

Isaiah Before King Ahaz

Isaiah 7

By Scott Huckaby

8/14/2022

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

Isaiah 7:1-9 – Isaiah sent to King Ahaz

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it. ² And it was told to the house of David, saying, “Syria’s forces are deployed in Ephraim.” So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.

³ Then the Lord said to Isaiah, “Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller’s Field, ⁴ and say to him: ‘Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. ⁵ Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, ⁶ “Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel” — ⁷ thus says the Lord God:

*“It shall not stand,
Nor shall it come to pass.*

*⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus,
And the head of Damascus is Rezin.*

*Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken,
So that it will not be a people.*

*⁹ The head of Ephraim is Samaria,
And the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son.
If you will not believe,
Surely you shall not be established.” ’ ’*

v1 – Who was King Ahaz?

Ahaz was a wicked king of Judah, worshipping other gods and even sacrificing his son to Molech (2 Kings 16:1-4). The only good thing Ahaz seemed to do was father Hezekiah, who became a good king of Judah.

- He was a cowardly, superstitious and hypocritical ruler, one of the worst kings Judah ever had.

Who threatened Judah at that time?

Rezin king of Syria and Pekah ... king of Israel: The alliance between these two nations and their unsuccessful attack on Jerusalem is described in 2 Kings 16.

- The attack on Jerusalem was unsuccessful, but the war took a great toll on Judah.
- 2 Chronicles 28:6 says Pekah killed 120,000 in one day, because they had forsaken God.
- 2 Chronicles 28:5 says that the Syrian army carried away a great multitude of them as captives.
- The king of Israel also captured 200,000 men, women and children as captives, but sent them back to Judah at the command of the prophet Oded (2 Chronicles 28:8-15).

When the events of this chapter unfold, the nation of Judah had faced terrible calamity, and was devastated.

- As the combined armies of Israel and Syria approached Jerusalem, it looked like everything would be lost.

How was Ahaz saved from this attack?

Went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it: Because he entered into an ungodly alliance with Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and even gave Tiglath-Pileser silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD as a present to win his favor and protection (2 Kings 16:7-9).

- When Ahaz went to meet Tiglath-Pileser, he saw the pagan altars and places of sacrifice. He copied these designs and remodeled the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem after that pattern.
- Ahaz is an example of someone who enters into an ungodly alliance for "good" reasons, and is thoroughly corrupted thereby (2 Kings 16:10-18).

It is important to understand that the events of this chapter happened before Ahaz made his final decision to put his trust in the king of Assyria. Though we are told the end result of the attack in Isaiah 7:2 (could not prevail against it), Isaiah is telling us the end result before he describes his prophecy to Ahaz.

v2 – Why was Syria's forces in Ephraim?

Ephraim is another title for the northern nation of Israel. King Ahaz heard that Syria and Israel had joined together to make war against Judah.

How did Judah respond to the rumor of war with Syria and Israel?

King Ahaz and his people react with fear instead of with trust in God. They are shaken and unstable in their hearts.

- In this, the people of Judah really are the people of Ahaz (his people), not the people of the LORD.
- If the king and people of Judah had put their trust in the LORD, they would have had the peace of God in this conflict.

v3 – Why would the Lord tell Isaiah to take his son to meet King Ahaz?

He brought his son as a walking object lesson, because the name Shear-Jashub means, "A Remnant Shall Return."

- God wanted Ahaz to know that because of the kind of ungodly trust he put in the king of Assyria, Judah would eventually be taken into captivity, and only a remnant would return.

Why were the details of where they were to meet given here?

At the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field: These seemingly irrelevant details make an important point. All this happened to real people at a real time and in real places. This isn't make-believe or fairy tales. This is real.

What did God tell Isaiah to pass on to King Ahaz?

Take heed, and be quiet: Seemingly, Ahaz needed to pay attention (*take heed*) and stop his talking about the problem (*be quiet*). He needed to trust God, and take courage in the LORD (*do not fear or be fainthearted*).

- The calamity and devastation that had wracked Judah thus far had made Ahaz doubt God. "If God loves us, why are we in this mess at all?"

v4 – Why did God describe Syria and Israel as a couple of smoking firebrands?

He was taking them in contempt as smoking and not burning, which was their last state before becoming extinct. They had pride but not real power.

Why was it so hard for Ahaz to trust in God?

Because he didn't see the situation the way the LORD did. Ahaz looked at Israel and Syria and saw a terrible threat. God looked at Israel and Syria and saw two stubs of smoking firebrands. To the LORD, they were all smoke and no fire!

v5-6 – What was the intention of Syria and Israel?

They sought to strike fear in the people of Jerusalem, breach their defenses, and establish a vassal king over them.

v7 – What did God have to say about Syria and Israel's plan?

It shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass: God was not worried about their plans knowing they would fail.

- Their plans will not succeed because the nations were led by ungodly men, and not by the LORD.
- This is God's promise, and Isaiah calls Ahaz to trust in the LORD and in His promise.

v8-9 – What contributed to the pride of the kings of Syria and Israel?

They were the heads of their respective nations and capital cities which were glorious by the day's standards.

What challenge did God give King Ahaz?

If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established: God has promised, now the king of Judah must believe. If he will not believe, it will not affect the outcome of the attack against Jerusalem. God has already decreed that their attack would not succeed. But it would affect the course of Ahaz's life and reign as king (*surely you shall not be established*).

Would King Ahaz believe God?

No, he put his trust in the king of Assyria. Jerusalem was spared, and Ahaz no doubt believed he was successful, and his plan worked. But if he would have just trusted in the LORD, Jerusalem would have been spared, and Ahaz would have been blessed.

Isaiah 7:10-25 – The sign of Immanuel

¹⁰ *Moreover the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying,* ¹¹ "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above."

¹² *But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!"*

¹³ *Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?"* ¹⁴ *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.* ¹⁵ *Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.* ¹⁶ *For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.* ¹⁷ *The Lord will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house—days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah."*

¹⁸ *And it shall come to pass in that day*

That the Lord will whistle for the fly

That is in the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt,

And for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

¹⁹ *They will come, and all of them will rest*

*In the desolate valleys and in the clefts of the rocks,
And on all thorns and in all pastures.*

²⁰ *In the same day the Lord will shave with a hired razor,
With those from beyond the River, with the king of Assyria,
The head and the hair of the legs,
And will also remove the beard.*

²¹ *It shall be in that day
That a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep;*

²² *So it shall be, from the abundance of milk they give,
That he will eat curds;
For curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the
land.*

²³ *It shall happen in that day,
That wherever there could be a thousand vines
Worth a thousand shekels of silver,
It will be for briers and thorns.*

²⁴ *With arrows and bows men will come there,
Because all the land will become briers and thorns.*

²⁵ *And to any hill which could be dug with the hoe,
You will not go there for fear of briers and thorns;
But it will become a range for oxen
And a place for sheep to roam.*

v10-11 – What did God invite King Ahaz to do?

Ask a sign for yourself: Through the prophet Isaiah, God invites Ahaz to ask for a sign. God has just challenged Ahaz to believe and be blessed, and now God offers to give Ahaz a basis for belief.

v12 – How did King Ahaz respond to God's invitation?

But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!"
This sounds very spiritual. He almost seems to say what Jesus said in Matthew 4:7 quoting Deuteronomy 6:16:
"You shall not tempt [or test] the LORD your God."

- The real reason Ahaz refused to ask for a sign was because he really didn't want to believe. His pride kept him on his own way, not God's way.
- Perhaps his mind is, "I want nothing to do with the God who allowed it to get this bad."

Is this a conflict?

Is it always wrong to tempt or test God?

This was not tempting or testing God in wrong way. It is never testing God to do as He says, and if the LORD invites us to test Him, we should. For example, in Malachi 3:10, the LORD invited Israel to give as He commanded, and thereby to prove Me now in this.

How have we like Ahaz rejected the gracious, free gifts of God for silly and strange reasons?

People rationalize all kinds of worldly ways rejecting God's way...

- Salvation-by-works
- Universalism
- Doing things in our own power rather than seeking God's help

v13 – How did God respond to King Ahaz's rejection?

Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? The rulers of Judah treated other people poorly, but they treated the LORD even worse.

- If people expressed the same distrust they generally have in the LORD towards other people, they might get a punch in the nose!

v14 – What sign would God give us of Him?

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. This is one of the most famous prophecies regarding the birth of Jesus the Messiah in the Bible.

- It also illustrates a principle that prophecy may have both a near and far fulfillment.

Why would God give this far-off prophecy to King Ahaz?

The sign gave King Ahaz was that both Israel and Syria would be crushed. This was a sign of deliverance to Ahaz. While the Messianic deliverance was beyond his lifetime, it would still benefit him if he would just trust in God.

- Some commentators think that this was literally fulfilled when a young woman in the royal household shortly married, conceived a son, and unknowingly naming him "Immanuel." Before this boy came to eat solid food, Israel and Syria would be defeated (see verses 15-16).
- If that actually happened, it still would have been a type pointing to the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

How do we know this is a messianic prophecy?

Because the Holy Spirit says so through Matthew:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

We also know this passage speaks of Jesus because in verse 13 the prophecy is addressed not only to Ahaz, but also to David's entire house (*O house of David!*).

- We know this speaks of Jesus because of the name *Immanuel*. This was true of Jesus in fact, not only as a title. Immanuel speaks both of the deity of Jesus (God with us) and His identification and nearness to man (God with us).

In what sense is Jesus God with us?

He is God with us...

- in his incarnation
- by the presence and influences of the Holy Spirit
- in the hearing of His word
- in private prayer in His name
- through every action of our life, that we begin, continue, and end in his name
- to comfort, enlighten, protect, and defend us, in every time of temptation and trial, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment

God is with us and in us to all eternity

Is there a problem in that Hebrew word translated virgin can also be translated as "young woman"?

While the near fulfillment may have reference to a young woman giving birth, the far or ultimate fulfillment clearly points to a woman miraculously conceiving and giving birth.

- This is especially clear because the Old Testament never uses the word in a context other than virgin and because the Septuagint translates it as virgin.

v15-16 – How would these verses apply to the far-off messianic prophecy?

- **v15:** Though the Messiah shall not be born like other children, but of a virgin, yet he shall be really and truly man, and shall be nursed and brought up like other children: Butter and honey shall he eat, as other children do, particularly the children of that land which flowed with milk and honey.
- **v16:** The Messiah would not be like other children who naturally act selfishly but would know from birth to *refuse evil and choose the good.*

v16 – How did God make this prophecy specifically relevant to King Ahaz?

He made the sign near-term: the lands of Syria and Israel would be forsaken by their kings in their failure against Judah.

v17 – What consequence would there be for trusting in Assyria instead of the Lord?

The LORD will bring the king of Assyria upon you: This was bad news to Ahaz... It is as if the LORD is saying, "Trusting in Assyria appears to be a clever move, but after they defeat Syria and Israel they turn their attention to defeating you also."

v18 – For what will the Lord whistle?

the fly that is the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that in the land of Assyria: Judah will not only be attacked by the Assyrians, they would also be invaded

by the Egyptians. God would pinch Judah between these mighty nations to the north and south.

v19-22 – What would be results of the harassment of the flies from Assyria and the bees of Egypt?

These invasions would bring Judah low, so that they could not farm as normally, and instead seek after the curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the land.

v20 – How would Judah be humiliated by Assyria?

To shave off the beard of people at that time was an unbearable shame and a sign of great sadness, mourning and despicable slavery.

- We see this principle illustrated by the actions of David in 2 Samuel 10:4-5.

v23-25 – What would become of the grape vines of Judah?

Normal agriculture would be devastated (*wherever there could be a thousand vines ... it will be for briars and thorns*). Former vineyards will be suitable only for grazing (*it will become a range for oxen and place for sheep to roam*).

What applications do we see from our discussion today?

- Trust God, and take courage in Him (*do not fear or be fainthearted*).
- God's will be done whether we believe it or not.
- We shouldn't test God except when He invites us to.
- Prophecy may have both a near and far fulfillment.
- God with us is true now if we respond to Him.
- There are consequences for trusting in our plans that are in opposition to the promises of God.