

I And The Children

The writer to the Hebrews tells us the Lord spoke by the prophets in 'divers ways' and this diversity is highlighted in our verses today. Having spoken publicly and directly to the king concerning Judah's deliverance from the Syria/Israel confederacy, Isaiah repeats the message of the previous chapter. The king would know, his court would know, the people would hear, and see with their own eyes, the glory and sovereignty of God. Ignorance is no excuse for unbelief.

A broad message

Careful reading of this whole chapter will prove helpful. Without directly naming who he is addressing Isaiah speaks to different groups, condemning some, encouraging and comforting others. He speaks to those who fear Syria/Israel and to some who want to submit and join them, he speaks to those who wish to call for Assyria's help, and even symbolically speaks directly to the Assyrian king, who of course cannot hear him, calling him to prepare for war. Sometimes it is the Lord who speaks to Isaiah.

Another son, another name

The prophet had previously taken his son Shear-jashub to meet Ahaz. That boy's name means 'The remnant shall return' and testified of God's faithfulness concerning the coming Messiah and His people. Now another son is mentioned. Maher-shalal-hash-baz means, 'hasten to the spoil, hasten to the prey' as if the words are spoken directly to the Assyrian monarch to fall quickly upon Syria/Israel. Before the child could say 'mother' or 'father' the destruction of Syria would have begun, as it did. First, Syria was overthrown and Israel made tributary before itself being destroyed some years later in the reign of Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz; but the fulfilment of the prophecy started here.

Enduring gospel, certain judgment

Isaiah was instructed by the Lord to write down and bind up his prophecy in a great roll or parchment. He takes reputable men both to confirm the prophecy was received and recorded before it happened, and also to publicise the message. By this we learn his words were to have lasting importance for many generations until the coming of Christ. The people of Judah will be ravaged by Assyria as punishment for their rebellion and rejection of God. Having refused the peaceful rule of the Lord, likened to the gentle-flowing stream of Shiloah, later called the pool of Siloam in the New Testament, the nation of Judah, together with Syria and Israel, would be flooded by the raging-river torrent of Assyria.

The elect not forgotten

However, with all the warnings and threats of judgment also came words of comfort and support for the Lord's elect concerning His mercy. In the years, decades and even centuries to follow, during siege, starvation, loss and captivity, Isaiah's prophecies would be read and remembered by men and women of faith to encourage them in the Lord's faithful promises of grace. In tomorrow's service we shall see how this is revealed in three distinct ways.

Immanuel's land

First, the people are reminded the land of Canaan; Judah, with Israel and Galilee, is Immanuel's land. Assyria would surely fill the territory like a mighty flood but it was still Immanuel's land (v. 8). As we have seen, Immanuel means 'God with us'. Judah is the nation into which Christ would be born, Israel the land upon which He would walk, Jerusalem the city in which He would die and the Jews the people from whom the gospel of His kingdom would go forth into all the world. Isaiah dares the people to make their alliances but every effort to destroy the Lord's people will come to nothing for Immanuel's sake. It shall not stand because 'God is with us' (v. 10). It is not possible for the kingdom of Judah to be completely destroyed until Messiah comes to it and Immanuel be born of a virgin in it.

Christ our Sanctuary

Second, not only shall Messiah come but by implication a remnant seed must needs be preserved. Consequently, the Lord Himself will be the safe hiding-place for His people. He shall be to His people for a sanctuary (v. 14), though He be a rock of offence and a stumbling stone to others. There is no doubt who we are talking about. This latter phrase is clearly attributed to Christ by the apostles Peter and Paul. When Isaiah is told to 'bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples' (v. 16) he understands this to mean the Messiah's arrival is not imminent so he resolves to wait patiently (v. 17).

I and the children

This opens our final point. The Lord blesses His faithful, patient prophet with a glimpse of the victorious Saviour together with His redeemed church, 'Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me' (v. 18). Isaiah saw the Lord Jesus Christ ruling in His church and dwelling amongst His people, who are identified as the children given to Him by His Father in the everlasting covenant of grace. Isaiah saw the Lord again, just as he had seen Him before, high and lifted up with His train, His church, filling the temple. Once again he is shown Christ and all the children of promise.

Amen

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