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The Sign of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz

8: 1-4

The sign of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz DIG: What do the names of Isaiah's two sons symbolize in the context of Chapters 7 and 8? What did this second son's name mean? Why was it significant? To whom was it directed? Why was Isaiah's wife called a prophetess?

REFLECT: How does the LORD communicate with you today? How can you be sure that what you are being told is reliable (Second Timothy 3:16)? In what ways do you simply walk in obedience to God without being sure of where you will end up? Who is watching you walk with ADONAI? Your children? Your spouse? Your co-workers? In what ways are you a positive model for them? How do you react when you slip up?

The Assyrian domination of the northern kingdom of **Isra'el** in **Chapters 6** and **7** foreshadow its domination of the southern kingdom of **Judah** in **Chapter 8**. **Isaiah** had already prophesied about the fall of the Syrian-**Isra'el** alliance (**7:4-17**). Now **he** gives another prophecy about the same event. Like **Chapter 7**, the prophecy involves *the birth of a baby*, this time to **Isaiah's wife**, a **prophetess**. **God** allowed this prophecy to be witnessed by several important people to prove to the northern kingdom of **Isra'el** once again that **Isaiah** was speaking for **the LORD** and **His** words were **reliable**.

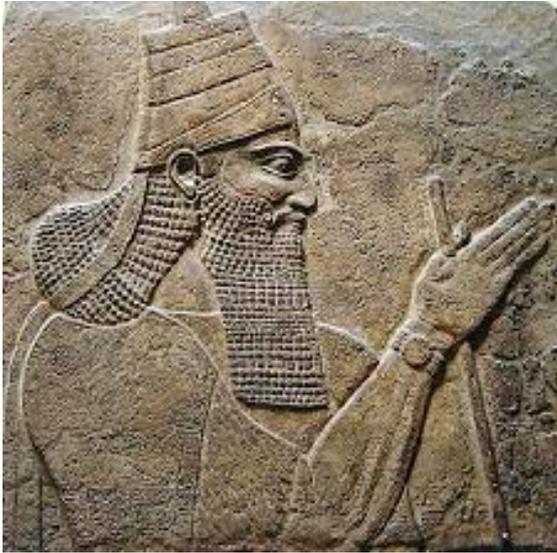
The LORD said to **His prophet**, "**Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz**" (**8:1**). **Isaiah** used a **large scroll** as a visual aid to help the people understand **his** prophecy. **He** was to **write** the name of **his** soon-to-be-born **son** even before **he** was born. This would point to the certainty of the birth. The name **Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz** is the longest personal name in the Bible. It means *quick to plunder, swift to spoil*. Soldiers would shout these words to one another as they defeated their enemy. **Isaiah's** listeners would remember **his** prophecy of the fall of the Syrian-**Isra'el** alliance and would understand the significance of his **son's** name. Those two nations would be *plundered* and **the Assyrian** army would take their *spoil*.

Isaiah wrote the words **he** was told on the **scroll**. Not until **the boy** was born did **he himself** fully understand the significance of what **he** had done. **Isaiah** simply walked in obedience, a model for the people of **God**.

YHVH said **He** would **call in two witnesses (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:5)** who could confirm that **His** words were true. **He** then called **Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah** because **they** were faithful or **reliable witnesses (8:2)**. In what sense were **Uriah and Zechariah reliable** or faithful? They were *not* faithful in the sense of being faithful to the covenant of **God**. But **they were faithful witnesses for God** in the sense that these were **not** men who would side with **Isaiah** against **Ahaz**; **they** would side with **Ahaz against Isaiah**. In other words, because **they** would tend to be *anti-Isaiah* rather than *pro-Isaiah*, they were **reliable witnesses**. When **Isaiah's** prophecy did come true, **they** could testify that **Isaiah** prophesied truthfully about it beforehand. The first sign, then, was this impressive **large scroll**.

Then I went to the prophetess and she conceived and gave birth to a son (8:3a). Nine months later we see the second sign, and it is a living one. The living witness, **Isaiah's second son**, will now replace the lifeless, **large scroll**. **And the LORD said to me: "Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz" (8:3b)**. Like Immanuel, the **boy** possessed four names. But he foreshadowed doom, whereas **the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace (9:6b)**, focuses on hope. The naming of the **son** communicated the message that **God's** word is sure and can be trusted. After the **birth of his son**, **Isaiah** probably knew that **he** must call **his wife a prophetess**, because **she** had literally been the bearer of the Word of **the LORD**. If **she was a prophetess in her own right**; however, we have no biblical record of it.

For before the boy knows how to say "My father," or "My mother," the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria (8:4). Before the child could **say** two syllable words, **my father or my mother**, **Assyria** would **plunder** both **Damascus** (Syria's capital city) and **Samaria** (Israel's capital city). Most children can say those words before, or soon after, they are one year old. As a result, **the boy** would serve as a time-indicator of what **his** name foreshadowed.



The **king of Assyria** mentioned here was Tiglath-Pileser III. In 734 BC he marched down the Israeli seacoast as far as the Egyptian border. Egyptian aid was then cut off. In 733 BC **Isra'el** lost Galilee, the Transjordan (**Second Kings 15:29**), Megiddo and other cities. Only the swift submission of Hoshea gave the northern kingdom of **Isra'el** a few more years. When **Damascus and Samaria** fell in 742 BC, **Judah** should have turned to **God** as **Isaiah** had told **her** to do. But **Uriah the priest**, one of the two **witnesses**, followed **Ahaz's** orders and changed the Temple worship to mirror the pagan worship that had been practiced in **Damascus (Second Kings 16:10-16)**. Apparently **he** was an influential **priest** and the nation followed **him** into spiritual adultery with tragic results.

Failure to listen to **the LORD** has dire consequences. Those consequences may come quickly or they may be delayed, but they will come. **God**, however, is merciful and gives us warning in advance. **His** warnings may come in different ways to different people. There is no formula. But we do need to be attentive. Make **Him** your best **Friend**, communicate with **Him** daily, and be in the Word. **He** may speak loudly or **He** might possibly come with a **gentle whisper (First Kings 19:12)**, but **He** promises that you will **find Him**. **YHVH** tells us: **I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me will find Me (Proverbs 8:17)**.