

In the last chapter, Isaiah had a vision of the Lord. He was humbled by the contrast of God's holiness and his own uncleanness. After confessing his sin, it was atoned, and then he heard the call of God and volunteered to serve. The message God had him deliver was a harsh one that would be difficult for Judah to hear. Only a remnant would survive. They would be like a burned over stump in which the holy seed remained (6:13).

A little historical background will help us understand what has taken place between the last chapter and this one. Syria and Israel (the ten northern tribes) have both defeated Judah (2 Chronicles 28:5). Captives and treasure were taken. In one war with Israel 120,000 from Judah died and 200,000 were taken captive. Oded the prophet warned them that the wrath of God would come upon Israel if they took their brothers from Judah captive, so Israel released all the captives at Jericho (2 Chronicles 28:8-11).

Syria and Israel knew that Assyria was planning to conquer them, and they feared Judah would join Assyria making the war on two fronts, so they planned on defeating Judah again. The introduction in verse one tells us they won't succeed and then the passage proceeds into an account of Isaiah confronting the king Judah with the word of the Lord. ² *When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.* Isaiah 7:2 King Ahaz of Judah and all the house of David heard that Syria and Israel were going to unite and attack again and replace him with a puppet king. They were still reeling from previous attacks, so Ahaz went into survival mode.

You know what that is like. You desperately try to think out every possible scenario. Who could possibly help and how? What if you do this or that? Every resource available, except God, is taken into account. In fact, you may say a little prayer, but you don't want to open your Bible or pause to be still because God might tell you to do something crazy, like just trusting Him and nothing more.

My old nature sympathizes with Ahaz. Look what happened before. He probably said a little prayer then and God didn't give them victory. He did see Israel return the captives, but they didn't get the treasure back! Is trusting God practical?

³ *And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.* Isaiah 7:3 God sent Isaiah along with his son, whose name meant "a remnant will return," to meet King Ahaz. The king was checking his water sources and planning his defense tactics. We don't know if it was before or after this that he had sent word to Assyria to come help him. One commentator said he was like a mouse about to be attacked by two rats and calling on a cat to help. After the cat ate the rats, he would have the mouse for desert.

Commented [PW1]: Isaiah 6:13 (ESV)

¹³ And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

Commented [PW2]: 2 Chronicles 28:5 (ESV)

⁵ Therefore the LORD his God gave him into the hand of the king of Syria, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with great force.

Commented [PW3]: 2 Chronicles 28:8-11 (ESV)

⁸ The men of Israel took captive 200,000 of their relatives, women, sons, and daughters. They also took much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria.

⁹ But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded, and he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria and said to them, "Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven.

¹⁰ And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. Have you not sins of your own against the LORD your God?

¹¹ Now hear me, and send back the captives from your relatives whom you have taken, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you."

The LORD God told Isaiah, ⁴ *And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah.* Isaiah 7:4 This was a gentle and encouraging instruction, but it was also a command. First, we should understand that God has promised the house of David that they would reign forever (1 Kings 8:25). If they believed God, they should never fear their annihilation. God is inviting King Ahaz to lean upon Him. He wants the king to have some faith and believe God.

When things seem desperate, this is great advice for us all. Be careful. Be quiet. Do not fear. Fear is the opposite of faith. And when we fear and give up faith in God, we can say and do some very counter-productive things. Be careful what you do and say in those times of testing. Don't act out of fear. Faith produces calm serenity (Proverbs 3:25-26).

What Ahaz feared would never happen. These two were smoldering tails of firebrands. Their fire had gone out. In spite of the past, what Ahaz feared was never going to happen, at least not from these two. And isn't that like much of what we fear. Someone has said that 90% of what we worry about never comes to pass and the other 10% isn't changed by our worrying. That is very practical advice, but what is more real for the child of God is that the Lord is with us no matter what comes. What should we fear or worry over when the all-powerful God is with us? We either believe that or we don't. Our true condition is evidenced by our disposition.

⁷ *thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.* ⁸ *For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.* Isaiah 7:7-8 In other words, what you fear will never come to pass. Rezin will stay in Damascus. The very next year Assyria would attack him (733 B.C.). In 65 years (669 B.C.) Israel (Ephraim) will no longer be a people. It didn't take that long before they were conquered, but in exactly 65 years other conquered people were brought into the land forever ending those who lived in the area of the ten tribes as the people of Israel. They became known as the Samaritans. We now call a part of that area the West Bank.

^{9b} *If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.*" Isaiah 7:9b Buck up Ahaz and advisors and have some faith. Get some backbone and believe, or fall on your face from doubt. You is plural in Hebrew, addressing those who witnessed him delivering the word from the LORD. Firmness comes from conviction. Unless we are firm in our faith in God, we cannot be firm. God is the only unchanging One (Malachi 3:6). All else we place faith in can and will falter and fail. Faith is the total commitment of our heart and mind. Lean on Christ and we will stand. Trust in self or the world and you will crumble.

¹⁰ *Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,* ¹¹ *"Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."* ¹² *But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."* Isaiah 7:10-12 I see in this the gracious patience of God pleading with Ahaz to believe. Signs are needed for the weak in faith. It is God's gracious way of helping those who have not matured or perhaps have been confused by circumstances

Commented [PW4]: 1 Kings 8:25 (ESV)

²⁵ Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.'

Commented [PW5]: Proverbs 3:25-26 (ESV)

²⁵ Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes.

²⁶ for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.

Commented [PW6]: Malachi 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

in life. The grace of God will give us a reason to have faith and overcome our doubt. But Ahaz refused, and did so with the hypocritical use of Scripture. It is God who is offering to help him overcome his doubt, but he refuses to ask. God put no limits on what he would do to help Ahaz believe, but Ahaz did not want to believe. He did not want to give control over to God and trust Him. God commanded Ahaz to ask for a sign and he refused to ask.

The verse Ahaz was quoting was about the Israelites demanding a sign from God to prove that God was with them (Deuteronomy 6:16). They were saying, "Prove it God!" Here God is saying, "I want to prove to your weak faith that I am God, so ask for a sign." The Jews in the wilderness were expressing a lack of faith, while God was asking Ahaz to stretch his faith. If you quote it, quote it in context.

To understand what is about to be said, we have to understand the flow of the passage. The last chapter ended saying the holy seed would remain. The line of the Messiah will not be destroyed. Threats come from the north, but God is telling King Ahaz this is not the time for the predicted captivity. God commands Ahaz to ask for a sign. He refuses. Then God will give the prophecy reassuring the coming of Messiah, the holy seed, but also warn of the eventual devastation of the land.

¹³ And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?" Isaiah 7:13 Notice that God is speaking to the house of David from whom will come the Messiah. ("Hear" and "you" are plural.) They persist in their rebellion in spite of God's graciousness to give them any sign they asked. They are trying the patience of God, and He has patience in abundance! In verse ten Isaiah told Ahaz to ask "your God" to give you a sign. In verse thirteen Isaiah refers now to God as "my God." It appears Ahaz has now thoroughly rejected God as his Savior and refused to trust Him.

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. Isaiah 7:14 The "you" in this verse is again plural showing us that Isaiah is speaking to the house of David. Matthew quotes this verse as referring to Jesus (Matthew 1:22-23). Some would claim that this use of the passage distorts its meaning. They claim the word for "virgin" (*almah*) is simply a young fertile woman. Isaiah could have used a different word that definitely meant virgin. However, the word *almah* is never used of a married woman whereas the other word is (*bethulah* Joel 1:8). Isaiah's words were carefully chosen. This is the fulfillment of the "seed of the woman" from Genesis 3:15. Isaiah is addressing the house of David and telling them to have faith. The Messiah will still come through their lineage. God will be present with the nation to deliver us with a greater deliverance than that of Moses.

The critics of this interpretation point to the next chapter and say the boy that is born is the fulfillment. In a remote sense, that boy may have been a partial fulfillment, the Lord was still with them (8:10), but the particulars don't line up. First, verse fourteen says the woman names the child Immanuel. In 8:3 Isaiah, not the woman, names the child

Commented [PW7]: Deuteronomy 6:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.

Commented [PW8]: Matthew 1:22-23 (ESV)

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

Commented [PW9]: Joel 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.

Commented [PW10]: Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Commented [PW11]: Isaiah 8:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

and secondly, he gives him a completely different name. Then in 8:8 Isaiah says Judah is Immanuel's land. Certainly he is not referring to the boy. While the Lord said this virgin birth was a sign for the house of David, Isaiah says it is he and his boys who are signs for Ahaz about the immediate situation (8:18).

Finally, if this were the natural birth of a child to a fertile woman, how would it be a sign? How could any natural birth result in God being with us? The critics need to read on as this is the same child we will see in chapter nine that is called God (9:6).

¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. Isaiah 7:15-16 Now the word "you" returns to the singular meaning that Isaiah is speaking to King Ahaz and referring to the son Isaiah brought with him. Before that little boy would come to what we call the age of accountability, those two nations would be deserted. Assyria decimated Israel the year after taking Syria (732 B.C.) (2 Kings 17:6).

The rest of chapter seven tells of the conditions in the land of Judah after the Assyrian invasion. *¹⁷ The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.*" Isaiah 7:17 When the northern ten tribes split off from Israel there was a civil war. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had listened to his young counselors instead of the older men of wisdom (1 Kings 12:8). The nation was suddenly half of what it once was under David and Solomon because of one man's terrible and arrogant decision. It was happening again.

The land would be scraped of any good like a man shaves the whiskers from his face. If you can keep the milk animals from the invaders, their milk and wild game will be all there is to eat. Ahaz refused to ask for a sign and instead called on Assyria, and Assyria would come.

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." Isaiah 8:3-4 Isaiah's wife was a prophetess. Their second child was named "The spoil speeds; the prey hastens." By the time he is able to say "My father," or "My mother" Assyria will have taken Syria and Israel. In Hebrew these are very simple two syllable expressions (*avi* and *imm*). We learned already that was what took place.

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." Isaiah 8:6-8 It is interesting to note that the Lord refuses to mention Pekah's name. It is a way of dismissing him as unimportant

Commented [PW12]: Isaiah 8:18 (ESV)

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.

Commented [PW13]: Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Commented [PW14]: 2 Kings 17:6 (ESV)

⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

Commented [PW15]: 1 Kings 12:8 (ESV)

⁸ But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him.

to call him the son of Remaliah. The people of Judah rejected the gentle water that sprang up for the city of Jerusalem. That is to say they rejected the gentle goodness of God. They rejoiced over the destruction of Syria and their brothers in the north (Proverbs 24:17). The powerful Assyrian army, represented by the Euphrates, would sweep on past those northern nations up to the neck of Judah. Its wings would fill the land like a bird of prey. Judah would survive but only by standing on their toes to keep their head above water. They would go on as a people. The Messiah would come and change the world, while Assyria would disappear into history.

Commented [PW16]: Proverbs 24:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles,

Again God was gracious to give Judah warning after warning. If there was any other way to turn them, God would do whatever it took. But they would continue to harden their hearts and look to man or other gods. Though they were faithless, yet God remained faithful to His Word (2 Timothy 2:13). The Messiah was coming. God would prepare a people for His arrival. If it meant captivity, then so be it.

Commented [PW17]: 2 Timothy 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

What can we learn from this passage? Perhaps one of the most important points in our day is to see the desperate attempt to discredit and distort the truth of who Jesus is and the many prophecies about Him (John 15:18). And yet we see that it takes determination and careful examination to really understand them. God gives us enough so that those who are truly searching will find, but those who are looking for excuses can still manufacture them (Revelation 22:11).

Commented [PW18]: John 15:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

At the same time we see God’s patience and love extended to King Ahaz. God would have done anything to get Ahaz to trust Him. Doesn’t God do the same with every soul? He’ll give them whatever they need to turn and trust in Him, if they are willing and desire the truth.

Commented [PW19]: Revelation 22:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

Another lesson we should take from Ahaz is that our fears are often unfounded. When our faith is in God we can do as God commanded Ahaz, “Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart become faint.” But most importantly of all, lean on the Lord. Trust Him. Believe His promises. Don’t run off thinking you can handle everything. Fully trust in the Lord. Our gracious God will do whatever it takes to convince you that He is real and loves you. Are you willing to accept the sign He gives you?

We’ve all been given the greatest of signs, the life of Jesus, God with us. Some say Jesus was just a good teacher ahead of His time, not really God or a Savior. How else could He have rebuked the wind and commanded the waves, touched the lepers and made them whole, ordered demons to leave, or lifted a paralytic to his feet restoring his nerves and giving him muscle and balance? How else could He have fed thousands with a boy’s small lunch, or spoke healing to a man’s servant who was miles away, or predict the destruction of the temple? Who can turn water into wine, or cause one who was born blind to see, or call the dead to life? Who else has walked out of their own grave after three days? Who else could do these things and more but the One we know as “God with us?”

Who would say such things as, “I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life (John 8:12),” or “I am the resurrection and

Commented [PW20]: John 8:12 (ESV)

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

the life (John 11:25),” or “love your enemies (Matthew 5:44),” or “no one comes to the Father but by me (John 14:6)!” Jesus said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father (John 14:9).” Immanuel is God’s sign to you and me. Will you believe and trust Him? Or will you be like Ahaz, persisting in hardhearted rebellion? Jesus is God’s sign to us.

Questions

- 1 Why was Ahaz so afraid?
- 2 What did God command Ahaz to do?
- 3 Why shouldn’t we fear?
- 4 Was God’s Word true? What happened?
- 5 What happens to those not firm in faith?
- 6 Why did Ahaz refuse God’s command?
- 7 What was wrong with the verse Ahaz quoted?
- 8 Why is 7:14 about Jesus and not about Isaiah’s son?
- 9 Would Assyria come to Judah?
- 10 Review the lessons?
- 11 What is the sign given for us to believe?

Commented [PW21]: John 11:25 (ESV)

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

Commented [PW22]: Matthew 5:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Commented [PW23]: John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Commented [PW24]: John 14:9 (ESV)

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”