

Isaiah 7

- Isaiah received a commission to present God's word to Israel, a word they weren't permitted to understand
 - They entered into a covenant with God to keep His law
 - When they broke it, God was not only within His rights to bring judgment, He was required to do so
 - The Law gave God the opportunity to declare His judgment on Israel during Isaiah's time
 - He would bring about the arrival of new Gentile kingdoms, use them to exact Israel's punishment
 - This period of judgment would last not just through Isaiah's lifetime, but all the way until a Messiah would come
 - But even that wouldn't end their punishment
 - For the sake of Gentiles, God would without mercy on Israel even past the coming of their Messiah
 - As John explained...

[John 12:37](#) But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.

[John 12:38](#) This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"

[John 12:39](#) For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,

[John 12:40](#) " HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM."

[John 12:41](#) These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.

- In a future day when the day is right for Jesus' return, God will remember His loophole in Lev 26 and bring mercy to Israel
 - And then they will know what they currently do not know

[Rom. 11:30](#) For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,

[Rom. 11:31](#) so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

[Rom. 11:32](#) For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

- With Isaiah's commissioning established, he moves next to a series of chapters (7-12) commonly called the book of Immanuel,
 - The name comes from three uses of the name Immanuel to describe a coming Messiah or savior for Israel
 - In chapter 7, we see the birth of Immanuel promised
 - In chapter 9, we see the birth is viewed as having already happened
 - In chapter 11 Immanuel is reigning as King
 - Throughout these chapters Isaiah writes in a way that is so artful and intricate, it's simply a marvel
 - The more I read it, the more I felt like I was seeing the wisdom of God on full display
 - Isaiah tells of future historical events in Judah and northern Israel, while weaving in references to God either delivering them to judgment or protecting them
 - And in these references, we find numerous references to Christ
 - So that these references instantly take on double meaning, and the majesty of how both meanings work together makes Shakespeare look like schoolyard poet
 - Chapters 7-9 play on a motif of children, which coincides with a reference to the birth of the Messiah
- The first event described is the coming Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom and its threat to Judah

[Is. 7:1](#) ¶ Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it.

- King Ahaz was the grandson of King Uzziah
 - Terrible king
 - Worshipped pagan gods
 - Sacrificed his own son in a pagan temple
 - Placed an idolatrous altar in the temple
- During the reign of King Ahaz, the Southern kingdom of Judah was under siege from two enemies allied together against the House of David.
 - The nation of Syria had joined forces with the Northern Kingdom of Israel to battle against Judah,
 - In 734 BC their armies traveled south and attacked Jerusalem.
 - Their military goal was to force Judah to join their alliance against a growing threat from the northern empire of Assyria.
 - King Ahaz refused to join their alliance, and instead he defended Jerusalem against Syria and Israel.
 - Though they were outnumbered, the Southern Kingdom successfully beat back the invaders and saved their beloved Jerusalem.
- Unfortunately, King Ahaz still faced a difficult situation.
 - The armies of Israel and Syria had been repelled,
 - Yet they hadn't been defeated.
 - They regrouped in Ephraim to the north within the Northern Kingdom of Israel to prepare for a second attack.
 - The prospect of more attacks left the nation of Judah trembling fearfully
 - And King Ahaz searching for a way to preserve his kingdom and defeat his enemies once and for all.
- Isaiah describes the fear in Judah this way:

[Is. 7:2](#) When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.

- King Ahaz's options were limited.
 - Judah's army wasn't strong enough to defeat a second attack,
 - New threats were emerging in Edom and in Philistia.
 - The king could seek his own alliance with Assyria or Egypt, or Judah could remain neutral and try to defend itself alone.
- At this bleak moment, the faithfulness of our Lord appears.
 - The Lord sends His prophet Isaiah to visit King Ahaz with a better offer.
 - Isaiah is accompanied by his toddler son Shearjashub, which becomes significant later
 - The Lord reveals to Ahaz that He had been the One to defend Jerusalem against the first attack,
- And the Lord promises Ahaz He is prepared to defend the nation again.
 - Isaiah explains God's offer this way:

[Is. 7:3](#) ¶ Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field,

[Is. 7:4](#) and say to him, 'Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.

[Is. 7:5](#) 'Because Aram, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you, saying,

[Is. 7:6](#) "Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,"

[Is. 7:7](#) thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.

[Is. 7:8](#) "For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin (now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, so that it is no longer a people),

[Is. 7:9](#) and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.'""

- The Lord send Isaiah and his son, whose name means a remnant shall return
 - God says tell the king to be calm and not afraid

- The two nations that came up against Jerusalem are but smoldering stubs now
- God was prepared to stop their repeated attacks
 - The head of these countries was their government and the head of government were these men
 - And the implication is that God can control these men, and in fact they serve as king because God has placed them there
 - And God pointed states they are the head of their countries, NOT the head of Judah
 - Meaning their plan will never succeed
- And Isaiah adds that in 65 years Ephraim won't even be a people any longer
 - Speaking of northern Israel
 - Assyrian will conquer them in 14 years after this prophecy, yet it will take another 51 years before Assyrian deports and scatters the inhabitants of Israel
 - So God was assuring Ahaz that Ephraim's days are numbered as it is
- As Isaiah explains, the Lord's offer held one condition.
 - He would stop the invading armies from the north but the king must believe in the Lord's offer of protection.
 - The king must place his trust exclusively in the Lord's protection.
 - He must not seek other alliances or make backup plans for defending the city.
 - It was an "all or nothing" offer.
 - As Isaiah says in verse 9: if you will not believe (in God's promise to defend the city), you surely shall not last.
 - Meaning, God would eventually destroy Ahaz's reign and if the king didn't believe God's promise

- God would still hold off these attackers for the sake of His promise to the house of David
- But a failure to believe would bring a future destruction for Ahaz as king
- Isaiah uses another play on words in Hebrew
 - Ex.: Don't confide/ don't abide, don't believe, don't receive
- This was a demanding condition
 - The Lord knew that the King's faith would waiver under the pressure of the moment.
 - Even the strongest faith would have wavered in the face of the approaching armies and the prospect of certain defeat,
 - So surely the king would question whether he should forgo taking action to defend the city.
 - How could he be expected to sit idle while a powerful enemy advances upon his nation?
- Because the Lord knew the king would need assurance to rest in His promise, in mercy and grace the Lord invites King Ahaz to request a sign.
 - The Lord's offer to Ahaz is recorded in Isaiah:

[Is. 7:10](#) ¶ Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying,
[Is. 7:11](#) "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

- God told Ahaz he could ask for any sign he wanted,
 - And the Lord would perform the sign to confirm His promise.
 - A sign is generally a miraculous manifestation of God's power intended to confirm His promises and prove His power to keep His word
 - For example, the Lord gave Noah the sign of a rainbow as proof of His promise never to flood the world again.
- So what did Ahaz do in response to the Lord's gracious offer?
 - What miraculous sign did he request to bolster his faith?

- Surprisingly, he refused to name any sign.
- Isaiah records his response in the next verse:

[Is. 7:12](#) But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!

- At first reading, Ahaz's response sounds very respectful.
 - After all, doesn't scripture teach a man shouldn't test the Lord (Deut 6:16)?

[Deut. 6:16](#) ¶ "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.

- Even King Ahaz himself cites the Law's restriction as his reason for spurning the prophet,
 - In reality King Ahaz was simply making excuses to Isaiah.
- When the Lord offers us an opportunity to request a sign, it's not a test to take Him up on His offer.
 - On the contrary, it's a show of faith when we are willing to accept a sign.
- Sadly, King Ahaz had no such faith
- Apparently, King Ahaz had already decided to seek another way to defend the city,
 - Ahaz had come to believe that Assyrian was a country he could bargain with and he had decided to seek an alliance with Assyrian against Syria and Israel
 - So he wasn't interested in relying on the Lord's promise to defend Jerusalem.
 - Rather than confess his lack of trust in God, the king speaks hypocritically, pretending to be respectful by quoting the Law,
 - Yet secretly doubting the Lord's promise to defend the city.
 - Ahaz trusted in himself rather than in God.
- Naturally, the Lord saw through the King's pious act,
 - And by the words of Isaiah, the Lord answers Ahaz this way:

[Is. 7:13](#) Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"

[Is. 7:14](#) "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

[Is. 7:15](#) "He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.

- Scripture says that King Ahaz was a man who tried the patience of men
 - Now he had the audacity to try God's patience too
 - Therefore God decides the sign
- At this point we need to observe some subtle changes in Isaiah's words and the underlying Hebrew
 - In verse 13 Isaiah begins to address the house of David
 - Up to this point everything has been spoken to Ahaz personally
 - And all the personal references have been in the singular
 - You, singular
 - But now, Isaiah begins to speak to the House of David
 - And every Hebrew pronoun is now in the plural
 - Read it in the plural "you" to see how it changes
- The sign involves a virgin - a young woman who has never married - will bear a son whose name will be With us God
 - While the Son is still eating food common to infants, He already know to refuse evil and choose good
 - Meaning He will be sinless from birth and arrive under miraculous circumstances
 - We know this refers to the birth of Jesus

[Matt. 1:18](#) ¶ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

[Matt. 1:19](#) And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

[Matt. 1:20](#) But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

[Matt. 1:21](#) "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

[Matt. 1:22](#) Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

[Matt. 1:23](#) "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

- Interestingly, the Hebrew definitive article says "the" virgin, not "a" virgin
 - Using the definitive article of "the" implies this is the virgin spoken of earlier
 - Since there is no reference to a virgin in any earlier verse of Isaiah, it leaves us asking what other prominent mention of a virgin would have been familiar to Isaiah and his audience
 - The only other mention of a virgin birth in all the Old Testament comes in Genesis 3:15

[Gen. 3:15](#) And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed; <-- the woman's "seed" = virgin birth
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."

- Isaiah says "the" virgin to emphasize this is the fulfillment of God's earlier promise to provide a solution for man's sin
 - Just as Matthew explains
- There has been a lot of debate over whether this promise might also related to something in Ahaz's day
 - The very nature of a sign from God requires that it be something miraculous

- If it were natural and normal, then it wouldn't carry much weight as a sign or proof
 - So the birth of a child from a virgin fits the requirements for a sign
- Yet if the only time a virgin birth has ever happened was 700 years later at Jesus' birth, how can this prophecy be considered a sign for Ahaz?
 - Well, first remember that the words of this prophecy were spoken in the plural to the house of David, not to Ahaz singularly
 - So these verses are spoken beyond the moment as a sign to Israel regarding God's deliverance
 - He had offered Ahaz a sign for God's deliverance in Ahaz's day
 - But when Ahaz refused to ask, God promised a sign to the entire disobedient nation
 - Specifically, that the Throne of David would see its eternal King come as promised
- Secondly, God does give Ahaz a sign for his time, in the very next verses
 - It's hard to see, because God has woven it into Isaiah's words so artfully

[Is. 7:16](#) "For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

[Is. 7:17](#) "The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria."

- First thing to notice is that the Hebrew pronoun for you returns to the singular in these verses
 - Isaiah has begun to talk to Ahaz personally now
 - Secondly, The word for child in verse 14 is harah, which means an infant
 - The word for boy in verse 16 is naar, which means lad or toddler
 - Isaiah is talking about a different boy now
 - He's talking about the young son he's brought with him to this meeting with Ahaz

- Shearjashub's name means a remnant will return
- Before this boy is old enough to do the right thing, the two kings will be dispatched by God
 - If the reference was still talking about Jesus, then the description would make no sense
 - There was never a time when Jesus was too young to know to refuse evil
 - Isaiah just described him as a boy who could refuse evil from birth
 - This is a different boy who knows sin
 - It's Isaiah's son
- God is keeping his promise to destroy these kingdoms because He was faithful to His promise to David
 - But Ahaz didn't demonstrate faith in God's promise, so God was going to cut him off
 - Since he was willing to get into bed with Assyrian, he was now going to have to lie in it
 - Though God would dispose these two threatening kings, He would allow Assyrian to invade Judah just long enough to cause Ahaz distress though He allowed Ahaz to survive the attacks

[2Chr. 28:19](#) For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the LORD.

[2Chr. 28:20](#) So Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him.

[2Chr. 28:21](#) Although Ahaz took a portion out of the house of the LORD and out of the palace of the king and of the princes, and gave it to the king of Assyria, it did not help him.

[2Chr. 28:22](#) ¶ Now in the time of his distress this same King Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the LORD.

[2Chr. 28:23](#) For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, and said, "Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they became the downfall of him and all Israel.

[2Chr. 28:24](#) Moreover, when Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, he cut the utensils of the house of God in pieces; and he closed the doors of the house of the LORD and made altars for himself in every corner of Jerusalem.

[2Chr. 28:25](#) In every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked the LORD, the God of his fathers, to anger.

- Isaiah describes that invasion in the rest of chapter 7

[Is. 7:18](#) ¶ In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

[Is. 7:19](#) They will all come and settle on the steep ravines, on the ledges of the cliffs, on all the thorn bushes and on all the watering places.

[Is. 7:20](#) ¶ In that day the Lord will shave with a razor, hired from regions beyond the Euphrates (that is, with the king of Assyria), the head and the hair of the legs; and it will also remove the beard.

[Is. 7:21](#) ¶ Now in that day a man may keep alive a heifer and a pair of sheep;

[Is. 7:22](#) and because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left within the land will eat curds and honey.

[Is. 7:23](#) ¶ And it will come about in that day, that every place where there used to be a thousand vines, valued at a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns.

[Is. 7:24](#) People will come there with bows and arrows because all the land will be briars and thorns.

[Is. 7:25](#) As for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample.

- Isaiah describes armies meeting for battle like flies and bees settling on Judah
 - Assyria will have conquered Syria and Israel and will March south toward Egypt
 - Meanwhile, Egypt will March north to engage the approaching Assyria in battle
 - They will meet in Judah, and the battle will rage there
 - The result of the battle is total destruction of the land
 - Few cattle, so that they must be preserved for milk production
 - All the vineyards will be reduced to thorn bushes in which people will hunt for game
 - This destruction comes upon Judah because their leader refused to believe in God's promises of deliverance
- There are two interesting sequels to this story
 - First, two decades later Ahaz's son, Hezekiah was king still struggling under Assyrian domination brought upon the nation because his father refused to trust God

- Hezekiah repeats his father's mistake by rebelling against God's instructions
 - This time by rebellion against Assyria though God tells Hezekiah to not to rebel
 - God brings the Assyrians back again to Judah destroying many cities
 - They come up to Jerusalem and seize the city

[Is. 36:1](#) ¶ Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.

[Is. 36:2](#) And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field.

- Did you notice the location?
 - Hezekiah met the prime minister of Assyria at the same spot where his own father had committed the sin that resulted in Assyria's domination of Judah
- The second sequel relates to the virgin birth
 - When Ahaz stood and heard God promise to protect his nation, he offered a sign to Ahaz as proof that God's provision would be sufficient and they should trust in it
 - Judah's leadership in the person of Ahaz rejected God's sign
 - And because Ahaz rejected God's sign, God brought judgment not only against the man Ahaz, but also upon his entire nation that he represented
 - And God used a Gentile nation to exact that punishment by utterly destroying the cities
 - Seven centuries later, (notice the number seven), God brought the sign Isaiah promised
 - A virgin birth in Bethlehem
 - God gave the nation the sign of a child born of a virgin as His proof of his promise to deliver the nation of Israel from its enemies, including the ultimate enemy, Satan, the serpent of old
 - But the leaders of Israel didn't accept that provision

- They rejected God's sign, the Child Immanuel,
- And when Israel's leadership rejected their God's sign, God brought a sign of His own

[Luke 13:34](#) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

[Luke 13:35](#) "Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

- God used a Gentile nation - the Roman Empire - to bring utter destruction upon Jerusalem and the people of Israel, scattering them as Assyria had scattered the northern kingdom centuries earlier
- Oh, the depths of God's wisdom