

February 25, 2018

“Immanuel”

Focal Passage: Isaiah 7 (NIV)

Cross References: Psalm 56:3; Matthew 1:20-23;
Romans 8:31-39

Important Background Passage: 2 Chronicles 28. Because Judah’s King Ahaz refused to listen to Isaiah’s counsel from the Lord, his kingdom was wrought with heartache and defeat. (see also 2 Kings 16)

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Feb 18 Numbers 16-17	Feb 19 Numbers 18-20
Feb 20 Numbers 21-22	Feb 21 Numbers 23-25
Feb 22 Numbers 26-27	Feb 23 Numbers 28-30
Feb 24 Numbers 31-32	Feb 25 Numbers 33-34

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **God is all-powerful (omnipotent) and sovereign over all the kings of the earth.**
- **God is all-knowing (omniscient) and has foreknowledge of what will happen in the future.**
- **We need to obey to the Lord’s commands even when we don’t understand why He commands it.**
- **God would give a sign of encouragement during Isaiah’s day that would also be a prophecy of the eternal Messiah. Jesus is *Immanuel* = “God with us.”**
- **Lesson Idea:** If we don’t stand firm in our faith, we will not be able to stand at all.

Isaiah 7:1-9 Stand Firm in Your Faith

1 When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it.

2 Now the house of David was told, “Aram has allied itself with Ephraim”; so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.

3 Then the Lord said to Isaiah, “Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer’s Field. 4 Say to him, ‘Be careful, keep calm and don’t be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood—because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. 5 Aram, Ephraim and

Remaliah’s son have plotted your ruin, saying, 6 “Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it.” 7 Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says:

“It will not take place,

it will not happen,

8 for the head of Aram is Damascus,

and the head of Damascus is only Rezin.

Within sixty-five years

Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people.

9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria,

and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah’s son.

If you do not stand firm in your faith,

you will not stand at all.”

DISCUSSION:

- v 1-2. What threat was facing the nation of Judah, and how were they responding to it? (see 2 Chronicles 28 for why they were facing so much opposition.)
- V 3. Isaiah’s son, Shear-Jashub’s name meant “a remnant will return.” Why did God want Isaiah to take him when he went to talk to King Ahaz?
- V 4. What was God’s message to Ahaz? (This is a constant theme in Isaiah, see Isaiah Isa 8:12; 12:2; 35:4; 37:6. See also Psalm 56:3; Romans 8:31-39) Why did he refer to Rezin and “Remaliah’s son” (Pekah) as “two smoldering stubs of firewood?”
- V 5-6. What did the leaders of Aram and Israel intend to do to Judah?
- V 7. How did God respond to their threat? What does this teach us about God’s sovereign power?
- V 8. What did God say would happen to Israel (Ephraim) within the next 65 years? What does this teach us about the foreknowledge of God?
- V 8-9. How did God look at the nations of Aram and Ephraim? What did God tell Ahaz about standing firm in his faith? How does that warning apply to us also?

Isaiah 7:10-16 Immanuel, God With Us

10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 11 “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” 12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.”

13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. 15 He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, 16 for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

DISCUSSION:

- v 10-12. What did God tell Ahaz to do? Why did Ahaz refuse? How can our "religious responses" sometimes be a mask for disobedience and rebellion?
- V 12. How did God respond to his refusal? Why?
- V 13-16. What sign would the Lord give to Ahaz? How was "Immanuel" both a sign for Isaiah's day and a prophecy for the future Messiah? (see Matthew's interpretation of this verse in Matthew 1:20-23)

Isaiah 7:17-25 Assyria, the Lord's Instrument

17 The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria." 18 In that day the Lord will whistle for flies from the Nile delta in Egypt and for bees from the land of Assyria. 19 They will all come and settle in the steep ravines and in the crevices in the rocks, on all the thornbushes and at all the water holes. 20 In that day the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria—to shave your head and private parts, and to cut off your beard also. 21 In that day, a person will keep alive a young cow and two goats. 22 And because of the abundance of the milk they give, there will be curds to eat. All who remain in the land will eat curds and honey. 23 In that day, in every place where there were a thousand vines worth a thousand silver shekels, there will be only briars and thorns. 24 Hunters will go there with bow and arrow, for the land will be covered with briars and thorns. 25 As for all the hills once cultivated by the hoe, you will no longer go there for fear of the briars and thorns; they will become places where cattle are turned loose and where sheep run.

DISCUSSION:

- v 17-20. What would be God's answer to the problem of the Kings of Aram and Ephraim? Why would this be a strange way for God to rescue Judah? How did the King of Assyria end up as a problem even for Judah? (see 2 Chronicles 28:20-21)

- V 21-25. How will God's people be kept alive? What negative things will they face in the land? Why will the land be filled with thorns and briars?

APPLICATION:

- ✓ What fears do you need to turn over to the Lord, so you can stand firm in your faith?
- ✓ Why can you trust God with your future?
- ✓ What area of your life have you not been obedient to what God has already told you? Why?
- ✓ How does knowing Jesus as Immanuel (God with us) give you comfort every day?

Lesson by Bro Stan

NOTES: from David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary*:

V 1. *In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham*: Ahaz was a wicked king of Judah, worshipping other gods and even sacrificing his son to Molech (2 Kings 16:1-4). The only good thing Ahaz seemed to do was father Hezekiah, who became a good king of Judah.

Rezin king of Syria and Pekah . . . king of Israel: The alliance between these two nations and their unsuccessful attack on Jerusalem is described in 2 Kings 16. The attack on Jerusalem was ultimately unsuccessful, but the war against Judah took a great toll against the southern kingdom. 2 Chronicles 28:6 documents the damage: For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed one hundred and twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. 2 Chronicles 28:5 says that the Syrian army carried away a great multitude of them as captives. The king of Israel also captured 200,000 men, women and children as captives, but sent them back to Judah at the command of the prophet Oded (2 Chronicles 28:8-15).

All in all, when the events of this chapter unfold, the nation of Judah had faced terrible calamity, and was devastated. As the combined armies of Israel and Syria approached Jerusalem, it looked like everything would be lost. Ahaz was challenged to trust God when things were bad, and it looked like soon, all would be lost.

Went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it: How was Ahaz saved from this attack? Because he entered into an ungodly alliance with Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and even gave Tiglath-Pileser silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord as a present to win his favor and protection (2 Kings 16:7-9).

When Ahaz went to meet Tiglath-Pileser, his new master, in Damascus, he saw the pagan altars and places of sacrifice. He copied these designs and remodeled the

temple of the Lord in Jerusalem after the pattern of the pagan temple and altars in Damascus. Ahaz is a powerful, extreme example of someone who enters into an ungodly alliance for “good” reasons, and is thoroughly corrupted thereby (2 Kings 16:10-18).

It is important to understand that the events of this chapter happened before Ahaz made his final decision to put his trust in Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria. Though we are told the end result of the attack in Isaiah 7:2 (could not prevail against it), Isaiah is telling us the end result before he describes his prophecy to Ahaz. This disregard for chronological order may be frustrating to us, but is completely natural to the ancient Hebrew mind.

V 2. **Syria’s forces are deployed in Ephraim:** Ephraim is another title for the northern nation of Israel. King Ahaz heard that Syria and Israel had joined together to make war against Judah.

So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind: King Ahaz and his people react with fear instead of with trust in God. They are shaken and unstable in their hearts. In this, the people of Judah really are the people of Ahaz (his people), not the people of the Lord. God was not shaken or unsettled by this threat. If the king of Judah and the people of Judah had put their trust in the Lord, they would have had the peace of God in this conflict.

V 3-4. **At the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller’s Field:** These seemingly irrelevant details make an important point. All this happened to real people at a real time and in real places. This isn’t make believe or fairy tales. This is real.

Take heed, and be quiet: Seemingly, Ahaz needed to pay attention (*take heed*) and stop his talking about the problem (*be quiet*). He needed to trust God, and take courage in the Lord (*do not fear or be fainthearted*)...

Why was it so hard for Ahaz to do this? Because he didn’t see the situation the way the Lord did. Ahaz looked at Israel and Syria and saw a terrible threat. God looked at Israel and Syria and saw *two stubs of smoking firebrands*. To the Lord, they were all smoke and no fire!

V 11-12. **Ask a sign for yourself:** Through the prophet Isaiah, God invites Ahaz to ask for a sign. God has just challenged Ahaz to believe and be blessed, and now God offers to give Ahaz a basis for belief – a sign for yourself.

But Ahaz said, **“I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!”** This sounds very spiritual from Ahaz. He almost seems to say what Jesus said in Matthew 4:7: *“You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”* Though the words are similar, the hearts are far apart. Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, because when God fulfilled the sign, he would be “obligated” to believe. This was not tempting or testing God in wrong way. It is never testing God to do as He says, and if the Lord invites us to test Him, we should. For example, in Malachi

3:10, the Lord invited Israel to give as He commanded, and thereby to prove Me now in this.

V 14. **Therefore the Lord Himself will give you as sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.** This is one of the most famous prophecies regarding the birth of Jesus the Messiah in the Bible. It also illustrates a principle of prophecy, that prophecy may have both a *near* fulfillment and a *far* fulfillment.

The near fulfillment of this prophecy centered around Ahaz, Jerusalem, and the attack from Israel and Syria. For Ahaz, the sign centered around a time span (*For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings*). Simply put, God would give Ahaz a sign that within a few years, both Israel and Syria would be crushed. This was a sign of deliverance to Ahaz.

The far or ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy goes far beyond Ahaz, to announce the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus Christ. (i). We know this passage speaks of Jesus because the Holy Spirit says so through Matthew: *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”* which is translated, *“God with us.”* (Matthew 1:23) (ii). We know this passage speaks of Jesus because the prophecy is addressed not only to Ahaz, but also to David’s entire house (*O house of David!*). (iii). We know this passage speaks of Jesus because it says the *virgin* shall conceive, and that conception would be a sign to David’s entire house. Those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus like to point out that the Hebrew word translated *virgin* (*almah*) can also be translated as *“young woman.”*... While the near fulfillment may have reference to a young woman giving birth, the far or ultimate fulfillment clearly points to a woman miraculously conceiving and giving birth. This is especially clear because the Old Testament never uses the word in a context other than *virgin* and because the Septuagint translates it categorically *virgin* (*parthenos*). (iv). We know this passage speaks of Jesus because it says He will be known as *Immanuel*, meaning *“God with Us.”* This was true of Jesus in fact, not only as a title. Immanuel speaks both of the deity of Jesus (**God** with us) and His identification and nearness to man (God **with us**).

V 17. **The Lord will bring the king of Assyria upon you:** This was bad news to Ahaz, who had been foolishly trusting in Assyria instead of the Lord. It is as if the Lord is saying, *“It will seem to you like trusting in Assyria is a clever move, because the armies of Syria and Israel will be defeated. But the Assyrians will end up defeating you also.”*

The Lord will whistle for the fly that is the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that in the land of Assyria. They will come: Judah will not only be attacked by the Assyrians, they would also be invaded by the Egyptians. God would pinch Judah between these mighty nations to the north and south.