

ISAIAH

Chapter 8

The Coming Assyrian Invasion

Then the LORD said to me, “Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, ‘Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz.’ 2 And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me.” 3 And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz; 4 for before the boy knows how to cry ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.” 5 The LORD spoke to me again: 6 “Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, 7 therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, 8 and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.” 9 Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered; give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered. 10 Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

8:1–2 *tablet ... witnesses.* † The witnesses would attest to the transaction. The Hebrew word for “scroll” is related to the word for “unsealed copy” in Jer 32:11. (CSB)

8:1 *large tablet* – Not long after Isaiah’s interview with Ahaz at the Upper Pool, the Lord again directed the prophet to act. This time the Lord told him to create a kind of billboard. Isaiah was to write a message on a large scroll or tablet. Isaiah wrote this message large enough so people could see it from a distance in letters the people could easily read. (PBC)

Sized for public display and reading. (TLSB)

That is, so that they can be read clearly. [The prophet is to write] large letters, such as are commonly used by men, so that no one can excuse himself as though he could not read them. (Luther)

common characters. Large letters of ordinary script. The name was to be read and its meaning understood by the general reading public. Isaiah’s action assumes a significant reading population in Jerusalem. Chemnitz: “The prophet is commanded to write ... with proper, clear, and commonly understood words, so that there be no ambiguous, unclear, difficult, or intricate meanings, but words which can be understood by each individual” (*LTh* 1:37). (TLSB)

Maher-hash-baz – This means “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil. (PBC)

As the name given Isaiah’s older son foretold the ultimate failure of the enemies to conquer Jerusalem, so this name was a prophetic proclamation that Damascus, capital of Syria, and Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom, would be defeated. (TLSB)

Once exhibited to the public, the message was a riddle in Jerusalem. Did it mean that Pekah and Rezin would succeed and plunder Jerusalem? Did it mean that God would visit His people with

destruction? Did it mean that Assyria, Egypt, or another foreign army would come? Isaiah, of course, told Ahaz that Damascus and Ephraim would be destroyed and the king of Assyria would come. The last part of chapter 7 warned about the destruction to come at the hands of the Assyrians. But for the common people of Jerusalem, the message of Isaiah written in large bold letters was puzzling. (PBC)

8:2 *Uriah the priest.* Served under King Ahaz (see 2Ki 16:10–11). (CSB)

reliable witness – Uriah was the priest who had co-operated with Ahaz to make a model of a heathen altar to be set up in the temple area at Jerusalem, apparently an Assyrian altar indicating that Ahaz would offer sacrifices for the success of the Assyrian king. Zechariah on the other hand was the father-in-law of Ahaz. Both are called “faithful men” of witnesses, because they would not have sided with the prophet against the king. (Leupold)

Zechariah. Not the prophet. Cannot be identified further. (TLSB)

8:3 *prophetess ... son.* † This is the only known case of a prophetess marrying a prophet. But the young woman may be called a prophetess here because she had become the wife of a prophet. (CSB)

went to the prophetess. Had sexual relations with his wife. *prophetess.* Certainly not the virgin of 7:14 because she already had a son (7:3). (TLSB)

Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. This symbolic name meant that Ahaz’s enemies would be plundered, , but it also implied that Judah would suffer (see vv. 7–8). (CSB)

Thus the second sign corresponds with the words. The people were quickly to become a prey. The tablet and the son’s name have this meaning. It is Christ, however, who most worthily bears this title by His death, for He despoiled hell. But just as the innocent sons of Hosea are called sons of fornication for the sake of the people who did fornicate, so here Isaiah’s son bears his name. (Luther)

8:4 *knows how to say.* At about age two. The time period is identical to that in 7:16. (CSB)

spoil of Samaria will be carried away. The first stage of the destruction of the northern kingdom (see note on 7:4), which was not completed until 722–721 B.C. (CSB)

Tiglath-Pileser, the Assyrian king, attacked Damascus in 733 and plundered it, killing Rezin. The campaign of the Assyrian king continued against Israel, and he took Gilead and Galilee and deported the population to Assyria (2 Kings 15:29). In the midst of all the political and military turmoil, Hoshea assassinated Pekah and became king in 732. At the time, the son of Isaiah was not yet two years old, just barely being able to say “Mommy” and “Daddy.” (PBC)

8:5 *Lord spoke to me again* – The Lord begins to speak here, and He continues speaking until the end of chapter 12. (Stoekhardt)

8:6 *because this people has refused* – Judah (TLSB)

The people, void of faith, sought help and counsel everywhere, even among outsiders and enemies, or else of necessity they made agreements with them and hired them at great expense. So you will read below in chapters 30 and 31. But never did they seek help with the Lord. They

made treaties which they broke afterwards. “The wicked,” He says, “are like the tossing sea” (Is. 57:20). This is therefore a rebuke of their unbelief over against God and their trust over against their enemies. To sum it up: He who trusts in man will go to ruin. Alliances are the cause of two evils. For the minds of some are inflamed, who would otherwise be peaceful; these burden themselves with envy, and when they come to the heart of the matter, nothing happens. Always there are excuses. The Jews, having spurned their own God, even made alliances with strange gods, because they noticed the exceedingly successful military campaigns of the idolaters. (Luther)

waters of Shiloah. The waters in Jerusalem that flow from the Gihon spring (see 2Ch 32:30) to the Pool of Siloam (see Jn 9:7) may be intended (see Ne 3:15). Here they symbolize the sustaining power of the Lord. (CSB)

The Gihon stream/canal, flowing gently along Jerusalem’s southeastern wall, was used for irrigation and emptied into a reservoir within the city (the Pool of Siloam; cf 7:3); it symbolizes the assurance of God’s care. (TLSB)

Shiloah is the name of a source whose point of origin is in a deep canyon between Mt. Zion and the mountain on which the temple is located, and of the stream that flows into the valley south of Jerusalem. These waters of Shiloah flow gently and softly. (Stoeckhardt)

Rezin and the son of Remaliah. Rezin and Pekah both died in 732 B.C. (CSB)

8:7–8 *waters of the River, mighty and many.* Mighty rivers were often used to symbolize a powerful invading army (see 28:17–19). (CSB)

Symbol of Assyria, the heart of whose kingdom was between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. (TLSB)

A reference to the Euphrates River in Assyria. It is a raging powerful river, especially when the snow melts in the mountains. (PBC)

rise over all its channels. Poetic description of Assyria’s might. (TLSB)

8:8 *even to the neck.* Sennacherib’s invasion in 701 B.C. overwhelmed all the cities of Judah except Jerusalem (see 1:7–9). (CSB)

The waters denote people. The little rivers denote walled towns, so also the banks up to the neck, that is, the head, which is Jerusalem. It will remain, it will continue to stand, even though in the midst of waters. Obviously, trusting Hezekiah, of whom the Jews say that he is that Immanuel, was protected in a wonderful way by a clear prophecy. He who puts his trust in men walks on clouds and builds on sand. (Luther)

Assyrian would not be satisfied to stop at the border of Judah. Instead, it would “overflow all its channels.” Judah would be neck-deep in trouble. As history turned out, the Assyrians ravaged the Judean countryside and laid siege to the Jerusalem itself during the reign of Hezekiah. But God did provide help for Hezekiah. Because of the Lord’s intervention, the Assyrians lost 185,000 soldiers at the gates of Jerusalem and had to abandon their siege and return home to Nineveh. (PBC)

Judah was able to keep its head above water for a short time because Jerusalem would not be conquered until later. (Stoekhardt)

outspread wings. The figure changes to a bird of prey, perhaps the eagle, renowned for its speed. (CSB)

Assyria would dominate the entire region. (TLSB)

This river is spreading out its wings. Waves of water pour out from the main channel, just like a bird spreads its two wings to either side, and so fills the entire country, that wide it is. (Stoekhardt)

Immanuel. All seems lost, but “God is with us” (v. 10) and defeats the enemy. (CSB)

The inhabitants of the land are so addressed because they would remain unharmed if they would be “firm in faith” (7:9) and express their faith by saying, “Immanuel,” “God is with us.” (TLSB)

Believers gasp at the judgment of God upon the sin and wickedness of the world around them. But they know where to turn, and so did Isaiah. The believer cries, as Isaiah did, “O Immanuel!” When the Jews of Isaiah’s day were either killed or deported, the promise would endure and remain. The believers who heard Isaiah trusted God’s promises. Each generation of believers clings to the same hope. No matter what happens, God is with us. The promised Messiah has come and given forgiveness and eternal life. Such comfort brings a boldness to face the world and its raging against God. Isaiah showed us the way. (PBC)

8:9 *peoples... be shattered.* Just as Aram and Israel would be shattered (7:7–9), so Assyria and Babylon would eventually fall. (CSB)

you peoples. Nations opposing Judah. *be shattered.* God does not leave His people completely devastated. Isaiah predicts Assyria’s fall and the fall of all who oppose God’s people. Their power will be shattered. (TLSB)

Once the prophet had turned to Immanuel, he could shake his fist at the power of foreign armies. (PBC)

8:10 *it will not stand.* Only God’s plans and purposes will last. (CSB)

It would be better if chapter eight began here. These are threats against the king of Assyria, whose plan was to flood the land of Judah up to its neck, as has already been said, but in order fully to upset and destroy everything, the body together with the head. It was God’s plan, however, to preserve a remnant and some grapes from the ruined vineyard. Therefore the prophet scoffs at the plan of that king after he has finished speaking about the blow that would strike the Jews. The word of comfort in the midst of wrath is for the purpose of arousing hope. *Be gathered,* Jerusalem. This is the Hebrew way of saying “Be evil, show what you can do.” *Be conquered,* that is, you will not succeed. The repetition shows the intensity of emotion and suggests: “Do whatever you can, and do it as vigorously as possible.” The kingdom of Judah refers to the kingdom of Christ, namely, that He would be the one to take the initiative in that kingdom. He provides the aid, they will win the victory. Therefore look for those who are drawn up in battle array with many weapons. Let the strange god first be cast down, and his army will easily be defeated. Let us pray first of all against Satan. Christians fight most effectively when they fight least. (Luther)

speaking a word. The nations' decrees cannot surpass God's power; He is with His people. (TLSB)

8:1–10 Ahaz does not heed the Lord's signs, so a different sign is given through the birth and name of Isaiah's second son. Judah would be all but swept away by Assyria. Yet the Lord would still abide with and protect His people. The Lord abides with us still, even amid judgment and devastation. He is our Immanuel, and nothing can sweep Him away. • Merciful Lord, defend me even as You chasten me. Lead me to sincere confession and enduring faith. Amen. (TLSB)

Fear God, Wait for the LORD

11 For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: 12 “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. 13 But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.” 16 Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples. 17 I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. 18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. 19 And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. 21 They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. 22 And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.

8:11 *the Lord spoke to me* – He says, “I am forced to contradict those who trust in the flesh and to lead them back to God, because the Lord has commanded me, and He wants it so, for He withdraws me from the people like a hand, a people that wants only to trust in men and to enter into alliances with outsiders, now with this king, now with that one. Yet these kings have plundered them and swallowed them up. Hence I am ultimately forced to set myself against this people and not to speak like them, and I am not afraid because I am in God's hand. He will protect me. I seek no other protector. But this people thinks, plans, ponders nothing else than that it would be good to form alliances, whereby they deny and anger God. Yet God Himself still deems these people worthy of having their evils and blessings proclaimed to them, if only they would believe.” (Luther)

his strong hand upon me. See Eze 1:3; 37:1; 40:1. The prophets were conscious of God's presence in and control over their lives. (CSB)

God's powerful, guiding presence (cf Ezk 1:3; 3:14). (TLSB)

8:12 *conspiracy.* Isaiah's warning against relying on Assyria was considered treason. (CSB)

Isaiah spoke against seeking foreign lands, like Assyria, to defend God's people, knowing that they would eventually harm Judah. Some called his warning treason or conspiracy. Cf Jer 26. (TLSB)

When the prophet received this special revelation from the Lord and told the faithful what the Lord had said to him, the Syrian-Ephrimites war was still being waged. Both kings, Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria, had made a compact and had conspired to conquer, to annex Judah and Jerusalem, to topple the house of David from the throne and to install a vassal as king in Jerusalem. This "compact," this "conspiracy," was now known to everyone in Judah. It was a word that struck terror. Those of Judah said: Woe betide us, what a powerful alliance, what a fearful conspiracy! What will become of us? They said such and similar things. Their hearts trembled and shook like leaves on a tree. (Stoekhardt)

do not fear what they fear – That is, you who are godly, do not be afraid like the ungodly, or do not fear the ungodly who want to frighten you, or do not fear the princes who advise you to forsake God. (Luther)

8:13 *the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy* – Hallow Him who dwells in Jerusalem, in the waters of Shiloah, worship and trust Him, and He will sanctify you and say: "I will be an enemy to your enemies. He who touches you touches the apple of My eye" (Zech. 2:8). (Luther)

God is holy, and we should remember this and worship Him accordingly. (TLSB)

let him be your fear. See 7:2; Pr 1:7. (CSB)

As we hear these words spoken to Isaiah, we too can take comfort in them. They are recorded for the strengthening of believers of all times. Jesus echoes the thought of these verses when He says, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). No matter how difficult the circumstances believers must face, they are to look to the Lord Almighty. Their help comes from Him and Him alone. How different that is from the thoughts and fears of the unbelievers who surround God's elect in every age. (PBC)

8:14 *he will become a sanctuary* – The temple is not merely a place of refuge but also a place of grace, blessing, and peace. Whoever sanctifies the Lord, him the Lord encompasses like walls of the temple. He conceals him within Himself, while outside are lodged tribulation and death. And He consoles, nourishes, and make him happy in this fellowship. (Stoekhardt)

As the temple gave asylum to certain individuals (cf Ex 21:13), so God protected His people. (TLSB)

both houses. The northern and southern kingdoms, Israel and Judah. (CSB)

snare...stumble on it. Either the Lord is the cornerstone of our lives (see 28:16) or he is a rock over which we fall. See Ro 9:33; 1Pe 2:6–8 for an application to Christ. (CSB)

Peter (1 Peter 2:8) and Paul (Rom. 9:33) cite this passage and make a general application out of a specific one. Wherever people turn away from faith in God and swerve toward confidence in the flesh, there it will be as is stated here: They take offense, they fall, they are ensnared, they are crushed, etc. Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:23: "We preach Christ crucified, ... folly to the Gentiles, etc." God's prophets are all regarded as fools. And from the beginning of the world to its end the Word

of God is a stumbling block, not indeed by its own fault but by the fault of the depraved flesh which loves darkness rather than God's light (cf. John 3:19), and so that which is given as a cure becomes a poison to the flesh. Life becomes death, salvation becomes destruction, because men attack, blaspheme, reject, and persecute it. Paul says in 2 Cor. 2:15 f.: "We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, etc." (Luther)

snare – He charges the house of Judah separately with what he has previously attached to the kingdom of Israel in order to fix it the more on Judah once the kingdom of Ephraim has been destroyed. This is something the prophet saw long before it happened. (Luther)

God's presence can be received as Gospel (a sanctuary), but those who reject Him find it to be Law (a rock of stumbling). Faith finds safety, while rejection stumbles (vv 14–15). The function of the "stone" and "rock" are described in further detail in 28:16; Ps 118:22; 1Pt 2:6. (TLSB)

many shall stumble on it – The Lord of Hosts will make Christ-Emmanuel a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, for the unbelieving, hardened Israel, in general for unbelievers, who reject Christ and salvation in Christ. They collide with Him. They are exasperated by Him. They take offense at Him. They stick obstinately to, they harden themselves in, in their enmity, and so they stumble and fall and dash themselves to pieces on this rock. (Stoekhardt)

shall be snared – This will happen in their errors so that they cannot be rescued; they will remain in everlasting captivity. Therefore we must pray more urgently that the Word may remain, so that cleansed hearts may believe and abide in the light, etc. (Luther)

8:16 Perhaps a reference to the legal transaction connected with vv. 1–2. (CSB)

bind up – As a sack is tied up and sealed, so put it out of sight! That is to say: They will take offense, fall, etc., because wisdom and understanding of the Word will be taken away from them because they resist it, as Ps. 109:17 says: "He did not like blessing; may it be far from him!" The testimony, that is, the Word, will be bound up, the Law will be sealed, all things will be concealed. The heart will be veiled, etc. This is not the fault of the Word, because it is plainly preached, but of the hardened heart, which does not want to believe. (Luther)

Convinced that what the Lord spoke through him will occur, Isaiah directs his disciples to keep a written and sealed record of his words. The prophets recognized the truth and divine source of their words by carefully preserving them. (TLSB)

testimony. See v. 20. By preserving Isaiah's teaching ("the law"), his disciples could later prove that his predictions had come true. This term occurs elsewhere only in Ru 4:7 ("method of legalizing transactions"). (CSB)

Isaiah's prophecy, the true Word of God. (TLSB)

This can be understood as spoken in a general sense, namely, that here Isaiah is speaking as well as Christ, as chapter 2 of Hebrews applies this to Christ. "I will put My trust in Him, etc.," He says (Heb. 2:13). This is, however, praise of the Word of God and an indication what kind of disciples and what kind of stumbling blocks it has. (Luther)

seal – That is, up to My disciples, who believe. To them it will be an open testimony, etc. In Hebrew "disciples" is in the Dative case, and it means that the Word is not hidden for the

disciples but that they have the Word which is hidden to others, as Christ says in Luke 8:10: “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God.” It remains a sealed and dark word and is nothing but pure parables until the disciples of God, who are of God, hear it. What the wisdom of the flesh does not grasp, because it is spiritual and new, is unsealed and unbound for them as for new and reborn men, as John 8:47 says. (Luther)

teaching. The Hebrew for this word can also mean “teaching” or “instruction.” The legal document containing Isaiah’s teaching about Assyria’s invasion was tied and sealed and then given to the prophet’s followers, who were to preserve it until the time of its fulfillment, when God would authenticate it by the events of history (see Jer 32:12–14, 44). (CSB)

teaching. Hbr *torah*; (TLSB)

disciples. Hbr *limud*, a “learned” or “practiced” person. Prophets had apprentices or scribes who studied the Word. It is not enough to “have the Spirit.” Leaders among God’s people must have and cling to the Word as well. (TLSB)

8:17–18 In Heb 2:13 these verses are applied to Christ. (CSB)

8:17 *I will wait* – Isaiah trusts God’s timing. (TLSB)

He explains how the Word is unlocked, namely, when men keep silent before the Lord, wait, and believe. This the Lord’s disciples were taught, to wait for the Lord, not to pat themselves on the back in their works, but to trust the Lord. Ps. 130:6 says: “My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning.” See Is. 29:18. To one who does not know what faith is, the Word of God is a closed book. Paul says in Gal. 2:20: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,” as if to say, “I lean not on my own righteousness nor on that of the Pharisees but on that of Christ alone.” Thus here and in chapter 2 of the Epistle to the Hebrews there is contained the sum of the whole Christian doctrine. “I will put My trust in Him” (Heb. 2:13). This will be my righteousness. He who does not know or do this strikes a blow against the Word of God, even if he makes use of the greatest words of Christ. (Luther)

hiding his face. See 1:15; 59:2; Mic 3:4. (CSB)

He is hiding because they see the spiritual understanding of the Word, which means to wait for the Lord to be treated as holy, to fear Him. Until they understand this, the Lord’s face is hidden from them, as 2 Cor. 3:7, 13 says. The Law is not understood apart from faith, but they do not want to believe, they only want to pat themselves on the back, and therefore God hides His face from them, because they are ungodly and do not want to look upon Him as merciful but as hostile. (Luther)

house of Jacob. Israel and Judah. (TLSB)

8:18 *behold, I and the children* – Here applies to Isaiah’s family; the NT applies this to Christ and His people (Heb 2:13). Luther: “This depicts the course and success of the Word. Though some do not accept it when it is proclaimed, it still is not without disciples. Therefore he rejoices in both the fruit and power of the Word. An honest teacher always has disciples. This is also Christ’s word for His faithful ones. ‘Children.’ Hbr: ‘Little infants.’ Peter had this in view when he said in 1 Peter 2:2: ‘Like newborn babes.’ They are the least complicated human beings and depend entirely on their mother’s breast. So Christians depend entirely on the simplicity of Scripture. They have the ‘pure milk’ without guile, that is, they do nothing but seek the breasts;

they do not pass judgment nor argue much about the Word, but they simply accept it as it is given to them, the way babes accept milk” (AE 16:93). St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “The holy place is open and accessible only to the children of Christ” (SLSB, p 76). (TLSB)

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The Lord’s believing disciples are called children. These children God has given, allotted to Christ-Emmanuel. Thus in John 10:29 Christ speaks of the sheep which the Father has given Him. God has given Him these elect children in order that He might guard and protect and seal His Word in them during periods of severe temptation, backsliding, and God’s beginning judgments. Christ carries out His divine work upon God’s children until the end. After all, He is Emmanuel, God in our flesh and blood, and for that reason takes care of His brothers according to the flesh and brings them safely through this evil world, strengthens and upholds them in Word and faith by His might arm, by His divine power. And when He has completed this work, at the end, when this time of testing and temptation has come to an end, He presents Himself along with the children entrusted to Him and preserved and saved by Him to His Father and says: “Lo, here am I and the children whom you have given me.” He has not lost sight of a single one of them. The same work which Christ, the God-man, performs on the holy seed in Israel, He carries out on all the elect children, and on the Last Day He will present the entire host of what to God what is His, the possession He has preserved for Him. John 10:27-29 (Stoekhardt)

signs and portents. Isaiah’s own name (“the LORD saves”) and the names he gave his sons indicate what the future will bring. (TLSB)

Such babes as simply believe and suck milk eagerly without guile are freaks to the world. “They are men of good omen,” says Zech. 3:8. In the presence of God they are the most happy infants, but in the sight of the world nothing is more subversive than they, to the point that men think they have rid the world of monsters when these have been removed from the scene, and they consider them most unworthy of life. Christ says in Ps. 22:6: “I am scorned by men.” (Luther)

These are signs and wonders in Israel simply because they have been preserved in a wonderful fashion. It is a wonder of God that in this untoward generation there still is a church which holds firmly, unswervingly to God’s Word and promise. This occurs within His kingdom of Grace on the part of the Lord of Hosts, who dwells and governs upon Mt. Zion. God has placed elect children, who remain faithful to their God, as wonders and sings in this God-forgetting world. And by sustaining and holding onto them through Christ, He shows that He the Lord of Hosts; He shows His divine power and omnipotence. (Stoekhardt)

dwells on Mount Zion. God has chosen to dwell with His people and so is distinguished from false gods. (TLSB)

8:19 *mediums and the necromancers.* In the present crisis, people were turning to the spirits of the dead (necromancy), as King Saul did when he went to a medium to contact the spirit of Samuel (1Sa 28:8–11) and learn about the future. (CSB)

Resorting to occult means of gaining knowledge was rejection of the Lord (cf Lv 19:31; Dt 18:10–12; 1Sm 28). (TLSB)

Among the soothsayers and necromancers there were also ventriloquists, who imitated the squeaking and gibbering attributed to the shadows in Hades. (Stoekhardt)

The admonition is of the kind Christ spoke in Matt. 16:6, 11: “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” First comes teaching, then admonition. Such is the custom of prophets and apostles. It is as if he were saying: “Your doctrine will be a stumbling block. You will be an abomination. No harm, only remain constant. False prophets and false brethren, as 2 Cor. 11:13 calls them, will come, trying to pull you away from that state of childhood, but you be wise. They will surround you with flattering words.” And yet he does not say: “Consult the priests and the teachers,” but he describes them for what they are in the presence of God, even the best of them who discharged the teaching office. He calls them enchanters, soothsayers, etc. This is no small affront to the ecclesiastical administrators. But as many as do not teach the Word of faith are rightly so called. These have the divining spirit, the Pharisaical spirit, the spirit of error and giddiness; they teach their own ideas and dreams. (Luther)

chirp and mutter – Practitioners of divination and spiritism often made their voices sound mysterious and unearthly. Gregory of Nazianzus: “It is very shameful, and not only shameful, but very foolish, to take from things below a guess at things above, and from a fluctuating nature at the things that are unchanging, and as Isaiah says, to seek the Living among the dead” (NPNF 2 7:321). (TLSB)

They are inclined to wordiness, they make a show of wisdom, great knowledge, etc. They want to teach, not hear. They are as full of ideas as dogs are of fleas. Their word bags cannot be emptied. This is the way they talk: “You should consult us and ask us for whatever must be taught. Who gave you the authority to introduce new doctrine without consulting us? Be obedient to your Mosaic masters, the legal experts, of whom you have an ample supply, etc.” Let them be answered as follows. (Luther)

should not a people inquire of their God – We have heard nothing but the voice of God. Paul says in Eph. 4:14 that we should not be “carried about with every wind of doctrine, etc.” Must we not rather cling to the Word of God than to that of men? Are the dead more properly consulted than the living? God lives, the fanatics are dead, and all of them are likewise blind people and people for whom the testimony is “bound up”(v. 16). There are two sentences here. Our translation combines them into one. Should not a people consult their God? Should they not consult the living rather than the dead? (Luther)

8:20 *the teaching... the testimony.* See v. 16 and note. Only by heeding the Lord’s word through Isaiah—reinforced by the “signs and symbols” (v. 18) that Isaiah and his sons represented—would the light dawn for Israel. (CSB)

Isaiah’s prophecy. (TLSB)

That is, the Law must be consulted rather than the mediums. The teaching must be sought from God alone, so that one may be your master, Christ, as Matt. 23:10 says. But this takes place through the medium of Scripture and oral preaching. The “Law” is Scripture, and the “testimony” is oral preaching. He who reads Scripture in an unfeigned and humble spirit does not read it without fruit. In this way you have recourse to the Law. That is to say, the Law and the testimony should be consulted. (Luther)

they have no dawn – That is, the Gospel, the Word of God, which is the light that has arisen in Christ: a new sun, a new dawn, as 2 Peter 1:19, Ps. 119:105, and Prov. 6:23 say. Our hearts are the earth, and the morning light is the Word of God. Therefore we must give careful heed to these words, lest we follow strange doctrines, doctrines of the old serpent, of the old man. For to those who will remain in the Law and the testimony the morning light will come up, that is, understanding of the Word. But it will not come up for those who want to be masters before they are disciples or for those who run after another word. Horribly, to be sure, have the Pharisees and Sadducees, the papists and heretics fallen into darkness. See above ch. 5:21: “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes.” (Luther)

They live in spiritual darkness. (TLSB)

8:21–22 The Assyrian invasion would bring deep distress on all Israel. (CSB)

8:21 *they will pass through the land* – This passage can be applied to all conditions of the ungodly. Whenever the Word is present, few assent, many resist. Therefore he says, the people *will pass through it*; that is, the land beyond and outside of the Word will collapse, and the man with a hardened heart will go hungry. Surely the Jews are eagerly waiting for Messiah a long time already, having been led astray by false prophets, meanwhile despising the proclaimed Gospel and becoming hardened. Delay makes restless people. “Hope deferred makes the heart sick,” Prov. 13:12 says. Therefore the Jews curse Christ, their own King, because they deny the Word or explain it differently, and they curse us while they deny the Scripture. Hence their doctrine is full of venomous curses, they could break in pieces when they hear Christ Jesus named. “They have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened,” Rom. 10:2 says. Whoever, then, wishes to avoid the spirit of hardening and blasphemy must humble his heart before that Law and testimony. But what are the forms of blasphemy? In one form a person has the worst kind of thoughts about God and Christ and yet remains committed to the tenet that Christ is true God and that all things contained in Scripture are true. This is a known and familiar spirit of blasphemy. It especially afflicts good minds in monasteries, and this is the last temptation of which the Book of Job speaks in an argument about whether anything God does is unjust. In another form the Word is attacked, as here. It is also called a spirit of remorse, for it is not so well recognized as the former. Hardening and famine follow contempt of the Word, and then blasphemy of Christ and of God. Then their prayer is turned into sin, and they seek in vain for help either from heaven or from earth. (Luther)

speak contemptuously...king and ... God. Because of their terrible suffering (cf. Pr 19:3)—but severe punishment awaited anyone who cursed God or a ruler (Ex 22:28; Lev 24:15–16). (CSB)

8:22 *darkness, the gloom of anguish* – They are without light and peace wherever they turn. Light denotes good fortune anywhere, and darkness misfortune. The repetition shows the violence and the permanence of the calamities. “They go from hardship to hardship,” he says, “and even so they do not stop blaspheming.” “The future distress,” he says, “will not be as light as the last one, when they were captive, suffered hunger, and were molested by their neighbors, etc., but it will bite more sharply, and they will not be afflicted just for a time as formerly.” But he mentions two

misfortunes sustained before: One through King Tiglathpileser, the other through Shalmaneser. The Zebulonites were neighbors of Syria. (Luther)

look to the earth. They desperately seek to understand, but will not see God's answers. (TLSB)

distress and darkness. Bleak description of their emotional and spiritual state. (CSB)

8:11–22 Isaiah urges his hearers to repent, learn, and cling to the Word of God rather than to false spirituality. Beware of any religious person who directs you to a spiritual source other than the Word of God, which we have from His prophets and apostles. Even if you are frustrated in searching the Scriptures for answers, “wait for the LORD ... hope in Him” (v 17). He will answer you from His Word and seal you with His peace. • Lord, deliver us from false witnesses who would rob us of Your Word. Grant us peace in Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)