**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ISAIAH-010. SHILOAH AND EUPHRATES by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly ... the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many."*

*Isaiah 8:6, 7*

The kingdom of Judah was threatened with a great danger in an alliance between Israel and Damascus. The cowardly King Ahaz, instead of listening to Isaiah's strong assurances and relying on the help of God, made what he thought a master-stroke of policy in invoking the help of the formidable Assyrian power. That ambitious military monarchy was eager to find an excuse for meddling in the politics of Syria, and nothing loath, marched an army down on the backs of the invaders, which very soon compelled them to hasten to Judah in order to defend their own land. But, as is always the case, the help invoked was his ruin. Like all conquering powers, once having got its foot inside the door, Assyria soon followed bodily. First Damascus and Israel were ravaged and subdued, and then Judah. That kingdom only purchased the privilege of being devoured last. Like the Spaniards in Mexico, the Saxons in England, the English in a hundred Indian territories, the allies that came to help remained to conquer, and Judah fell, as we all know.

This is the simple original application of these words. They are a declaration that in seeking for help from others Judah was forsaking God, and that the helper would become ruler, and the ruler an oppressive tyrant.

The waters of Shiloah that go softly stand as an emblem of the Davidic monarchy as God meant it to be, and, since that monarchy was itself a prophecy, they therefore represent the kingdom of God or the Messianic King. The waters strong and many are those of the Euphrates, which swells and overflows and carries havoc, and are taken as the emblem of the wasting sweep of the Assyrian king, whose capital stood on its banks.

But while thus there is a plain piece of political history in the words, they are also the statement of general principles which apply to every individual soul and its relations to the kingdom, the gentle kingdom, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

**I. The Gentle Kingdom.**

That little brooklet slipping quietly along; what a striking image of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ!

It suggests the character of the King, the meek and lowly in heart. It suggests the manner of His rule as wielded in gentleness and exercising no compulsion but that of love. It suggests the blessed results of His reign under the image of the fertility, freshness, and beauty which spring up wherever the river cometh. That kingdom we are all summoned to enter.

**II. The Rejection of the Kingdom.**

Strange and awful fact that men do turn away from it and Him.

In what does rejection consist?

* In not trusting in His power to help and deliver.
* In seeking help from other sources. This rejection is often unconscious on the part of men who are guilty of it.

**III. The Allies who are preferred to the gentle King.**

The crowd of worldly things.

What is to be noticed is that at first the preference seems to answer and be all right.

**IV. The Allies becoming Tyrants.**

The swift Euphrates in spate. That is what the rejecters have chosen for themselves. Better to have lived by Shiloah than to have built their houses by the side of such a raging stream. Mark how this is a divine retribution indeed, but a natural process too.

**(a)** If Christ does not rule us, a mob of tyrants will.

* Our own passions.
* Our own evil habits.
* The fascinating sins around us.

**(b)** They soon cease to seem helpers, and become tyrants.

How quickly the pleasure of sin disappears--like some bird that loses its gay plumage as it grows old.

How stern becomes the necessity to obey; how great the difficulty of breaking off evil habits! So a man becomes the slave of his own lusts, of his indulged tastes, which rise above all restraints and carry away all before them, like the Euphrates in flood. Fertility is turned to barrenness; a foul deposit of mud overlays the soil; houses on the sand are washed away; corpses float on the tawny wave. The soul that rejects Christ's gentle sway is harried and laid waste by a mob of base-born tyrants. We have to make our choice--either Christ or these; either a service which is freedom, or an apparent freedom which is slavery; either a worship which exalts, or a worship which embrutes. If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. It is peaceful to pitch our tents beside its calm flow, whereon shall go no hostile fleets, and whence we shall but pass to the city above, in the midst of the street whereof the river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.