

Is. 7:1 And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.

This chapter is introduced with a time marker—in the days of King Ahaz, an evil king who reigned for 16 years, the third king under whom Isaiah ministered. The kings of Syria and Israel decided to form an alliance and attack Jerusalem, but they were unable to conquer it. (See 2Kings 16 and 2Chronicles 28)

The following verses describe events leading up to this attack.

Is. 7:2 And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

“the house of David” = Ahaz

When Ahaz was told about the alliance between Syria and Ephraim/Israel/the Northern Kingdom, he became afraid, as did the people of Jerusalem.

Is. 7:3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field;

Is. 7:4 And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

“fuller’s field” = where the people spread their freshly washed clothes to bleach in the sun (from the Believer’s Bible Commentary)

God instructs Isaiah to take his son, Shearjashub, and go and meet Ahaz at a specific place. Shearjashub’s name means “a remnant will return.” Isaiah is to tell Ahaz not to be afraid.

The word for *smoking* again implies anger. The word for *firebrand* indicates a poker for gathering embers. Rezin and Pekah are pictured going away (the view is from their behind) angry that their efforts have been unsuccessful.

It is always important to understand that God’s perspective is that of already knowing the outcome. When God says that we have no reason to fear, we have no reason to fear. Knowing that Ahaz would take matters into his own hands and make a league with the king of Assyria instead of trusting in Him, Isaiah prophesied using his son to picture the truth that “a remnant will return” even though Judah would suffer great loss.

Is. 7:5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,

Is. 7:6 Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, *even* the son of Tabeal:

Is. 7:7 Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

Is. 7:8 For the head of Syria *is* Damascus, and the head of Damascus *is* Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

Is. 7:9 And the head of Ephraim *is* Samaria, and the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

I think what God is saying through Isaiah is that He is totally aware of the plans of the kings of Syria and Ephraim to divide Judah between them and make it subservient to them. No matter what their plans are, God is not going to allow them to accomplish their purpose. In fact, He is reminding Ahaz through Isaiah that these kings are just men.

"If ye will not believe..." – If Ahaz refuses to believe God, the foundations of his own kingdom will crumble; but Judah will not fall prey to Syria and Ephraim. In fact, Ephraim will disappear as a nation within 65 years. I was listening to Joe Focht recently, and he pointed out that 65 years later they were carried off as captives by Assyria and captives from other nations were brought in to replace them. This actually established the origin of the Samaritans.

Is. 7:10 Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,

Is. 7:11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

God even tells Ahaz that He will give him a sign to confirm His promise and give Ahaz confidence. Ahaz can even pick the sign, any sign.

Is. 7:12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

Ahaz was not ignorant of God's word.

Deuteronomy 6:16 "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test..."

Interestingly enough, he was ready to give credence to words of God from the past, but ignore the word of God given directly to him. Also, if God gives you specific instruction, it would be a matter of honoring him with obedience and not a matter of tempting Him.

Is. 7:13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

God sees right through him. Ahaz has less regard for God than he does his fellowman.

Is. 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Ahaz's response doesn't change God's purpose one iota.

Isaiah 14:24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.

Ahaz may not be willing to ask for a sign, but God is going to give a sign anyway. This is a bit hard to understand. This is supposed to be a sign to confirm that what God says is going to come to pass. The sign that is given is in reference to the birth of Messiah, Who will be born of a virgin and Whose name will be Immanuel (God with us), Who will be the ultimate deliverer of His people. We know this because of the revelation of the Holy Spirit through Matthew.

Matthew 1:22-23 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

I have heard in the past that these verses have a double reference applying to Isaiah's son as well as the Messiah. This brings up a whole other group of questions. Isaiah's wife is not a "virgin"; that would not be a *sign*. The rabbis who translated the Septuagint interpreted this word to refer to an unmarried girl. The sign of the Messiah would be a sign to the "house of David" and to the nation as a whole confirming God's promises, but it would not serve as a sign regarding the events being discussed with Ahaz. Help!

Thought - The fact that God is promising to send Immanuel, God with us, through a supernatural birth is a promise that necessitates the existence of the Jewish people as a nation at the time of His birth. In other words, God's promise is a sign because His word never fails.

I was checking out one of my favorite web sites, www.gracethrufaith.com, and Jack Kelley gave one of the best explanations for this problem passage I've read:

"Reading Isaiah 7 & 8 together helps to understand the context, because this is one of the so-called dual fulfillment prophecies. When an important prophecy had a long-range fulfillment, the Lord would often provide a short-term partial fulfillment to confirm the long-range complete one. A good example is Isaiah 9:6 "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the government will be upon His shoulders ..." and so on. Of the entire prophecy, only the child was born and the Son given. The rest awaits fulfillment during the Millennium, but the fact that the child was born confirms that He'll one day rule the world.

"So it is with Isaiah 7:14. There would only ever be one virgin birth and it was of critical importance to all mankind, so God provided a partial fulfillment in the birth of a son to Isaiah and his wife (Isaiah 8:3) saying that before the baby was old enough to know right from wrong, the Assyrians would attack. Sure enough when he was about two years old the Assyrians came and conquered Aram and

the Northern Kingdom. This confirmed the long-range prophecy of a virgin-born Messiah who would be God in the flesh.

“It's Isaiah's son, by the way, who was most likely named Immanuel. (He was also given a ceremonial name, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.) Scoffers point out that if Isaiah 7:14 had to do with the Lord's birth, then Jesus should have been named Immanuel. They apparently don't realize that Immanuel means "God with us" and Jesus literally is "God with us."

“They also claim that the Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14 doesn't really require a virgin birth, only that a young woman give birth. But this is because there would only ever be one virgin birth and Isaiah's wife couldn't be the short-range fulfillment if it required a virgin. He had to use a word that would include both.”
[end quote]

Is. 7:15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

Is. 7:16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

The use of the pronoun *he* seems to refer back to the child Immanuel. Chapter 8 seems to connect the child Immanuel with Isaiah's future son that he was told to name Mahershalalhashbaz (as described in the above quote).

Is. 7:17 The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; *even* the king of Assyria.

Isaiah continues his message from the Lord. The Lord is going to cause His people to experience something they have never experienced since the time that they had separated into two kingdoms. They would be conquered----by the King of Assyria. The one Ahaz trusts instead of the LORD will be the one that causes great suffering in the land of Judah.

Is. 7:18 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall hiss for the fly that *is* in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria.

Not only will Judah suffer at the hands of Assyria, they will also suffer at the hands of Egypt. They had experienced the sting of Egypt in the past. God is always in control. As God, Sovereign in the universe, He uses the choices and actions of others to serve His purposes.

Is. 7:19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

I think this verse is saying that the whole of the land of Israel will feel the sting of these invaders.

Is. 7:20 In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, *namely*, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.

This verse is indicating that the Lord will make Israel desolate (shave it bald) by using a hired hand / a servant, the king of Assyria. Though Ahaz had hired the king of Assyria to protect him, God would use that same king to inflict judgment against Judah. All levels of society will be affected—the head (the leaders and mighty men), the hair of the feet (the lowliest in society), and the beard (the aged).

Is. 7:21 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep;

Is. 7:22 And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk *that* they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.

When this time of judgment comes, the cows and goats will no longer produce sweet milk in abundance; those left in the land will have to settle for curdled milk or butter and scavenge for honey.

Is. 7:23 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall *even* be for briers and thorns.

Where there were once many fruitful vines that brought in great profit, the land will only produce briers and thorns.

Is. 7:24 With arrows and with bows shall *men* come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns.

Is. 7:25 And *on* all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

It would seem that the Lord is saying that where the land was once friendly and productive for man, it would now be a place only fit as a dwelling place for oxen and cattle. Men will only hope to profit from it through their skill in hunting with the bow and arrow. God's judgment will be thorough.