa_7:9.

That say in the pride - This is a description of general and prevalent pride; and it is traced to the source of all pride - the heart. It was a desire of splendor, power, and magnificence, originating in the heart, and manifesting itself by the language of self-confidence and defiance at the judgments of God.

Stoutness - Hebrew 'Greatness.' It means a self-confident purpose; and indicates the state of feeling in a man when he trusts to his own resources, and not to God.

Isaiah 9:10 The bricks are fallen down - The language of this verse is figurative; but the sentiment is plain. It contains the confession of the inhabitants of Samaria, that their affairs were in a ruinous and dilapidated state; but also their self-confident assurance that they would be able to repair the evils, and restore their nation to more than their former magnificence.

Bricks, in oriental countries, were made of clay and straw, and were rarely turned. Hence, exposed to suns and rains, they soon dissolved. Walls and houses constructed of such materials would not be very permanent, and to build with them is strongly contrasted with building in a permanent and elegant manner with hewn stone.

The meaning is, that their former state was one of less splendor than they designed that their subsequent state should be. Desolation had come in upon their country, and this they could not deny. But they confidently boasted that they would more than repair the evil.

We will build - Our ruined houses and walls.

With hewn stones - At once more permanent and elegant than the structures of bricks had been.

The sycamores - These trees grew abundantly on the low lands of Judea, and were very little esteemed; 1Ki_10:27; 2Ch_1:15; 9:27.

'This curious tree seems to partake of the nature of two different species,' says Calmet, 'the mulberry and the fig; the former in its leaf, and the latter in its fruit. Its Greek name, *συκομορος* *sukomoros*, is plainly descriptive of its character, being compounded of *συκος* *sukos*, a fig tree, and *μορος* *moros*, a mulberry tree. It is thus described by Norden: "They have in Egypt divers sorts of figs; but if there is any difference between them, a particular kind differs still more. I mean that which the sycamore bears, that they name in Arabic *giomez*. This sycamore is of the height of a beech, and bears its fruit in a manner quite different from other trees. It has them on the trunk itself, which shoots out little sprigs in form of a grapestalk, at the end of which grows the fruit close to one another, most like bunches of grapes. The tree is always green, and bears fruit several times in the year, without observing any certain seasons, for I have seen some sycamores which had fruit two months after others. This sort of tree is pretty common in Egypt." They were not highly valued, though it is probable they were often employed in building.

They are contrasted with cedars here -

(1) Because the cedar was a much more rare and precious wood.

(2) Because it was a much more smooth and elegant article of building.

(3) Because it was more permanent. The grain and texture of the sycamore is remarkably coarse and spongy, and could, therefore, stand in no competition with the cedar for beauty and ornament.

We will change them - We will employ in their stead.

Cedars - The cedar was a remarkably fine, elegant, and permanent wood for building. It was principally obtained on mount Lebanon, and was employed in temples, palaces, and in the houses of the rich; see the note at Isa_2:18.

The sycamore is contrasted with the cedar in 1Ki_10:27: 'Cedars he made to be as sycamore trees.' The whole passage denotes self-confidence and pride; an unwillingness to submit to the judgments of God, and a self-assurance that they would more than repair all the evils that would be inflicted on them.

Isaiah 9:11 Therefore - This verse indicates the punishment that would come upon them for their pride.

The Lord shall set up - Hebrew, 'Shall exalt.' That is, they shall overcome and subdue him.

The adversaries of Rezin - King of Syria, Isa_7:1. It should be observed here, that twenty-one manuscripts, instead of adversaries, read princes of Rezin. The sense seems to require this; as in the following verse, it is said that the Syrians will be excited against them.

Against him - Against Ephraim.

And join his enemies together - Hebrew, 'Mingle them together.' They shall be excited into wild and agitated commotion, and shall pour down together on the land and devour it. In what way this would be done is specified in Isa_9:12.

Isaiah 9:12 The Syrians - Isa_7:1. The Syrians had been the allies of the Israelites. But after the death of Rezin, it is probable that they joined the Assyrians, and united with them in the invasion of Samaria. - Aben Ezra; Grotius. "Before." Hebrew 'From the east.' Syria was situated to the east of Samaria, and the meaning is here, that they would pour in upon Samaria from that side.

And the Philistines - The Philistines occupied the country southwest of Samaria, lying along on the shores of the Mediterranean. It is not particularly mentioned in the Scriptures that they invaded Samaria after this prediction of Isaiah, but such a thing is by no means improbable. They were long unsubdued; were full of hostility to the Jewish people; and were many times engaged with them in wars and several times subdued them; Judg. 13; 14; 2Ch_28:18. The name Palestine is derived from Philistine, although this people occupied but a small part of the country; see Reland's Palestine, c. vii.

Behind - That is, from the west - the region where they dwelt. The sacred writers speak as if looking toward the east, the rising sun, and they speak of the west as the region behind them; see the notes at Job_23:8-9.

And they shall devour - Hebrew, 'They shall eat.' This figure is taken from a ravenous beast; and means that they should come up with raging desires, and fierce impetuosity, to destroy the nation.

With open mouth - Hebrew, 'With the whole mouth.' The metaphor is derived from raging and furious animals. Chaldee, 'In every place.'



God's Anger with Israel's Arrogance (9:8-21)

9:13 **Yet the people do not turn back to Him who struck them,
Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts.**

9:14 **So the LORD cuts off head and tail from Israel,
Both palm branch and bulrush in a single day.**

9:15 **The head is the elder and honorable man,
And the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.**

9:16 **For those who guide this people are leading them astray;
And those who are guided by them are brought to confusion.**

9:17 **Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men,
Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows;**

**For every one of them is godless and an evildoer,
And every mouth is speaking foolishness.**

**In spite of all this His anger does not turn away,
And His hand is still stretched out.**

Barnes - Isaiah 9:13 For the people ... - This is a reason why his anger would not cease, and it is, at the same time, the suggestion of a new crime for which the divine judgment would rest upon them. It commences the second part of the oracle.

Turneth not - It is implied here that it was the design of the chastisement to turn them to God. In this case, as in many others, such a design had not been accomplished.

Unto him that smiteth them - To God, who had punished them.

Neither do they seek - They do not seek his protection and favor; they do not worship and honor him.

Isaiah 9:14 Will cut off head and tail - This is a proverbial expression, which is explained in the following verse; see also Deu_28:13-14. The head is often used to denote those in honor and authority. The tail is an expression applicable to the lower ranks, and would commonly indicate more than simply the common people. It would imply contempt; a state of great abjectness and meanness.

Branch and rush - This is also a proverbial expression, meaning the highest and lowest; see...Isa_19:15. The word here translated branch, means properly the bough or top of the palm tree. The palm grew to a great height before it gave out any branches, and hence, the image is a beautiful one to denote those high in office and authority. The word rush means the coarse, long-jointed reed, that grows in marshes - an apt emblem of the base and worthless classes of society.

Isaiah 9:15 The ancient - The elder; the old man.

And honorable - Hebrew, 'The man of elevated countenance.' The man of rank and office.

The prophet that teacheth lies - The false prophet. Of those there were many; and probably at this time many in Samaria.

Isaiah 9:16 For the leaders of this people ... - Note, Isa_3:12. Hebrew 'They that call this people blessed' - referring more particularly to the false prophets.

They that are led of them - Hebrew, 'They that are called blessed by them.'

Are destroyed - Hebrew, 'Are swallowed up;' see the note at Isa_3:12. They are ruined; or swallowed up as in a vast whirlpool or vortex.

Isaiah 9:17 Shall have no joy - He shall not delight in them so as to preserve them. The parallel part of the verse shows that the phrase is used in the sense of having mercy.

In their young men - The hope and strength of the nation. The word used here commonly denotes those who are chosen, particularly for purposes of war. The sense is, that the hope and strength of the nation, that on which the chief reliance would be placed, would be cut off.

Neither shall have mercy ... - Judgment would sweep through the nation, even over those who were the usual objects of the divine protection - widows and orphans; compare Psa_10:14, 18; 48:5; Deu_10:18; Jer_49:11; Hos_14:3. These passages show that the fatherless and the widow are the special objects of the divine favor; and when, therefore, it is said that the Lord would not have mercy been on these, it shows the extent and severity of the divine judgments that were coming on the nation.

For every one is a hypocrite - A deceiver; a dissembler. The word used here, however, *chafeph*, means rather a profane or profligate man, a man who is defiled or polluted, than a dissembler. It is applied often to idolaters and licentious persons, but not to hypocrites; see Job_8:13; 13:16; 15:34; 17:8; Dan_11:32.

Every mouth speaketh folly - The word rendered folly, may denote foolishness, but it is also used to denote wickedness or crime; Isa_25:23. Probably this is the meaning here. That the character here given of the Ephraimites is correct, is abundantly shown also by other prophets; see particularly Hosea.

For all this - Notwithstanding all the judgments that should come thus upon the young men, and widows, and orphans, still his anger was not turned away. This is the close of the second stroke of the prophecy.

Judgment on Israel's Godlessness (9:13-17)

BKC - b. The entire nation judged (Isa 9:13-17)

Isaiah 9:13 The prophet lamented that even though the Northern Kingdom had suffered at the hand of God, they still had not returned to Him. So their continued refusal would lead to more judgment. Israel was like a child who stubbornly refuses to obey his parents and therefore is punished more severely.

Isaiah 9:14-17 Israel's refusal to turn to God would result in the most severe judgment imaginable. The whole nation, from rich to poor and from old to young, would be cast aside. Both head and tail (Isa 9:14, explained in Isa 9:15) is a merism, a figure which gives opposite extremes to include the whole spectrum. Elders (the head) and false prophets (the tail), guides and those who are guided, and young men... the fatherless... widows — these were all ungodly and wicked and therefore would be judged by God. On the refrain in Isa_9:17 see comments on Isa_9:12.

- 9:18 **For** wickedness burns **like** a fire;
It consumes briars and thorns;
It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame,
And they roll upward in a column of smoke.
- 9:19 By the fury of the **LORD** of hosts the land is burned up,
And the people are **like** fuel for the fire;
No man spares his brother.
- 9:20 And they slice off *what is* on the right hand but **still** are hungry,
And they eat *what is* on the left hand but they are not satisfied;
Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm.
- 9:21 **Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh,**
And together they are against Judah.
In spite of all this His anger does not turn away,
And His hand is still stretched out.

BKC
c. A description of wickedness (Isa 9:18-21)
Isaiah 9:18-21 The people's wickedness (cf. Isa 9:17) is pictured as burning them up like a huge fire with a large column of smoke. The judgment would come not only from God (Isa 9:11) and from enemies of the nation (Isa 9:12), but also from within. The nation would destroy itself by its own wicked deeds. People would oppose each other (Isa 9:19), devour each other (Isa 9:20), and even entire tribes will be in conflict (Isa 9:21).

Pulpit - Ver. 18. - Wickedness burneth as the fire; i.e. the contagion of wickedness overspreads a whole nation in the same rapid way that fire spreads over a field of stubble or a forest. They shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke; rather, they - i.e. the forest thickets - shall be whirled upward with the uplifting of smoke. The burning thickets shall mount up with the volumes of smoke into the air, and hang there as a murky but lurid pall. The flames of wickedness give no light to a land, but plunge it in heavy, hopeless gloom.

Ver. 19. - Is the land darkened; rather, burnt up (συγκέκασται, LXX.). The root used occurs in Arabic in this sense. It is not used elsewhere in Scripture. **The people shall be as the fuel of the fire.** Though the general ravage, devastation, and desolation of the land, with its buildings, its trees, and its other vegetable products, is included in the image of the fire devouring the thorny brakes and tangled thickets of a dense forest, yet the threat is intended still more against the Israelite people, who were the true "fuel of the fire," since the ravage would go on until the land should be depopulated. **No man shall spare his brother.** We have here a new feature. Not only shall foreign enemies - Syrians and Philistines - devour Israel, but the plague of civil war will also be let loose upon them (comp. ver. 21, and see 2 Kings 15:30, where we find that Pekah fell a victim to a conspiracy headed by Hoshea).

Ver. 20. - He shall snatch; rather, one shall devour. A man, i.e., shall plunder and ravage in one quarter, and yet not be satisfied; then he shall do the same in another, and still desire more. "Increase of appetite shall grow by what it feeds on." There shall be no sense of satiety anywhere. The flesh of his own arm. In a civil war, or a time of anarchy, each man is always "eating the flesh of his own arm" - i.e. injuring his neighbour, who is his own natural protector and defender.

Ver. 21. - Manasseh, Ephraim. These two are mentioned as the two principal tribes of the northern kingdom (comp. 1 Chron. 9:3; 2 Chron. 30:1, 10, 18; 31:1; 34:9). It is not to be supposed that civil discord was confined to them. Probably there was a general disorganization. Still, all the tribes would at any time willingly unite "together against Judah" (see 2 Kings 15:37; 2 Chron. 28:6-8).

Barnes - Isaiah 9:18 For wickedness - This commences the third part of the prophecy, which continues to the end of the chapter. It is a description of prevailing impiety. The effects and prevalence of it are described by the image of a raging, burning flame, that spreads everywhere: first among the humble shrubbery - the briars and thorns, then in the vast forests, until it spreads over the land, and sends a mighty column of flame and smoke up to heaven.

Burneth as the fire - Spreads, rages, extends as fire does in thorns and in forests. In what respects it burns like the fire, the prophet immediately specifies. It spreads rapidly everywhere, and involves all in the effects.

Wickedness is not unfrequently in the Scriptures compared to a fire that is shut up long, and then bursts forth with raging violence. Thus Hos_7:6 :

Truly, in the inmost part of it, their heart is like an oven,
While they lie in wait;
All the night their baker sleepeth;
In the morning it burneth like a blazing star.

'As an oven conceals the lighted fire all night, while the baker takes his rest, and in the morning vomits forth its blazing flame; so all manner of concupiscence is brooding mischief in their hearts, while the ruling faculties of reason and conscience are lulled asleep, and their wicked designs wait only for a fair occasion to break forth.' - Horsely on Hosea; see also Isa_50:2; 65:5.

It shall devour - Hebrew, 'It shall eat.' The idea of devouring or eating, is one which is often given to fire in the Scriptures.

The briars and thorns - By the briars and thorns are meant, doubtless, the lower part of the population; the most degraded ranks of society. The idea here seems to be, first, that of impiety spreading like fire over all classes of people; but there is also joined with it, in the mind of the prophet, the idea of punishment. Wickedness would rage like spreading fire; but like fire, also, it would sweep over the nation accomplishing desolation and calamity, and consuming everything in the fire of God's vengeance. The wicked are often compared to thorns and briars - fit objects to be burned up; Isa_33:12 :

And the people shall be as the burnings of lime;
As thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

And shall kindle - Shall burn, or extend, as sweeping fire extends to the mighty forest.

In the thickets of the forests - The dense, close forest or grove. The idea is, that it extends to all classes of people - high as well as low.

And they shall mount up - The Hebrew word used here - יתאבכו 'yit'abeku' from אבך 'abak - occurs nowhere else. The image is that of a far-spreading, raging fire, sending columns of smoke to heaven. So, says the prophet, is the rolling, raging, consuming fire of the sins of the nation spreading over all classes of people in the land, and involving all in widespread desolation.

Isaiah 9:19 Through the wrath - By the anger, or indignation. This spreading desolation is the proof of his anger.

Is the land darkened - The word used here - עתם 'atham - occurs nowhere else. According to Gesenius, it is the same as תמם 'tamam to be or make complete; and hence means, "in this place, to be consumed, or laid waste." Kimchi and Aben Ezra render it, 'The land is darkened.' Septuagint, Συγκεκαυται 'Sungkekautai. Chaldee, צרוכת 'chārokat - 'Is scorched.' Jerome renders it, 'Conturbata est terra' - 'The land is disturbed.' The effect is doubtless such as ascending and spreading columns of fire and smoke would produce, and perhaps the general word desolate had better be used in translating the word.

And the people shall be as fuel of the fire - This is an image of widespread ruin. The idea is, that they shall destroy one another as pieces of wood, when on fire, help to consume each other. The way in which it shall be done is stated more fully in the next verse.

No man shall spare his brother - There shall be such a state of wickedness, that it shall lead to anarchy, and strife, and mutual destruction. The common ties of life shall be dissolved, and a man shall have no compassion on his own brother.

Isaiah 9:20 And he shall snatch - Hebrew, 'He shall cut off.' Many have supposed that this refers to a state of famine; but others regard it as descriptive of a state of faction extending throughout the whole community, dissolving the most tender ties, and producing a dissolution of all the bonds of life. The context Isa_9:19, 21 shows, that the latter is meant; though it is not improbable that it would be attended with famine. When it is said that he 'would cut off his right hand,' it denotes a condition of internal anarchy and strife.

And be hungry - And not be satisfied. Such would be his rage, and his desire of blood, that he would be insatiable. The retarder of those on one side of him would not appease his insatiable wrath. His desire of carnage would be so great that it would be like unappeased hunger.

And he shall eat - The idea here is that of contending factions excited by fury, rage, envy, hatred, contending in mingled strife, and spreading death with insatiable desire everywhere around them.

They shall eat - Not literally; but "shall destroy." To eat the flesh of anyone, denotes to seek one's life, and is descriptive of blood-thirsty enemies; Psa_27:2 : 'When the wicked, even mine enemies and foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell;' Job_19:22 :

Why do ye persecute me as God,
And are not satisfied with my flesh?
Compare Deu_7:16; Jer_10:25; 30:15; 50:17; Hos_7:7...

The flesh of his own arm - The Chaldee renders this, 'Each one shall devour the substance of his neighbor.' Lowth proposes to read it, 'The flesh of his neighbor.' but without sufficient authority. The expression denotes a state of dreadful faction - where the ties of most intimate relationship would be disregarded, represented, here by the appalling figure of a man's appetite being so rabid that he would seize upon and devour his own flesh. So, in this state of faction and discord, the rage would be so great that people would destroy those who were, as it were, their own flesh, that is, their nearest kindred and friends.

Isaiah 9:21 Manasseh, Ephraim - This verse is a continuation of the statement in regard to the extent and fearfulness of the faction. Those who were hitherto most tenderly and intimately allied to each other, would now be engaged in furious strife. Manasseh and Ephraim were the two sons of Joseph (Gen_46:20), and their names are used as expressive of tender union and friendship; compare Gen_48:20. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were near each other, and they always were allied together. The expression here denotes that they who had hitherto been joined in tender alliance, would be rent into contending factions, thirsting for each other's blood.

And they together - They would be united in opposing Judah while they were devouring each other, as it is not an uncommon thing for those who are opposed to each other to unite in hostility to a common foe; compare Luk_23:12. This is an image that heightens the description of the anarchy - introducing implacable animosity against another tribe, while they were contending among themselves. That such anarchies and factions existed, is apparent from all the history of the kingdom of Israel; compare 2Ki_15:10 ff; 30. In this last passage, the death of Pekah is described as having occurred in a conspiracy formed by Hoshea.

For all this ... - see Isa_9:12, note Isa_5:25. This closes the third strophe or part of the prophecy under consideration. The fourth and last strophe occurs in Isa_10:1-4.