

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Prediction respecting the conquest of Syria and Israel by the Assyrians, Isaiah 8:1-4. Israel, for rejecting the gentle stream of Shiloah, near Jerusalem, is threatened to be overflowed by the great river of Assyria, manifestly alluding by this strong figure to the conquests of Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser over that kingdom, Isaiah 8:5-7. The invasion of the kingdom of Judah by the Assyrians under Sennacherib foretold, Isaiah 8:8. The prophet assures the Israelites and Syrians that their hostile attempts against Judah shall be frustrated, Isaiah 8:9, Isaiah 8:10. Exhortation not to be afraid of the wrath of man, but to fear the displeasure of God, Isaiah 8:11-13. Judgments which shall overtake those who put no confidence in Jehovah, Isaiah 8:14, Isaiah 8:15. The prophet proceeds to warn his countrymen against idolatry, divination, and the like sinful practices, exhorting them to seek direction from the word of God, professing in a beautiful apostrophe that this was his own pious resolution. And to enforce this counsel, and strengthen their faith, he points to his children, whose symbolic names were signs or pledges of the Divine promises, Isaiah 8:16-20. Judgments of God against the finally impenitent, Isaiah 8:21, Isaiah 8:22.

The prophecy of the foregoing chapter relates directly to the kingdom of Judah only: the first part of it promises them deliverance from the united invasion of the Israelites and Syrians; the latter part, from Isaiah 8:17, denounces the desolation to be brought upon the kingdom of Judah by the Assyrians. The sixth, seventh, and eighth verses of this chapter seem to take in both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. "This people that refuseth the waters of Shiloah," may be meant of both: the Israelites despised the kingdom of Judah, which they had deserted, and now attempted to destroy; the people of Judah, from a consideration of their own weakness, and a distrust of God's promises, being reduced to despair, applied to the Assyrians for assistance against the two confederate kings. But how could it be said of Judah, that they rejoiced in Rezin, and the son of Remaliah, the enemies confederated against them? If some of the people were inclined to revolt to the enemy, (which however does not clearly appear from any part of the history or the prophecy), yet there was nothing like a tendency to a general defection. This, therefore, must be understood of Israel. The prophet denounces the Assyrian invasion, which should overwhelm the whole kingdom of Israel under Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser; and the subsequent invasion of Judah by the same power under Sennacherib, which would bring them into the most imminent danger, like a flood reaching to the neck, in which a man can but just keep his head above water. The two next verses, Isaiah 8:9,23; 8:10, are addressed by the prophet, as a subject of the kingdom of Judah, to the Israelites and Syrians, and perhaps to all the enemies of God's people; assuring them that their attempts against that kingdom shall be fruitless; for that the promised Immanuel, to whom he alludes by using his name to express the signification of it, for God is with us, shall be the defense of the house of David, and deliver the kingdom of Judah out of their hands. He then proceeds to warn the people of Judah against idolatry, divination, and the like forbidden practices; to which they were much inclined, and which would soon bring down God's judgments upon Israel. The prophecy concludes at the sixth verse of chap. 9 with promises of blessings in future times by the coming of the great deliverer already pointed out by the name of Immanuel, whose person and character is set forth in terms the most ample and magnificent.

And here it may be observed that it is almost the constant practice of the prophet to connect in like manner deliverances temporal with spiritual. Thus the eleventh chapter, setting forth the kingdom of Messiah, is closely connected with the tenth, which foretells the destruction of Sennacherib. So likewise the destruction of nations, enemies to God, in the thirty-fourth chapter, introduces the flourishing state of the kingdom of Christ in the thirty-fifth. And thus the chapters from 40 to 49 inclusive, plainly relating to the deliverance from the captivity of Babylon, do in some parts plainly relate to the greater deliverance by Christ.

Verse 1

Take thee a great roll "Take unto thee a large mirror" - The word גִּילְיוֹן (gillayon) is not regularly formed from גָּלַל (galal), to roll, but from גָּלַח (galah), as פִּדְיוֹן (pidyon) from פָּדָה (padah), קִילְיוֹן (killayon) from קָלַח (calah), נִקְיָוֹן (nikkayon) from נָכַח (nakah), אֵילְיוֹן (elyon) from אָלַח (alah), etc., the יוֹד (yod) supplying the place of the radical שׁ (he). גָּלַח (galah) signifies to show, to reveal; properly, as Schroederus says, (De Vestitu Mulier. Hebr. p. 294), to render clear and bright by rubbing; to polish. גִּילְיוֹן (gillayon), therefore, according to this derivation, 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 Chaldee paraphrast renders it by לוּאֵחַ (luach), a tablet, and the same word, though somewhat differently pointed, the Chaldee paraphrast and the rabbins render a mirror, Isaiah 3:23. The mirrors of the Israelitish women were made of brass finely polished, Exodus 38:8, from which place it likewise appears that what they used were little hand mirrors which they carried with them even when they assembled at the door of the tabernacle. I have a metalline mirror found in Herculaneum, which is not above three inches square. The prophet is commanded to take a mirror, or brazen polished tablet, not like these little hand mirrors, but a large one; large enough for him to engrave upon it in deep and lasting characters, בְּכֶרֶת עֲנוֹשׁ (becheret enosh), with a workman's

graving tool, the prophecy which he was to deliver.  $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$  (cheret) in this place certainly signifies an instrument to write or engrave with: but  $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$  (charit), the same word, only differing a little in the form, means something belonging to a lady's dress, Isaiah 3:22, (where however five MSS. leave out the  $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}$  (yod), whereby only it differs from the word in this place), either a crimping-pin, which might be not unlike a graving tool, as some will have it, or a purse, as others infer from 2 Kings 5:23. It may therefore be called here  $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$  (cheret enosh), a workman's instrument, to distinguish it from  $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$  (cheret ishshah), an instrument of the same name, used by the women. In this manner he was to record 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,  $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$  (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,  $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$  (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.

The words were to be written with a man's pen; i.e., though the prophecy be given in the visions of God, yet the writing must be real; the words must be transcribed on the great roll, that they may be read and publicly consulted. Or,  $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$   $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}^{\sim}$  (cherot enosh), the pen or graver of the weak miserable man, may refer to the already condemned Assyrians, who though they should be the instruments of chastening Damascus and Samaria, should themselves shortly be overthrown. The four words may be considered as the commission given to the Assyrians to destroy and spoil the cities. Make haste to the spoil; Fall upon the prey, etc.

#### Verse 4

For before the child - For my father and my mother, one MS. and the Vulgate have his father and his mother. The prophecy was accordingly accomplished within three years; when Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin, and also took the Reubenites and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and carried them captive to Assyria, 2 Kings 15:29; 2 Kings 16:9; 1 Chronicles 5:26.

#### Verse 6

Forasmuch as this people refuseth - Because this people have rejected - The gentle waters of Shiloah, a small fountain and brook just without Jerusalem, which supplied a pool within the city for the use of the inhabitants, is an apt emblem of the state of the kingdom and house of David, much reduced in its apparent strength, yet supported by the blessing of God; and is finely contrasted with the waters of the Euphrates, great, rapid, and impetuous; the image of the Babylonian empire, which God threatens to bring down like a mighty flood upon all these apostates of both kingdoms, as punishment for their manifold iniquities, and their contemptuous disregard of his promises. The brook and the river are put for the kingdoms to which they belong, and the different states of which respectively they most aptly represent. Juvenal, inveighing against the corruption of Rome by the importation of Asiatic manners, says, with great elegance, that the Orontes has been long discharging itself into the Tiber: -  
Jam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes.

And Virgil, to express the submission of some of the Eastern countries to the Roman arms, says: -  
Euphrates ibat jam mollior undis.

Aen. 8:726.

The waters of the Euphrates now flowed more humbly and gently.

But the happy contrast between the brook and the river gives a peculiar beauty to this passage of the prophet, with which the simple figure in the Roman poets, however beautiful, yet uncontrasted, cannot contend.

#### Verse 8

He shall reach even to the neck - He compares Jerusalem, says Kimchi, to the head of the human body. As when the waters come up to a man's neck, he is very near drowning, (for a little increase of them would go over his head), so the king of Assyria coming up to Jerusalem was like a flood reaching to the neck - the whole country was overflowed, and the capital was in imminent danger. Accordingly the Chaldee renders reaching to the neck by reaching to Jerusalem.

#### Verse 9

Associate yourselves - Know ye this - God by his prophet plainly declares to the confederate adversaries





manner unless he were Divinely inspired.

“One must have a curiosity to examine a passage which had so great an effect upon Labid. It is, I must own, the finest that I know in the whole Koran: but I do not think it will have a second time the like effect, so as to tempt any one of my readers to submit to circumcision. It is in the second chapter, where he is speaking of certain apostates from the faith. “They are like,” saith he, “to a man who kindles a light. As soon as it begins to shine, God takes from them the light, and leaves them in darkness that they see nothing. They are deaf, dumb, and blind; and return not into the right way. Or they fare as when a cloud, full of darkness, thunder, and lightning, covers the heaven. When it bursteth, they stop their ears with their fingers, with deadly fear; and God hath the unbelievers in his power. The lightning almost robbeth them of their eyes: as often as it flasheth they go on by its light; and when it vanisheth in darkness, they stand still. If God pleased, they would retain neither hearing nor sight.” That the thought is beautiful, no one will deny; and Labid, who had probably a mind to flatter Mohammed, was lucky in finding a passage in the Koran so little abounding in poetical beauties, to which his conversion might with any propriety be ascribed. It was well that he went no farther; otherwise his taste for poetry might have made him again an infidel.” Michaelis, *Erpenii Arabische Grammatik abgekürzt, Vorrede*, s. 32.