

# CHAPTER 8

## INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 8

This chapter contains a confirmation of the sudden destruction of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel, by another sign; a threatening to those that gloried in the kings of those nations, with an invasion of their land by the Assyrian monarch; a sarcastic address to those that joined in confederacy against Judah; some directions and instructions to the people of God; and some prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the miserable estate of the Jews, that should reject him and his Gospel. The sign given is a son of the Prophet Isaiah, whom his wife conceived and bore, and whose name was written with a man's pen, Mahershalahashbaz, of which there were witnesses, whose names are mentioned; and it is predicted, that before this child should have knowledge to call his father and mother, Damascus and Samaria, the chief cities of Syria and Israel, would be taken and spoiled by the king of Assyria, (<sup>-2388</sup>Isaiah 8:1-4) who would invade, the land of Israel, and even pass through the land of Judah, as a chastisement not only of the Israelites that rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son, the kings of Syria and Israel; but also of those Jews who chose to be under them, or neglected the promise of God, and applied to Assyria for help, (<sup>-2385</sup>Isaiah 8:5-8) and then both the people of Israel and of Syria are addressed, in a sarcastic way, to associate and take counsel together, when they should be broke to pieces, and their counsel come to nought, (<sup>-2389</sup>Isaiah 8:9,10) and the prophet being instructed by the Lord how to behave among the people of the Jews, advises them not to join with them whose cry was a confederacy with Assyria, nor to be afraid of the two kings that were come up against them, but to sanctify the Lord of hosts, and trust in him, and make him the object of their fear and dread, (<sup>-2381</sup>Isaiah 8:11-13) which is enforced from the consideration of what the Lord, who is no other than the Messiah, would be, both to his own people, and to his enemies; to the one a sanctuary, and to the other a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, a trap, and a snare, (<sup>-2384</sup>Isaiah 8:14,15) then follows an instruction to the prophet to take care of the Gospel of Christ, and communicate it to his disciples, (<sup>-2386</sup>Isaiah 8:16) upon which the prophet determines to keep waiting and looking for his coming, who at present was hidden from the people of God, (<sup>-2387</sup>Isaiah

8:17) wherefore the Messiah is introduced, as presenting himself and his children to the prophet's view, which would be for signs and wonders in Israel, gazed at and reproached, (<sup>2388</sup>Isaiah 8:18) and then the folly and vanity of seeking counsel of the Scribes and Pharisees, when Christ should be come in the flesh, is exposed; whose Gospel should be attended to, and not those dark and blind guides, (<sup>2389</sup>Isaiah 8:19,20) and the chapter is concluded with the wretched condition of the Jews that called Jesus accursed; they should pass through the land, and find no food; and look into it, and see nothing but darkness and misery, (<sup>2392</sup>Isaiah 8:21,22).

**Ver. 1.** *Moreover the Lord said unto me, &c.*] This is another prophecy, confirming the same thing that was promised in the preceding chapter (<sup>2390</sup>Isaiah 7:1-25); namely, safety to the Jews from the two kings of Syria and Israel, which combined against them:

*take thee a great roll;* or volume, a writing book, a roll of parchment, in which form the ancients used to write, (<sup>3907</sup>Psalms 40:7). The Targum renders it, a "table"; a writing table, such an one as Zacharias called for, (<sup>4063</sup>Luke 1:63) and this was to be a "great" or large one, because much was to be written in it; or what was to be written was to be written in large letters:

*and write in it with a man's pen;* such as men usually write with; and in such a style and language as may be easily understood by men, even though unlearned; and so clearly and plainly, that he that runs may read; and so the Targum,

"write in it a clear writing;"

very plain, and explicit, and legible:

*concerning Mahershalalhashbaz;* a son of the prophet Isaiah, so called, (<sup>2383</sup>Isaiah 8:3) whose name was very significant, and was given him on purpose to express the sudden destruction of the enemies of Judah. The Targum renders it,

"hasten to seize the prey, and to take away the spoil."

Some translate it, "in hastening the prey, the spoiler hastens"; perhaps it may be better rendered, "hasten to the spoil, hasten to the prey"; as if the words were spoken to the Assyrian monarch, to hasten to the spoil of Damascus and Samaria; and the repetition of the same thing in different

words may have respect to the spoils of both, (see <sup><2180></sup>Isaiah 8:4) and for the greater confirmation of the thing. Gussetius has a very peculiar fancy about the sense of this text; he observes that *j r j*, rendered a “pen”, signifies some hollow vessel, in which things were put; and supposes that it here designs a man’s chest, or some such thing, in which garments might be laid up and reserved: and *wyl g*, is the singular of a word used in (<sup><2183></sup>Isaiah 3:23), for some sort of luxurious garments wore by women; so that, upon the whole, the reading and sense of the words are, that the prophet is bid to take a large garment of the above sort, and write upon it, putting it into the chest. This for Mahershalalhashbaz; signifying it was to lie there till this child was born; and intimating hereby, that the women, far from battle, would be spoiled of their soft and precious garments, as well as the men be slain in war<sup>f134</sup>, though this is more tolerable than the fancy of Huetius<sup>f135</sup>, that the whole is an euphemism, in modest terms, expressing the prophet’s coition with his wife.

**Ver. 2.** *And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record*, &c.] Not his marriage, nor the birth of his son, nor the name he gave him, but the prophecy written in the roll, concerning the spoiling of Syria and Israel, in a very short time; that so, when it came to pass, it might be a clear and certain point that it had been foretold by him:

*Uriah the priest*; of whom mention is made in (<sup><1260></sup>2 Kings 16:10) which some object to, because he proved a wicked man, and obeyed the king’s command, contrary to the law of God, in building an altar according to the form of one at Damascus; but to this it is replied, that it was before this happened that Isaiah took him to be a witness; and besides, because of the authority of his office, and his familiarity with Ahaz, he must be allowed to be a proper and pertinent person to bear testimony in this case. Some indeed, and so the Jewish commentators, Jarchi, Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Abarbanel, would have Uriah the prophet meant, who prophesied in the times of Jehoiakim, and was slain by him, (<sup><2670></sup>Jeremiah 26:20-23) to which it is objected, that he was no priest, as this was and, besides, was not born at this time; it was a hundred and forty years after that he lived:

*and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah*; this was Zechariah the prophet, as the Targum, and all the Jewish writers, say<sup>f136</sup>; who lived in the times of Darius, which was two hundred and forty years after this; but most likely this Zechariah is he who was Ahaz’s wife’s father, (<sup><1210></sup>2 Kings 18:2) or rather, as Vitringa thinks, Zechariah a Levite, a son of Asaph, (<sup><1093></sup>2

Chronicles 29:13) though there are some learned men<sup>f137</sup>, who think the two prophets Uriah and Zechariah are meant, though then unborn; who prophesied of the like or same things as Isaiah did; and so were faithful witnesses of his prophecy, as of the calamities that should come on the land, the restitution of it to its former fruitfulness, and the coming of the Messiah; nor is the observation of Abarbinel to be despised, taken from the ancient Jews, that these are the words, not of the prophet, but of God himself; as also that they are to be read in the future tense, “and I will take to me”, &c.

**Ver. 3.** *And I went unto the prophetess*, &c.] His wife, so called; not because she prophesied, but because she was the wife of a prophet; and besides, the birth of her son later mentioned, and his name, had in them the nature of a prophecy. The phrase of going unto her is an euphemism, a modest way of expressing the conjugal debt:

*and she conceived and bare a son*; which Jarchi would have the same with Immanuel in (<sup>2374</sup>Isaiah 7:14) but this is a later prophecy, and a distinct one from that; and not only the names of the children are different, but the mothers also; the one a virgin, the other the prophet’s wife.

*Then said the Lord to me, call his name Mahershalalhashbaz*: of the signification of this name, (see Gill on “<sup>2300</sup>Isaiah 8:1”). Kimchi thinks that his name did not consist of these four words, only of two of them; and that he was sometimes called “Mahershalal”, and sometimes “Hashbaz”: both signifying the same thing. Some think that all this was done only in a vision, and not in reality, to declare and confirm what follows; though by that it seems rather to be a real fact.

**Ver. 4.** *For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father, and my mother*, &c.] Which are commonly the first words children learn to say; and so it signifies that what follows should happen in a year or two; as it did:

*the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria*; or, “he shall take away the riches”<sup>f138</sup>, &c.; not the child, unless he is considered as the sign of taking them away; but the soldier, put for the whole Assyrian army, which carried off the riches and spoil of these places, in the presence, and by the order, of the king of Assyria; the first of these, namely, Damascus, the metropolis of Syria, with its riches, wealth, and army, were taken and carried away by

Tilgathpilneser, king of Assyria, within the time here mentioned, (<sup><1216B></sup>2 Kings 16:9) but the latter, Samaria, the metropolis of the kingdom of Israel, was not taken and spoiled until the sixth year of Hezekiah, and ninth of Hoshea, (<sup><1277B></sup>2 Kings 17:6) (<sup><1281C></sup>2 Kings 18:10) but because the prophecy began to be fulfilled, and was fulfilled in part, within the time mentioned, the whole is attributed to it; though it should be observed, that before this, after Pekah the son of Remaliah was slain, and Hoshea reigned in his stead, the king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents; which may be called the spoil of Samaria, (<sup><1277B></sup>2 Kings 17:3).

**Ver. 5.** *The Lord spake also unto me again, &c.*] In the same prophecy, or in another; the Targum is,

“the Word of the Lord added to speak with me again;”

but rather Jehovah the Father, or the Spirit of the Lord, is meant, since the Person speaking is distinguished from Immanuel, (<sup><2188B></sup>Isaiah 8:8):

*saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 6.** *Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah, that go softly, &c.*] The same with Siloam, (<sup><4307></sup>John 9:7) and so it is called in the Septuagint version here; and the word here used signifies “sent”, as it is there interpreted. Jarchi says it is a fountain, whose name was Gihon and Shiloah; (see <sup><10E3></sup>1 Kings 1:33 <sup><4485></sup>Nehemiah 3:15) concerning which Jerom yet writes,

“Siloam is a fountain at the foot of Mount Sion, which does not send forth water continually, but on certain times and days; and comes through the hollow places of the earth, and caves of a hard rock, with a great noise; of which we especially cannot doubt, who dwell in this province.”

This was a small current of water, which moved softly and slowly, and not with a rapid motion, as some rivers do; to which the kingdom of the house of David is compared, because of its easy and gentle government; as the Targum, which paraphrases the words thus,

“because this people loathed the kingdom of the house of David which ruled them quietly, as the waters of Shiloah which flow softly;”

or because of the weakness of it in the days of Ahaz, it had not strength to oppose their enemies, as Kimchi suggests; now the ten tribes despised the house of David, and departed from it, and continued in their revolt, and had that government in contempt, as well as the religion of it. Jerusalem, the temple, and the worship of God in it, may be meant by the waters of Shiloah; it being usual to name places by the rivers that are near them.

*And rejoice in Rezin, and in Remaliah's son:* in Rezin king of Syria; and in Pekah, the son of Remaliah, king of Israel. Perhaps respect may be had to later times, to the times of the Messiah, when the Jews would despise his government, and reject him as King; though he is the Prince of peace, and his government the most quiet and peaceable one, and he the Shiloah, the sent of God, and declare they had no other king but Caesar.

**Ver. 7.** *Now therefore the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many,* &c.] Alluding to the river Euphrates, which ran by Babylon, which was a large river, full of water, and had a rapid torrent, and so is opposed to Shiloah and its waters; and these waters are explained as follows:

*[even] the king of Assyria, and all his glory;* his army, which was his glory, in which he gloried, and by which he got himself honour and glory. It is usual for mighty kings, kingdoms, and armies, to be signified by such waters, for their multitude and strength; (see ~~Gen~~ Revelation 17:1,15):

*and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks;* that is, either of the land of Ephraim or Israel, and overflow the borders thereof, run over all the whole land, and possess its fortified towns and cities. The Targum is,

“therefore behold the Lord shall bring, and cause to ascend upon them, the army of the people, who are many, as the waters of a river, strong and mighty, the king of Assyria, and his army; and he shall come up upon all his rivers, and shall go upon all his banks;”

or rather “its own”<sup>f139</sup> channels and banks, as it may be rendered; and so denotes, that the king of Assyria, and his army, should pass the Euphrates, and come out of their own land, and subdue the adjacent kingdoms and territories, and particularly the land of Judah, as follows.

**Ver. 8.** *And he shall pass through Judah,* &c.] That is, the king of Assyria, compared to a river of mighty waters; who should not only run over and

possess the land of Israel, or the ten tribes, but should enter into Judea, and pass through it, as a chastisement for not trusting in the Lord, but sending to Assyria for help; who instead of helping, distressed them in the times of Ahaz, even Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, (<sup><403></sup>2 Chronicles 28:20,21):

*he shall overflow, and go over*; the whole land of Judea, as Sennacherib king of Assyria did in Hezekiah's time:

*he shall reach [even] to the neck*; that is, to Jerusalem: the whole land is compared to a body, of which Jerusalem was the head; the Assyrian army, comparable to the waters of a great river, overflowed the whole land, took all the fenced cities of Judah, and came up even to Jerusalem, so that the whole was in great danger of being drowned and destroyed; as a man is, when the waters are come up to his neck; (see <sup><283></sup>2 Kings 18:13,17):

*and the stretching out of his wings*, the wings of the Assyrian army,

*shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel*; Judea, called Immanuel's land, because he was to be born there, and converse and die there; and this is particularly mentioned, to show that, though this land should be overrun by the Assyrians, yet not destroyed, until Immanuel, the son of the virgin, was born here. The Targum is,

“and he shall pass through the land of the house of Judah as an overflowing torrent, unto Jerusalem shall he come; and the people of his army shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.”

**Ver. 9.** *Associate yourselves, O ye people, &c.*] Both of Syria and Israel, whose two kings were confederate against Judah:

*and ye shall be broken in pieces*; as the kingdom of Syria was by Tilgathpilneser quickly after this, (<sup><263></sup>2 Kings 16:9) and the kingdom of Ephraim or Israel by Shalmaneser, (<sup><276></sup>2 Kings 17:6 <sup><288></sup>Isaiah 8:8):

*and give ear, all ye of far countries*; the Assyrians, and the nations that belonged to them, who were more remote from Judea:

*gird yourselves*; for a long and tedious march, and for war; it may signify the putting on of their whole armour; for, as Pausanius<sup>f140</sup> says, the ancients used to call putting on of armour, girding:

*and ye shall be broken in pieces*: as the Assyrian army was, which came up against Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time, (<sup><285></sup>2 Kings 19:35):

*gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces*; this is repeated for confirmation sake, to denote the certainty of it.

**Ver. 10.** *Take counsel together*, &c.] As Rezin king of Syria, and Remaliah's son, did against Judah, (<sup><237B></sup>Isaiah 7:5):

*it shall come to nought*; for, though they came up against it, they could not overcome it, (<sup><246B></sup>2 Kings 16:5):

*speak the word*; what they intended, resolved upon, and determined to do; this is the issue of their counsels:

*and it shall not stand*; (see Gill on "<sup><237D></sup>Isaiah 7:7"):

*for God is with us*; which is the interpretation of the name "Immanuel": and which shows that the reason why the consultations and resolutions of the enemies of Judah could not take place, so as to destroy it, was because Immanuel, the virgin's son, was to be born in it.

**Ver. 11.** *For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand*, &c.] In the strength of prophecy, as the Targum explains it; and so all the Jews' interpreters understand it of prophecy, as in (<sup><240B></sup>Ezekiel 1:3 3:14): or, "the Lord spake thus to me, when he took (me) by the hand"<sup>f141</sup>; as parents or masters take hold of the hands of children, while they are advising and instructing them, as expressive of their great affection for them; and when they would retain them with them, or restrain them from doing amiss:

*and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people*: or join with them in desiring and seeking for the help of the king of Assyria, against Rezin and Remaliah's son; or in being willing to surrender up into their hands:

*saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 12.** *Say ye not, a confederacy*, &c.] With the king of Assyria, or any other; do not cry it up as a right thing, and express pleasure and satisfaction in it, and encourage others to come into it, and vote for it, and declare an approbation of it; or a "rebellion", as the Targum, that is, against Ahaz; and so deliver up the kingdom of the house of David into the hands of its enemies:

*to all [them] to whom this people shall say, a confederacy*: who either were for entering into an alliance with the Assyrian monarch, and sending



for him to help; or were for joining with their enemies, to the subversion of the present government. Jarchi interprets this of Shebna the Scribe, and his company; who, as he suggests, conspired against Hezekiah, and secretly made an agreement with Sennacherib king of Assyria; but the former sense is best:

*neither fear their fear, nor be afraid*: let not the same fear possess you as does them, on account of Syria and Israel combining together against Judah; nor be afraid of their two kings, as they were; since there was nothing to fear from them; it being impossible that the kingdom of Judah should fail until Shiloh came, or Immanuel was born of a virgin in it; nor does it become the people of God, and especially his prophets and ministers, to be afraid of men; since the fear of men brings a snare. (see ~~ABH~~ 1 Peter 3:14).

**Ver. 13.** *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, &c.*] Christ, Immanuel, God with us, the Lord of the armies above and below, of angels and of men, God over all, the true Jehovah, who is sanctified by his people, when they declare him to be so; as the Targum paraphrases it,

“the Lord of hosts, him shall ye say is holy;”

for they cannot make him so, nor can he receive any holiness from them, nor does he need any; but they celebrate the perfection of his holiness, and ascribe it to him; yea, they sanctify him, by ascribing their holiness to him; by looking to him as their sanctification, and by deriving and expecting every degree and measure of holiness from him, to complete theirs; by exercising faith upon him, and showing a regard to his commands and ordinances:

*and [let] him [be] your fear, and [let] him [be] your dread*; that is, the object of fear and dread; not of a servile fear and dread, but of a holy reverence and godly fear; such a fear as is the grace of the covenant, which flows from the goodness of God, and has that for its object, and is influenced by it; (see ~~ABH~~ Hosea 3:5) where the same Lord, Messiah, David the king, is meant, as here. (see ~~ABH~~ 1 Peter 3:15).

**Ver. 14.** *And he shall be for a sanctuary, &c.*] Not the king of Assyria, as Aben Ezra, but the Lord of hosts: the Targum rightly interprets it of the word of the Lord, the essential Word; of the Messiah, who is for a sanctuary, or asylum, a place of refuge for his people in all times of distress, and who is their dwelling place in all generations; he dwells in

them, and they dwell in him; and where they dwell safely and securely, peaceably and quietly, comfortably and pleasantly, and that always; he is a sanctuary to worship in, in whom they draw nigh to the Father, and offer up the sacrifices of prayer and praise, and where the glory of God is seen by them, and they have communion with him; or “for sanctification”, as the Septuagint version; this Christ is to his people, (~~403~~1 Corinthians 1:30):

*but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel:* which Jarchi interprets of Pekah, the son of Remaliah, and his company, and of Shebna and his company; but Aben Ezra much better of the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah, especially when the twelve tribes were under one form of government in Christ’s time. In the Talmud<sup>f142</sup> it is explained of the two houses of the fathers of Israel; and these are they, the head of the captivity in Babylon, and the prince in the land of Israel; and the Nazarenes, as Jerom<sup>f143</sup> reports, apply the words to the two houses or families of Hillel and Shammai, who were two heads of schools in Jerusalem, a little before the times of Christ, and were of the sect of the Pharisees; and to whom indeed Christ was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, as he was to the Jews in common; who were offended and stumbled at his birth and parentage, he descending from poor parents; at his education and place of bringing up; at the mean appearance of himself and his followers; at the obscurity of his kingdom, it not being of this world, nor coming with observation; at the company he kept, and the audience that attended on him; at his doctrines and miracles; and at his death, and the manner of it; (see ~~402~~Romans 9:32,33 ~~408~~1 Peter 2:8).

*For a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;* even the principal inhabitants of it, such as the elders of the people, priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, who sought to entangle Christ in his talk, and to ensnare him by questions they put unto him; but were themselves snared and taken, convicted, confounded, and silenced. (see ~~4215~~Matthew 22:15,34,46 ~~408~~John 8:3-9).

**Ver. 15.** *And many among them,* &c.] Not all, though the greater part; for Christ was set for the falling and rising of many in Israel, (~~4234~~Luke 2:34):

*shall stumble, and fall, and be broken:* stumble at Christ, the stumbling stone; fall by unbelief into other sins and punishment, and be broken in pieces by this stone, (~~4244~~Matthew 21:44):

*and be snared, and be taken*; and so die in their sins, and perish eternally. The allusion is to birds being taken in a snare or trap, or with bird lime, and therein or thereby held and detained.

**Ver. 16.** *Bind up the testimony*, &c.] These are not the words of the prophet, as Kimchi thinks, but of the Lord to the prophet, and are part of that instruction given him, (<sup><2181></sup>Isaiah 8:11). By “the testimony” is meant the word of prophecy delivered to him; particularly that evangelical part of it respecting Immanuel, who was to be born of a virgin, and would be for a sanctuary to them that believe in him, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to unbelievers; so the Gospel is called the testimony of Christ, it bearing witness of his person, office, and grace, (<sup><5003></sup>2 Timothy 1:8) and “binding” denotes care of it, as something valuable, that it be not lost, but committed to the trust faithful men, called disciples of Christ in the next clause, in allusion to the binding up of money, or anything of value, in bundles, to be laid up and preserved, (<sup><0425></sup>Genesis 42:35) so the Targum,

“O prophet, keep the testimony:”

*seal the law among my disciples*: the disciples of Christ, the faithful of that day, and of after times, to whom this prophecy, and the “doctrine” in it, which the word “law” signifies, even the doctrine of Christ, should be transmitted or communicated, which is meant by “sealing” of it; not hiding it from them, but signifying, that while it was a sealed book, a hidden doctrine, and delivered in parables to others, it should be made known to them, and sealed and laid up by them among their treasure, and be so esteemed of; as the Gospel, the doctrine of grace, is, by the true disciples and followers of Christ; who are such as are taught of God, have learned of the Father, who continue in the word and doctrine of Christ, love his people, take up the cross and follow him, and bring forth fruit to the glory of his heavenly Father, (<sup><3165></sup>John 6:45 8:31 13:35 15:8 <sup><0147></sup>Luke 14:27).

**Ver. 17.** *And I will wait upon the Lord*, &c.] Or “for the Lord”<sup>f144</sup>; for the coming of Christ, the Immanuel, who would be a sanctuary to some, and a stone of stumbling to others, and whose doctrine in the meanwhile would be bound up and sealed; faith in, and expectation of the Messiah’s coming, are often signified by waiting for him, (<sup><2370></sup>Isaiah 25:9 <sup><3113></sup>Habakkuk 2:3):

*that hideth his face from the house of Jacob*; to whom the promise of him was made, from whom he should descend, to whom he should be sent, and whom he would redeem. This is not to be understood of his deserting of

his people, and withdrawing his gracious presence from them, to show his displeasure at them, and resentment of their conduct, which is sometimes the sense of this phrase; but as descriptive of Christ before his assumption of human nature, when he was “Deus absconditus”, the hidden God, as some render the words in (<sup>24515</sup>Isaiah 45:15) until he was manifest in the flesh; and which is therefore called his “appearing”, (<sup>5010</sup>2 Timothy 1:10):

*and I will look for him*; the prophet here speaks in his own person, and in the person of the church who in that, and in succeeding ages, as well as before, were looking by faith for the coming of Christ, and redemption by him, (<sup>4128</sup>Luke 2:38) though some understand this of Christ, expressing his satisfaction in the few disciples he had among the Jews, and determining to wait for the accomplishment of divine promises hereafter, when he should have a larger number; the Lord for the present hiding his face from the Jewish nation, and giving them to a spirit of judicial blindness; which sense well agrees with what goes before, and follows after.

**Ver. 18.** *Behold, I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me, &c.]*

These are the words of Christ, as is clear from (<sup>8213</sup>Hebrews 2:13) who, upon the prophet’s declaring his resolution to look and wait for him, presents himself and his children to him, as if he was actually come, or else continues his discourse from the preceding verse; for these are not the words of the prophet, speaking of himself and his natural children, Shearjashub and Mahershalalhashbaz; nor of his spiritual children, his disciples, called sometimes the sons of the prophets; but of Christ, who has a seed, a spiritual offspring, to whom he stands in the relation of a father, (<sup>2006</sup>Isaiah 9:6 53:10) and who are given him of God, in the covenant of grace; for whose sake he partook of flesh and blood, and died to gather them together, being scattered abroad; and redeemed them, that they might receive the adoption of children; and who, being regenerated, believe in him: these were from eternity given unto him, to be his seed and offspring, his spouse, his sheep, his portion, and inheritance; in virtue of which they are brought unto him, and received by him in time in effectual calling; which gift of them to Christ is an instance of the Father’s love to him, and of distinguishing grace to them.

*[Are] for signs and wonders in Israel*; not the prophet and his natural children; though it is true that he himself was for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia, (<sup>2318</sup>Isaiah 20:3) and his children, Shearjashub and Mahershalalhashbaz, were signs in their very names, as well as actions, of

the future deliverance of Judah from its enemies; but Christ and his spiritual children: Christ the Immanuel, the son of the virgin, is “for a sign”, given by the Lord himself, even of the same deliverance, (<sup>2074</sup>Isaiah 7:14) and a sign of the love of God to his people, and of his care of them, and regard unto them; and a sign that should be spoken against, as he was in his person, office, doctrines, and miracles, by the unbelieving Jews, (<sup>1034</sup>Luke 2:34)

*and for wonders*: his name being wonderful; his person, as God man, wonderful; his love to his people wonderful; his works and actions, doctrines and miracles, life and death, being wonderful; (see Gill on <sup>2006</sup>Isaiah 9:6”) and so his children and people are “for signs and wonders”; they are like Joshua’s fellows, men wondered at, (see Gill on <sup>3008</sup>Zechariah 3:8”); they are a wonder to themselves, that such sinful and unworthy creatures should partake of so much grace; they are a wonder to angels, that they should be chosen, redeemed, and called; and they are a wonder to Christ, who admires his own grace in them; and they are a wonder to the men of the world, a spectacle, a gazingstock to them, and are reproached by them; and all this is

*from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion*; Christ, as man and Mediator, is from him, and all that befall him is according to his determination, will, and pleasure; his children, and their being children, and given to him; and whatsoever they have, and whatsoever they meet with, and befall them, is all from the Lord; and this may serve to comfort them, that “the Lord of hosts”, of armies in heaven and in earth, is for them, and on their side, and therefore need not fear any that shall be against them; and that he “dwelleth in Mount Zion”, the church, which he has chosen for his rest, and where he will dwell for ever, and so will never leave nor forsake his people.

**Ver. 19.** *And when they shall say unto you, &c.*] These are the words of Christ continued, as making his appearance in Israel; and are an address to his people among them, even to his children, disciples, and followers, advising them what they should do, when those among whom they dwelt should press them to

*seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards, that peep, and that mutter*; meaning the Scribes and Pharisees, the doctors among the Jews, who sat in Moses’s chair, and who were very much given to sorcery, and the magic art, and used enchantments, which were performed by

“muttering”; hence we read of muttering over a wound for the healing of it; and muttering over serpents and scorpions at the driving of them away<sup>f145</sup>; and of such a Rabbi muttering in the name of such an one<sup>f146</sup>; and of such and such a doctor skilled in wonders or miraculous operations: (see Gill on ~~¶~~ Matthew 24:24”) yea, even such as were chosen into the sanhedrim, or great council, were to be skilled in the arts of soothsayers, diviners, and wizards, and the like, that they might know how to judge them<sup>f147</sup>; now the Jews would have had the disciples of Christ to have applied to these men to direct their judgments in religious affairs, and be determined by them concerning the Messiah and other things:

*should not a people seek unto their God?* “to” Christ, who is the Lord God omniscient and omnipotent, who knows all things, and whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Angel of the great council; and who is able to give the best counsel and direction in matters of moment and consequence, and able to do everything for his people they stand in need of; and who being present with them, God manifest in the flesh, it would be egregious folly to apply to any other, and especially such as are here described; (see ~~¶~~ John 6:68):

*for the living to the dead?* that is, should men seek to such who are no other than dead men, for the sake or on the account of such who are living? The disciples of Christ, the children that God had given him, were quickened and made alive by the grace of God, had principles of grace and spiritual life implanted in them, had passed from death to life, lived by faith on Christ, lived holy lives, and were heirs of eternal life; and therefore it does not become them, nor any of them, to consult persons dead in trespasses and sins, who knew no more, and were no more capable of judging of spiritual things, than dead men are. (see ~~¶~~ 1 Corinthians 2:14,15).

**Ver. 20.** *To the law, and to the testimony,* &c.] Kimchi takes this to be an oath, “by the law, and by the testimony”, it is so and so; but Aben Ezra observes there is no instance of this kind in Scripture; it is a direction of Christ’s to his disciples, to attend to the writings of Moses and the prophets, to search the Scriptures, as in (~~¶~~ John 5:39) and particularly what is before said in this prophecy concerning himself, the same is meant as on (~~¶~~ Isaiah 8:16).

*if they speak not according to this word;* this sure word of prophecy, to which men do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place, it

being the rule of faith and practice, a lamp to the feet, and a light to the path:

*[it is] because [there is] no light in them*; that is, in them that speak not according to it, meaning the Scribes and Pharisees; who, rejecting the written word, set up the traditions of the elders above it, and taught the people to walk according to them; and so were, as our Lord says, “blind leaders of the blind”, (~~454~~ Matthew 15:14) or the words may be read, “if not”; if they will not regard the Scriptures, and the evangelical doctrine in them, and the testimony they give concerning Christ; “let them speak according to this word”; or instruction, and counsel, they have from the Scribes and Pharisees: “in which there is no light”,<sup>f148</sup>; but the darkness of ignorance, infidelity, superstition, and will worship; or “no morning”; but a night of Jewish darkness, even though the sun of righteousness was risen, and the dayspring from on high had visited the earth; yet they had received no light and knowledge from him, which was their condemnation, (~~800~~ John 1:4,5) (~~819~~ John 3:19,20) or thus, “to the law, and to the testimony, though they may say after this manner, there is no light in it”<sup>f149</sup>; in the law and testimony, preferring the traditions, decisions, and determinations of their doctors above it. Noldnius<sup>f150</sup> renders the words thus, “seeing they speak not according to this word, certainly they shall have no morning”; that is, seeing the seducers and false teachers, in the preceding verse (~~289~~ Isaiah 8:19), speak not according to the word of God, and testimony of Jesus, they shall have no morning of light and joy, of grace and comfort, or any spiritual felicity; Christ will be no morning to them, but they will continue in their dark, benighted, and miserable condition, described in the following verse.

**Ver. 21.** *And they shall pass through it, &c.*] The land, as the Targum and Kimchi supply it; that is, the land of Judea, as Aben Ezra interprets it. Here begins an account of the punishment that should be inflicted on the Jews, for their neglect of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and their rejection of the Messiah:

*hardly bestead and hungry*; put to the greatest difficulty to get food to eat, and famishing for want of it; which some understand of the time when Sennacherib’s army was before Jerusalem, as Aben Ezra; but it seems better, with others, to refer it to the times of Zedekiah, when there was a sore famine, (~~2816~~ Jeremiah 52:6) though best of all to the besieging of Jerusalem, by the Romans, and the times preceding it, (~~410~~ Matthew

24:7,21,22) and it may also be applied to the famine of hearing the word before that, when the Gospel, the kingdom of heaven, was taken from them, for their contempt of it:

*and it shall come to pass, when they shall be hungry*: either in a temporal sense, having no food for their bodies; or in a mystical sense, being hungry often and earnestly desirous of the coming of their vainly expected Messiah, as a temporal Saviour of them:

*they shall fret themselves*; for want of food for their bodies, to satisfy their hunger; or because their Messiah does not come to help them:

*and curse their King, and their God*; the true Messiah, who is the King of Israel, and God manifest in the flesh; whom the unbelieving Jews called accursed, and blasphemed:

*and look upwards*; to heaven, for the coming of another Messiah, but in vain; or for food to eat.

**Ver. 22.** *And they shall look unto the earth*, &c.] As persons in distress, upwards and downwards, backwards and forwards, on the right hand and on the left, particularly into the land of Judea; a land that used to flow with milk and honey, a land of light, plenty, and prosperity:

*and behold trouble and darkness*; adversity, and miseries of all kinds, expressed by a variety of words; and even words fail to express the tribulation of these times, which were such as were not from the beginning of the world, (<sup>4102</sup>Matthew 24:22):

*dimness of anguish*; or “fleeing from affliction”<sup>f151</sup>, multitudes everywhere fleeing from one place to another, to avoid the calamities coming upon them, (<sup>4246</sup>Matthew 24:16-20):

*and [they shall be] driven to darkness*; when they endeavour to escape one calamity, they shall be driven and fall into another; the whole land shall be full of nothing else.