

Isaiah 7

God wants to onboard all people into his eternal family of faith. Getting that job done is extremely difficult. Spiritual matters do not interest the natural mind. They seem to be a strange pastime. God reached out to the ancient Jews in the same way that he reaches out to us today. He must interrupt our fun and games with a serious dilemma now and then. This chapter captures a historic prophecy of God stepping out of eternity into time in another effort to capture men's hearts and minds. God prefers that we just bless God as the sun rises each day, with a full heart. Instead, a more urgent communication is usually required to create a conversation.

The northern 10 tribes (Israel) were allied with Syria to wipe out Judah; and they were on the march. The people of Judah were petrified. King Ahaz and the people needed a supernatural act from God. God told Ahaz, through Isaiah, that the Syrian and Israeli King were not long for this world. In fact, he told them that in 65 years Israel would be yanked out of their land. This prophecy took place in 736 BC; and it was fulfilled in 671 BC as the Assyrians drug Israel out of their land naked with fishhooks in their faces and noses. To the unbeliever, this is just information...not comfort to rely on. Faithless men rely on what they see; and not on God's promises.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil. ²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5)

Read Isaiah 7:1-9: Keep in mind that the death march had reached Jerusalem. It was not just approaching outer Judah. How much peace could you have if the Chinese Army was scaling the walls at your housing complex? You would be emotionally paralyzed. The people of Judah had been hearing about the need for repentance for a long time, without concern. Now they have an incentive to review those old messages from the prophets. They did not suddenly fall in love with God. They did not want to die; so all options were on the table.

Isaiah brought his son, named Shear-jashub (a remaining few will return). He tried to inspire trust in God in this situation with a prophecy that neither kingdom would prevail against Judah. Isaiah told King Ahaz that he will not become a stable king if he cannot trust in God. Life is full of challenges greater than our solutions. It is a blessing to face challenges; when you hand it over to God. That is how faith grows. It stretches and enlarges with each daunting scenario. A more mature believer won't bounce around like a ping pong ball.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Allow perseverance to finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4)

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in various trials, so that the proven character of your faith—more precious than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7)

A self-reliant man cannot be saved. In other words, you probably will not end up in heaven without scary situations, beyond your means. You have to, at some point, reach out to God for help. Would King Ahaz agree to give faith in God a shot? It is tragic, when a person refuses God's help in a dire situation.

God is trying to insert faith into this faithless king, and his people. Isaiah is telling the king to calm down; because God is decommissioning both opposing countries. He adds, that if King Ahaz cannot relax, knowing that God's promises always pan out...then he cannot ever be a stable king. Likewise, we are faced with waves of bad news. How many times do we need to experience God's deliverance before we can rest in all situations? Every time that we freak out over bad news, we need to take God's faith class over again. God wants to stabilize us all. To do so, we need to trust in his deliverances.

Read Isaiah 7:10-16: God tells Isaiah to set up a verification test. Ask anything from God to prove himself. In general, we are not to chase signs and wonders. The King refused the offer. To him, the exercise was pointless. Essentially, the King was saying that he was not interested in God's help, no matter what. It is hard to reach a heart that hard. King Ahaz is a representation of the unbelieving

world, uninterested in God's help. How proud do you have to be to let a nation perish, because of your pride?

Regardless of the repeated rejection of God's outstretched hand, God is still going to throw out a massive life preserver to all mankind. God is announcing that the virgin is going to have a child; who will be a sign, token, proof or a representation of God being with us. By the time this child is old enough to make a moral judgement these two invading kings will be dead.

Obviously, we know that the eventual and ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy is that Jesus will be born of a virgin, Mary. In the immediate sense, it was about Isaiah's second child with his young prophetess wife would be named Maher-shalal-hash-baz (quickly snatch the loot). The Hebrew word, Alma, used here is interchangeable for a true virgin or a young woman in her prime. In both cases the child is a sign from God.

Read Isaiah 7:17-25: The near-term fulfillment of the prophecy is that Syria will deport Israel. God will whistle for Assyria in the same way that would soon call for Babylon to cart Judah away. Once the invading nations evict the Hebrew tribes, the land of Israel will revert to a more overgrown and natural state. The staple will have to be cheese and honey, since grazing livestock can happen after buildings are knocked down. The crops and grapevines will be trashed from famine and invasion. God is trying to engage us all.