

Review

As we have discussed, Isaiah's years as a prophet spanned the reign of several of Judah's kings. Tonight, as we pick up in chapter seven, we see that he is telling us about a time when he interacted with one of those kings, King Ahaz.

7:1-2 Israel And Aram Attack

The southern kingdom of Judah was being attacked by an alliance of the northern kingdom of Israel and the Arameans.

Isaiah tells us the end result in verse one, that they "could not conquer" Jerusalem. But keep in mind that as these events unfolded, no one knew that but the Lord.

Israel's king **PEH-kakh** had allied himself with **Rets-EEN**, the king of Aram, and they were on their way to besiege Jerusalem. They had just conquered **Ay-LATH**, and this alliance of Israel and Aram had killed 120,000 Judeans (2Chr. 28:6). Additionally, 200,000 women and children had been carried away captive to Samaria (2Chr. 28:8).

It is understandable then, why we see that King Ahaz and the people reacted with fear when they heard that the alliance had camped just to the north, in the territory of Ephraim.

7:3-9 Have No Fear

The Lord knew where King Ahaz was, and sent Isaiah to give him a message. He told Isaiah to bring his son **Sheh-AWR-yaw-SHOOB** along as well.

When Isaiah arrived, he probably saw King Ahaz checking the security of the water supply for Jerusalem. Isaiah told him, "God is letting you know that you don't need to worry that these guys are fires about to consume you. In God's sight, they are just smoldering firebrands." He reassured Ahaz that he should not be afraid. God was going to make sure that they would not be conquered. But if Ahaz chose not to believe this

promise, Isaiah said, then God would make sure that he would not last.

That is actually an interesting phrase in Hebrew. "**Believe**" and "**last**" are actually the same word, "**aw-MAN**." The closest way to translate this into English would be, "**If you will not support this, then you will not be supported.**"

So many times, God challenges us to walk in faith, to believe the Word, to place our trust in Him. Yes, disaster may surround us on every side. We might be in a situation that looks completely hopeless. But God's command to us is, "Have faith in Me. I'm bigger than your enemy. I'm more powerful than your predicament."

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

But remember the opposite is also true. Many of God's promises of support are conditional.

Heb. 11:6 ...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Pleasing God means having faith. Being rewarded by God is a result of seeking Him. In the same way, Ahaz was told, "If you don't support this, I won't support you."

7:10-12 Ask For A Sign

The Lord, speaking through Isaiah, said to Ahaz, "I'm going to confirm my promise now through a miracle. Ask for anything you can imagine, and I will do it to reassure you that you can trust Me."

But Ahaz wouldn't. He said, "I won't ask, nor will I test the Lord." Now, this sounds quite reverent and respectful, doesn't it? It could be interpreted as one of the great statements of faith in the Scriptures. After all, Ahaz is quoting Deuteronomy 6:16...

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

Ahaz's response might sound like words of great faith, reverence,

and respect. But in fact, it was none of those things. This man was not faithful, reverent, or respectful. The Scriptures tell us,

2Kings 16:2-4 ...he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David had done. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel. He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

Ahaz was far from being a righteous or faithful man. He was a worshiper of false gods, and so steeped in idolatry that he even offered his son as a human sacrifice. He was wicked to the core, and his response was not given in reverence, but in rejection.

7:13-16 The Lord Himself Will Give You A Sign

Ahaz's answer tried God's patience. "Fine, Ahaz. Since you won't come up with a sign, I'll come up with a sign."

What would this sign be? This has been the subject of volumes of commentary and debate.

Is. 7:14 "...Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Im-maw-noo-ALE."

We have certainly heard this verse quoted many times, especially at Christmas. But confusion enters in as we read that God goes on to describe the details which take place after the son is born. Before the boy is old enough to refuse evil and choose good the two kings which Ahaz fears will have been forsaken.

Reading in context, it sure sounds like this doesn't have anything to do with the celebrated birth which took place more than 700 years later. It sounds like this is going to happen in Ahaz's hear future.

Which is true, then?

In fact, the prophecy to Ahaz would in fact happen just as God had said. But notice this: the prophecy wasn't just to Ahaz. Did you notice that the Lord had directed this prophecy by saying, "Listen now, O house of David"?

This prophecy reached much further than Ahaz's situation. It was directed to the entire house of David, from which would come the Messiah, born of a virgin.

Near And Far

This is an example of the two-fold fulfillment of prophecy. Often, when you are studying the Old Testament, you run across things that were written in a certain context, but then you read the New Testament, and the Holy Spirit attributes it to something that sounds completely different.

For example, in the book of Hosea, God speaks of Israel, saying that when the nation was young, it was called out of Egypt. He says,

Hos. 11:1 When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.

But then you get to the New Testament, and Matthew's gospel says, that when Joseph took Jesus and Mary to Egypt in order to escape Herod's wrath...

Matt. 2:15 ...This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

It's nothing that we would have ever read in Hosea and said, "Oh yes, now I understand. This speaks prophetically of the Messiah's step-father taking Him to Egypt!" But don't feel bad. Even Hosea didn't understand it. Remember, Peter tells us,

1Pet. 1:10-12 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or

time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

In other words, the prophets didn't understand it when they were writing it down, and the angels don't have things figured out until it happens either!

Another example of this is also found in Hosea. In chapter 13, God is lamenting the fact that Israel is against Him, even though He is the only One Who could help them. He says,

Hos. 13:12-14 "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; His sin is stored up. The pains of childbirth come upon him; He is not a wise son, for it is not the time that he should delay at the opening of the womb. Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight."

Seems pretty straightforward, until you read Paul's letter to the Corinthians. He is writing to them about the rapture of the church, and says,

1Cor. 15:51-55 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then

will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?”

Never in a million years would I have read the judgment against Israel as written in Isaiah and thought, "Oh sure! This is going to happen with the church of Jesus Christ when they're caught up in the air in the rapture!"

And so, Isaiah's prophecy had a near fulfillment - the kings of Israel and Ephraim didn't last much longer at all. But then there was the far fulfillment, of which we read in Matthew:

Matt. 1:18-25 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. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 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. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “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.” And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Personal Fulfillment

Now, as you can imagine, this opens up a pretty huge can of worms. Are we allowed to take any part of the Bible we want and interpret it however we want? Is a man named Mark allowed to point to Psalm 37:37 and say that it applies to him?

Psa. 37:37 (KJV) Mark the perfect man...

May it never be. As a matter of fact, that's how many cults have been formed. It is vital that we remember Peter's words:

2Pet. 1:19-21 ...we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

God wrote the Word, and He can use it however He wishes. But we do not have that same privilege. It's not a matter of OUR interpretation, but of HIS interpretation. And so we can believe with certainty that if God's Word says, "This took place to fulfill that which is written..." then it is a proper interpretation. But with everything else, we must apply the command given to Timothy:

2Tim. 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

7:17-25 Briars And Thorns

The Lord warns Ahaz that Judah is not in for a walk in the park. Trials are coming, and it's going to get very difficult. But none of this matters. He's already made up his mind not to trust God. In fact, he will be looking for strength elsewhere.

2Kings 16:7-8 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, “I am your servant and your son; come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me.” Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king’s house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria.

These difficulties in Judah were Ahaz's fault. The Chronicler tells us,

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.

His rebellion against the Word of God made things worse. For, when he turned to Tiglath-pileser for deliverance,

2Chr. 28:20-23 So Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. 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. Now in the time of his distress this same King Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the LORD. 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.

In spite of all of Ahaz's sin, God would be faithful to His Word. The northern kingdom and the Arameans would indeed fall, just as He had spoken.