

Isaiah Chapter 7

The Immanuel Prophecy (7:1-12:6), introduces the hope of the future in spite of pending judgment. Ahaz ruled Judah from 736 to 720 B.C. He was an ungodly king who refused Isaiah's words of encouragement. Rezin was the last king of Syria to reign in Damascus. He was later killed by Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria. Pekah was the king of northern Israel from 740 to 732 B.C. He usurped the throne by assassinating his predecessor, Pekahiah, and was later murdered by his successor, Hoshea, the last king of Israel.

Syria is confederate with Ephraim refers to the fact that they had formed an alliance against Ahaz to force him into an alliance with them against Assyria. This event is generally dated at 734 B.C. What Ahaz fears is an invasion of Judah by Syria and Israel.

Isaiah 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."

An unsuccessful invasion of Judah by Aram or Syria and Israel, i.e., the northern 10 tribes, led to a continued presence of King Tiglath-Pileser's Assyrian forces in Israel. Shortly after Ahaz assumed the throne, this threat to Judah's security brought great fear to the king and the people of Judah (see 2 Chron. 28:5-8; 17-19).

Ahaz was a wicked king. Jotham, his father, was a better man. He rebuilt the temple gates. Uzziah did what was right, as well. We find in this a desire to change rulership over Jerusalem. Jerusalem is God's, so they did not overthrow Jerusalem, and Ahaz remained as their ruler.

These two, Rezin and Pekah, did not overthrow Ahaz.

Isaiah 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."

This expression, house of David, refers to the Davidic dynasty, personified in the current king, Ahaz.

It was told to the descendent of David that these two evil groups, Israel and Syria, had made an agreement to overthrow the king of Judah and rule in Jerusalem their selves. Notice in this, that Ephraim is actually speaking of Israel at this point.

The blowing wind shakes the tree. The news of the confederacy of these two caused Ahaz to fear in his heart.

Verses 3-9: Isaiah is sent by the Lord to warn Ahaz not to form an alliance with Assyria, but to trust Him to rid the land of its enemies. Accompanying the prophet was Shear-Jashub (“A remnant Shall Return”), his son, whose name was indicative of hope. The location at the end of the conduit of the upper pool is the same place that the Assyrian Rab-Shakeh would later defy Hezekiah (36:2). The invading kings are described as smoking firebrands (literally “smoldering sticks”). The prophet predicts that the threatened invasion will not succeed and that within three score and five years (65 years) the northern kingdom will fall into captivity.

Isaiah 7:3 "Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;"

The presence of Isaiah’s son is an object lesson of God’s faithfulness to believers among the people.

The son of Isaiah was named Shear-jashub, which means a remnant shall return. The fact that Isaiah took his son with him to meet Ahaz could have been to encourage Ahaz that truly a remnant would return even though they were overtaken.

This conduit was a way to gather water and bring it underground to the city. Water was caught in the high places and funneled into pools for use, especially when they were under siege.

Isaiah 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."

Isaiah’s message to Ahaz is one of reassurance the two invading kings will not prevail.

The two tails were Pekah and Rezin. Notice, that Ahaz was not to panic, but have faith. Ahaz was to be strong in the Lord, not fainthearted. In this instance here, there was a great deal of smoke, and very little fire. At best, their confederacy was shaky.

Pekah was the general of Pekahiah. Pekah had killed him and taken his job. Both men were very evil. It is only fair that Pekah's successor killed Pekah, as well.

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

The son of Remaliah was Pekah. They are against Ahaz, of course.

Isaiah 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:"

We see from this, they were not as interested in destroying Judah, as they were of overthrowing Judah's king and putting a king of their own liking in Judah. Tabeal seems to be a Syrian name. "Tabeal" means pleasing to God.

The "breach" could be a break in the wall, or it could be a break in the confidence of the people in Ahaz.

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

This particular conspiracy against Judah and its king will not be successful. Jerusalem will remain in the same hands for now.

Isaiah 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."

"Ephraim be broken". This tribe represented all the northern 10 tribes. The prophet predicted the coming demise because of idolatry (Hos. 4:17). In 65 years they would cease to be a people, first through the captivity of most of them in 722 B.C. and then with the importation of foreign settlers into the land.

All of this is just saying that Syria is headed up by a mortal man who is no match for God, who is the head of Judah. The overthrow of Ephraim as a distinct race of people was accomplished in 65 years after this prophecy is spoken.

Ephraim is later on spoken of in a spiritual sense.

Isaiah 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."

The choice belongs to Ahaz. He could trust the Lord's word or fall into the enemy's hands or, even worse, experience a final heart hardening (6:9-10).

The Samaritans had inner-married so much, that they nearly destroyed the entire race of people. This is a call for Ahaz to stand firm in the faith. To doubt would bring destruction, but faith would remove this mountain of problems the evil neighbors had brought.

Ahaz (like us), should have faith in God's ability, not his own.

(In verses 10-13), as the spokesman of the Lord (Yahweh), Isaiah urges Ahaz to ask thee a sign (miracle). However, the king responded with a surprising pious ploy announcing that he would not ask for such a sign nor tempt the Lord. Instead, Isaiah announced that God Himself had chosen a miraculous sign addressed to the house of David.

Isaiah 7:10-11 "Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying," "Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above."

Since the Davidic line, and hence the messianic line, was at stake, the prophecy was directed to all generations. It was a prediction of hope: though Israel and Judah may be cut down, a Child will spring forth as a Branch out of its roots.

God is trying to encourage Ahaz by offering to give him a sign. The fact of the depth and height above shows that nothing is impossible to God. Look at "thy God". The Lord is trying to let Ahaz know that He is Ahaz's God.

It is not always the correct thing to ask the LORD for a sign, but in this particular case, God told Ahaz He would show him a sign to help him have faith.

To encourage his faith, the Lord offered Ahaz a sign, but Ahaz feigned humility in refusing the sign (verse 10).

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

Even though God offered Ahaz a sign, Ahaz refused, believing he might be tempting the LORD. We know that Gideon asked for a sign from God and got his sign. It helped Gideon have enough faith to believe God could use him.

Gideon's lack of faith was in his own ability. He just wanted to be sure that God had truly called him. He had no lack of faith in God's ability, just his own. Ahaz would have been better off to handle this as Gideon did.

Isaiah 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?"

Upon hearing Ahaz's refusal, the prophet broadened his audience beyond Ahaz (see verse 2), to include the whole faithless house of David. The nation was guilty of wearying God (1:14).

"House of David" was mentioned here, because God had promised that there would be a ruler from the house of David on this throne. Also, this message is not just to Ahaz, but to all of the house of David as well.

Refusing God is a very dangerous thing to do. This is not a man that Ahaz has said no to, but to God.

Isaiah 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."

Since Ahaz refused to choose a sign (verses 11 and 12), the Lord chose His own sign, whose implementation would occur far beyond Ahaz's lifetime. A virgin: This prophecy reached forward to the virgin birth of the Messiah, as the New Testament notes (Matthew 1:23).

The Hebrew word refers to an unmarried woman and means “virgin” (Gen. 24:43; Prov. 30:19; Song of Solomon 1:3; 6:8), so the birth of Isaiah’s own son (8:3), could not have fully satisfied the prophecy. Immanuel, the title applied to Jesus (in Matthew 1:23).

This, of course is the promise of the Messiah. This is the One we call Jesus Christ being prophesied to be born of a virgin. The name "Immanuel" means God with us. In fact, God the Word became God the Son, when He was born of the Virgin Mary and the Spirit of God.

His flesh was as a man, but the Spirit within that flesh was of God. The prophecy of Messiah being in this particular place, seems to be awkward. We must remember the terrible things, mentioned here of Judah, come to an end.

Messiah, the Son born of the virgin Mary, is the hope for their future. It gives them something to look forward to in this time of gloom. It is a promise that God will visit Judah again. I do not believe it is out of place at all. This is a little glimmer of hope that God has not forsaken them.

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

Curds result from coagulated milk, something like cottage cheese. This diet indicated the scarcity of provisions which characterized the period after foreign invaders had decimated the land.

Butter and honey was not all that Jesus ate, but is a symbol here to show that He would be in a humble family here on the earth. Jesus always knew right from wrong, He did not have to be taught that. In fact, He is the Truth. He alone is righteous in His own behalf.

The righteousness of a Christian is because we have taken on His righteousness. This is speaking of time, and not the personality of Jesus.

Isaiah 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."

“Refuse evil”: Before the promised son of Isaiah was old enough to make moral choices, the kings of Aram, or Syria, and Ephraim were to meet their doom at the hands of the Assyrians.

Verse 16 happens even before the birth of Jesus, so you can see it is not speaking of a condition of Jesus, but a time. Of course, the land that he abhorrest is Syria and Samaria. They became overthrown spiritually, as well as physically.

Verses 17-25: The day that Ephraim departed from Judah refers to the division of the kingdom between the northern and southern tribes after the death of Solomon (in 931 B.C.). The king of Assyria is named as the source of the coming destruction of northern Israel, which was fulfilled (in 722 B.C.).

The fly symbolizes Egypt and the bee symbolizes Assyria. Within two years after Isaiah's prophecy to Ahaz, Syria fell to Assyria (732 B.C.), and Pekah no longer ruled Israel. Within another 10 years, Israel, (Ephraim), had also fallen to Assyria.

Isaiah 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."

Not only did the Lord use the Assyrians to judge the northern kingdom, He also used them to invade Ahaz's domain of Judah. This coming of the Assyrian king was the beginning of the end for the nation and eventually led to her captivity in Babylon.

Since Ahaz will not use God's help, destruction will come. He is comparing the time with the time when the 10 tribes broke away from the twelve, just leaving the two, of which Judah was one.

This terrible happening is not just on Ahaz, but all of his people. This is speaking of terrible times to come. This will happen prior to the birth of Jesus.

From here to the end of this chapter, the desolation prophesied in this section began in the days of Ahaz and reached its climax when the Babylonians conquered Judah. Its results continue to the time when the Messiah will return to deliver Israel and establish His kingdom on earth.

Isaiah 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."

"Fly ... bee": Egypt was full of flies, and Assyria was a country noted for beekeeping. These insects represented the armies from the powerful countries which the Lord would summon to overrun Judah and take the people into exile.

Isaiah 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."

Not even inaccessible areas of the land were free from the invading armies.

Please notice that God just has to hiss (call), the fly and bee, and they will come. They are subject to God. It does not matter how far away they are, they must obey the voice of God. Satan is not the ruler, ultimately, God is.

Isaiah 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."

The Assyrians were the Lord's hired blade to shave and disgrace the entire body of Judah (1:6).

This is not a man being shaved, but a land. It speaks of the utter destruction and barrenness.

Isaiah 7:21 "And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep;"

The foreign invasion would cause a change from an agricultural economy to a pastoral one.

This is just saying that the remnant, which is left, will live a very meager life, sustained by, perhaps, one cow and two sheep. Poverty has overtaken those who are left, and they wander with their families just barely getting by.

Isaiah 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."

Milk, butter and honey will be their food. We see from this, that it is possible to get by on just a very little bit. God will bless the cow, and it will give an abundance of milk to help them survive.

This will not be a prosperous life, but one of survival. The honey will be found wild. This is the land God had promised them, when they came out of Egypt. He had said it would be a land of milk and honey.

Isaiah 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."

The presence of these uncultivated growths was a sign of desolation (as in 5:6).

“Silverlings” means pieces of silver.

The vineyard with 1000 vines would have been very valuable. God has stricken the vineyard, and all of the vines have died. Nothing but briers and thorns grow where the vines used to flourish.

Isaiah 7:24 "With arrows and with bows shall [men] come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns."

The "arrows and bows" speak of a hunter out to kill some wild game. The land that is grown up with briers is a good place for wild game to hide. It is no good for cultivation, and the farmers have moved.

Isaiah 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."

A "mattock" is a hoe. This is, possibly, speaking of an area that had been cultivated with a hoe in the past. This is, possibly, saying that it would be a place the cattle could go into to find something to eat, but would not be fit for man.

The lesser cattle could be speaking of wild animals similar to a deer. They like to hide in briar thickets. A person navigating the same briars and thorns would probably get stuck.

Isaiah Chapter 7 Questions

1. Who was Ahaz's father?
2. Which of them was the better man?
3. Who was king of Syria at the time mentioned here?
4. Why were they not able to overthrow Jerusalem at this time?
5. Who was confederate with Syria?
6. His heart was moved as what?
7. Who is Ephraim speaking of in verse 2?
8. What was the name of Isaiah's son?
9. What did his name mean?
10. Why did Isaiah take his son with him to meet Ahaz?
11. What instruction from God did Isaiah give Ahaz in verse 4?
12. Who were the two tails?
13. There was a great deal of _____, and very little _____.
14. Who was the son of Remaliah?
15. What could the breach in verse 6 be?
16. What were these enemies really interested in doing?
17. What does "Tabeal" mean?
18. The head of Syria is _____.
19. In how many years from the time Isaiah spoke the prophecy, will Ephraim be broken?
20. Whose ability should Ahaz have faith in?
21. What unusual thing did God tell Ahaz to do?

22. Did he do it?
23. Ahaz would have been better off to handle this as _____ did.
24. Why was "house of David" mentioned in verse 13?
25. What sign did God give them?
26. What is this prophetic of?
27. What does "Immanuel" mean?
28. Why does the author believe the promise of Messiah, here, is not out of place?
29. What is the "butter and honey" in verse 15 saying?
30. In what time frame does verse 16 occur?
31. What day is this terrible day compared to?
32. What will the LORD do in that day to call the fly?
33. What is verse 20 really talking about?
34. What does verse 21 mean, when it speaks of a cow and 2 sheep?
35. What will the remnant eat?
36. What does "silverlings" in verse 23 mean?
37. What grows in place of the vineyard?
38. The "arrows and bows" indicate what?
39. What is a "mattock"?
40. What could hide in the briars without harm?