

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #14

Isaiah 7:1-25

We are living in unusual times. This past week *Newsweek* magazine published an article that said we are now in a “global crisis” (*Newsweek*, February 2, 2009, p. 33). Consumer spending has collapsed, loans have dropped, trade between nations are so imbalanced that the whole world is tumbling into a recession. We are living in a world that features new intimidations and threats. Just this past week one of our political leaders said that the economic problems that are now in the United States is “uncharted territory.” For the first time in the history of our country, we are in big trouble. We are seeing a world that is beginning to turn against Israel. Yad Vashem Publications is sending book catalogs to many places trying to make sure that we remember the holocaust. Most are wondering if some of the most dangerous terrorists in the world are going to be freed so they can strike again. What should God’s people do? What can God’s people do? Where can we turn? Who can we trust? Do we really think that this can be solved by a human politician? **What we can dogmatically say in light of this text in Isaiah is, whatever you do in times of threat, don’t do what Ahaz did.** He turned to the wrong things and he trusted in the wrong person. The lesson we will see is this:

WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE ARE FACING SERIOUS THREATS, GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TRUSTING HIM AND TURNING TO HIM FOR HELP AND NOT THEMSELVES OR OTHERS.

God wants His people coming to Him. God wants His people talking and praying to Him. God wants His people trusting in Him and if ever there is a text that teaches that, it is **Isaiah 7**.

When we come to this text in Isaiah, we come to “uncharted territory” for Judah and Jerusalem. They were in big trouble. Ahaz, the grandson of Uzziah, was their king and he was evil. By his own example, he taught God’s people to trust in anything but God. He did evil and he tolerated evil and even promoted and participated in evil, including worshipping false gods (II Chronicles 28:2-4; II Kings 16:2-4). Most of Isaiah’s connection to Ahaz shows up in Isaiah 7-14.

Ahaz was 20 years old when he came into power and he reigned for 16 years in Jerusalem. He was a complete spiritual dud. **Ahaz would not turn to God for help no matter how desperate things became.** He was an arrogant leader who trusted in himself and in others to be able to get out of trouble. He refused to promote a trust in God and because of this, God allowed a series of negative things to hit this nation. God allowed Pekah to kill 120,000 of Ahaz’ soldiers in one day (II Chronicles 28:6). God allowed Zichri to capture 200,000 women, sons and daughters of Ahaz plus much spoil (II Chronicles 28:7-8). In spite of all of this, Ahaz did not turn to God. So God came to him through the prophet Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapters 7-12, we see a series of connected prophecies, given during the reign of Ahaz, which focus on a variety of themes. **Some of the prophecies focus on the future deliverance that only God would eventually bring to Israel.** Even though God’s people were surrounded by intimidating things, they could always turn to Him and keep their hope in Him. **As we come to Isaiah 7, the specific focus is on a child who would be born who would bring about a national deliverance.** He would be a child who would come through the line of David and He would be a child who would be born of a virgin. This would be

the Divine One who could and would eventually establish a glorious kingdom for Israel. This would be the One in whom Israel could place her hope as a nation and who can give us hope as an individual. The problem with Israel is that she still has not learned the lesson of **Isaiah 7** and that is why she finds herself in a national mess right now and that is the same problem many individuals have as well.

This chapter breaks down quite nicely into two main promises:

PROMISE #1 – Isaiah promises that deliverance will come from the God they do not trust.
7:1-16

There are three historical realities we see in these verses:

(Historical Reality #1) - In the days of Ahaz, the king of Aram (Rezin) and the king of Israel (Pekah) went to wage war against Jerusalem, but could not conquer it. **7:1**

The Hebrew word “war” (yacol) is one that means that these two kings didn’t just want to fight against Jerusalem, they wanted to conquer and prevail over this city and land in an enduring way. They wanted to completely capture and dominate Jerusalem and make it their city (Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 407).

This was the first time in its history that Jerusalem was under siege. This was the first time that Judah and Jerusalem were facing any serious threat since the founding of the southern kingdom. To add further intimidation to the threat, much of it was coming from their northern brothers, Israel. **The reason why God permitted all of this trouble was because of Ahaz’ evil rebellion against God’s Word (II Kings 16:2-6).**

Aram was the land northeast of Israel and these two kings, the king of Aram and the king of Israel, had formed an alliance to go to Jerusalem in order to remove Ahaz and replace him with their own puppet-king, the son of Tabeel (**Isaiah 7:6**). They conducted a major siege against Jerusalem for some time and were not able to completely conquer it. God permitted all of these negative things to hit Judah, trying to get her to turn to Him; but she refused.

You will never find peace or stability in life when you live in rebellion to God’s Word. In fact, if a child of God persists in rebellion against God’s Word, that child can expect one negative setback after another. If you refuse to turn to the Lord, God will hit you with one bad thing after another. You will live your life in total fear and frustration.

(Historical Reality #2) - When all of this was reported to the house of David they shook with fear. **7:2**

King Ahaz was from the Davidic line and when he got wind of this he was terrified. God promised that one from David’s line would sit on the throne, so any threat of king removal was a very serious and dangerous threat to a Davidic king.

Ephraim was Israel’s largest tribe and when Ahaz got word that these enemies were camped there, he literally shook in great fear. **He had never really depended on God for anything**

and he had no reason to think that God was going to give him Divine help. You would think that this would have caused Ahaz to rethink his relationship with God. His whole world was falling apart. But it did not affect him that way. Instead of turning to God for help, he decided to turn to the king of Assyria (Tiglathpilesar) (II Kings 19:7-9). Ahaz was going to rely upon human help, not Divine help.

When your world caves in, it is time to rethink your relationship with God. Times when we are afraid are wonderful times to turn to the Lord in total trust and snuggle up next to Him. Those who depend on Him will see God work in many wonderful ways.

(Historical Reality #3) - God sends Isaiah and his son to Ahaz to give him direct messages.
7:3-9

The truth is, the first thing Ahaz should have done when faced with all these threats was to search out Isaiah so he could hear God's Word and will. But instead of him searching out Isaiah, Isaiah has to search out Ahaz.

May I suggest that what is actually needed in times of great political and personal turmoil is a true focus of and a true understanding of God's Word. This text is an amazing example of God's grace. God was going to intervene and help Judah, because the time had not yet come to pour out His wrath. Ahaz is not even looking to God for any help and God is going to give him help anyway.

When you find yourself surrounded by impossible pressures, go to church to hear the Word of God. God still speaks to His people through His Word. Here is the one place you may expect to find stability in your faith.

We may observe from **verse 3** that God specifically told Isaiah to take his son Shear-jashub, whose name means "a remnant shall return." More than likely the reason God has Isaiah take his son is because a key Son was about to take center stage in the next series of prophecies. Only this Son would not be Isaiah's son, but God's Son, Immanuel - God with us (**Isaiah 7:14**).

God specifically told Isaiah exactly where to go to meet Ahaz (**7:3**), "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field." This conduit was the place where the people of Jerusalem got their water, and the fuller's field was the place where people went to wash their clothes.

More than likely, the reason Isaiah would find Ahaz there was because he was checking the supply of water to determine how long the people could hold out and he may have been trying to figure out a way to cut this water supply off from the enemy forces.

Again, the thing to see is that Ahaz is thinking he can solve this. He can get his people out of this jam. He can figure it out himself. Not one time does he think about turning to the Lord for help. Not one time does Ahaz get down on his knees and ask God for His wisdom, guidance or help.

So God sends Isaiah to Ahaz to give him five amazing direct revelatory messages. These are all messages of pure grace. Ahaz does not deserve any of this:

Direct Revelatory Message #1 - Take care and be calm . **7:4a**

These are commands in Hebrew. It is legitimate to understand Isaiah telling Ahaz, take care and quiet down. God is commanding Ahaz to calm down and be quiet because He is still on the throne. God can still be trusted to take care of His people, even when things are bad. When you realize God is in sovereign charge of things, you are able to take care and be calm no matter how intimidating the surrounding circumstances.

Direct Revelatory Message #2 - Have no fear and do not be fainthearted . **7:4b-8**

This bold confidence is only possible in the face of adversity for one who is right with God. Edward Young said, "Faith in God removes fear of heart" (*The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. 1, p. 272). What God basically says to Ahaz is, you need not fear because I am not going to allow your enemies to succeed. I have determined that their plans will end in failure. I have this whole thing in My Divine control. There are three reasons why Ahaz need not fear:

(Reason #1) - Because these are two hotheaded stubs . **7:4c**

In God's estimation these two kings (Aram and Israel) were nothing more than smoldering firebrands that were about to be extinguished . I'm sure these two political leaders thought themselves to be big and important and impressive. But God saw it differently. These were not raging flames that would accomplish much; they were tail ends of smoldering fire sticks that were about to burn out.

(Reason #2) - Because their evil plan against you shall not come to pass. **7:5-7**

God reveals that no harm at this time was going to come to Judah. **The reason why God would not permit their plan to succeed was not because Judah was so spiritual , but because Israel and Aram were so evil .** God was going to punish them with judgment before He would address Judah. They could have all the meetings they wanted and give all the counsel they wanted, but God would see to it that they would not succeed. Their desire was to take charge of the holy city, Jerusalem, and God said, "No," it isn't going to happen.

Sometimes God will not permit enemies to succeed because their evil is greater than another's evil. Any power or person who purposes to destroy God's nation will discover they will not succeed and eventually God will see to it that they are destroyed.

(Reason #3) - Because in 65 years all of these powers are going to be shattered . **7:8**

God would deal out His wrath on them for their evil. In 65 years their power would be totally gone and there would be nothing they could do to stop Assyria from taking the northern kingdom into captivity. Isaiah made this prophecy in 734 B.C. Assyria defeated Syria (Aram) in 732 B.C. just two years later, and then invaded Israel in 722 B.C. just twelve years later. They deported many of the Israelis and brought Gentiles into Israel's land and by 669 B.C., just sixty-five years later, the nation was gone. **God literally fulfills prophecy even to the very day, right down to specific numbers such as 144,000 Jews (Revelation 7) or 1000 years (Revelation 20).**

Direct Revelatory Message #3 - If you will not believe you will not last . **7:9b**

Ahaz was a man of action and his view was “don’t just stand there, do something.” Isaiah came to him and said, Ahaz you need to stand here and do nothing but believe something. What he needed to believe was in God. It was time for him to start trusting in God. He would never survive the warfare without a firm faith in the Lord.

Being established securely in a place is directly connected to your relationship with God. Long-term survival in this spiritual warfare is directly connected to one’s belief in God and His Word. What Ahaz needed to do, in the face of terrible threats, was to turn to God and to trust in God. If we do not turn to the Lord and trust Him, we will never survive the warfare.

Direct Revelatory Message #4 - You may ask God for any sign as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. **7:10-12**

God, through Isaiah, said to Ahaz that he could ask God for a sign that he could trust Him and that sign could be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven (**Isaiah 7:10-11**). This is God telling Ahaz to ask for any sign and once again Ahaz refused to ask God for a sign (**7:12**); he refused to obey the Word of God. As Young said, “He has no intention of obeying” (Vol. 1, p. 280).

When you first see this, you think this is so pious and good; after all Deuteronomy 6:16 says, “You shall not put the Lord to the test...” However, the thing we need to see is that Ahaz is not responding to what Isaiah and God just told Him to do, specifically “ask for a sign.” **Truth is Ahaz probably doubted that Isaiah was telling him the truth. So this was not about a great faith, this was about a lack of faith.** He doesn’t dare ask God for a sign because he doesn’t think God will give it to Him. He is too haughty and arrogant to ask God for help or for a sign or, for that matter, ask God for anything. He was self-dependent, and it would be this self-dependence that would bring him down. In fact, in just a few years, the king of Assyria would stand on this very spot and begin a downfall of Jerusalem that exists to this very day (Isaiah 36:2).

There are many people who think they can live their whole lives without any connection to God. They think they are smart and shrewd. They don’t need God’s help or guidance. They think they can live their lives and do just fine without God. They don’t need to pray or to hear God’s Word; they can survive on their own. These are Ahaz-types and are nothing but puffed up bags of wind, who one day will be dropped like a fly.

Direct Revelatory Message #5 - You are trying the patience of God so He will give a sign Himself. **7:13-16**

There are six sign elements given by God to show that He is in control. When you look at these sign elements, you must conclude there is only one Person who fulfills what is described here. Israel and Judah were so sinful and crooked that there was no way God could bless either of them, but what He could do was send one to Israel, who could make it possible for Him to bless.

(Sign Element #1) - A virgin will conceive a baby. **7:14a**

All other babies that are born into this world are conceived by the seed of a man; but not this baby. Whoever this One is who can turn things around for Israel cannot be a normal person for He will be born of a virgin (almah).

Now some have suggested that the Hebrew word “virgin” could be translated as a young lady or maiden who is unmarried, which is true (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Psalm 68:25; Song of Solomon 1:3; 6:8). But then they say it doesn’t mean she is a virgin, which is not true. Luke, who was a medical doctor (Colossians 4:14), specifically uses Greek words that indicate this word means virgin (Luke 1:27, 34).

I love something the great reformer, Martin Luther, did on this point. He offered a huge sum of money if any person could prove that this word “virgin” in Isaiah could ever refer to a young woman who was not a virgin. He had no takers.

(Sign Element #2) - A virgin will bear a son. **7:14b**

This one will be masculine, not feminine. There is a Divine man/child God will send who can bring the blessings of God to Israel. The birth of this baby signals to Israel that God will always protect and preserve her and she needs to look to this child for deliverance.

(Sign Element #3) - A virgin will name her son Immanuel. **7:14c**

The Son would be given a name that means, God with us (Matthew 1:23). This virgin’s Son would be God manifested in the flesh as a human.

(Sign Element #4) - The boy will grow up in a time of national poverty. **7:15a**

The imagery of “curds and honey” is one that means the land has been devastated and is so barren that there are no crops to eat. “Curds and honey” was the food of nomadic people who were always on the move and not in one place where they could have the stability of growing and eating crops. This Son would not grow up in a time of national prosperity but more like poverty.

(Sign Element #5) - The boy will always choose good and always refuse evil. **7:15b**

No other boy in the world meets this criterion. No other boy ever born has always chosen to do good and always refused to do evil. Luke revealed that this child continued to grow and become strong and the favor of God was on Him (Luke 2:40). All other children grow out of favor with God and it doesn’t take long before that child shows he has an evil bent.

(Sign Element #6) - The kings’ alliances will be broken before the boy is old enough to choose between good and evil. **7:16**

Now this is basically saying that before this child would be old enough to choose between good and evil, things will become desolate for Israel and the land would be left without a Son of David even sitting on the throne. This is the One Ahaz should trust and this is the One on whom he should depend.

PROMISE #2 – Isaiah promises that deliverance will not come from a foreign power they do trust. **7:17-25**

Ahaz was not trusting in God; he was trusting in Assyria. What happens here is that Isaiah informs Ahaz that God would bring judgment and disaster against him through the Assyrians. Judah would become a bone of contention between Assyria on the east and Egypt on the southwest. God would whistle for these powers to come against Israel and destroy her and leave her desolate. What they would do to Judah would be ferocious and humiliating.

Now contextually, these things will totally happen just before that One, born of a virgin, comes to deliver Israel. When you look down through these verses, there are four forms of judgment God would send:

Judgment Form #1 - Deprivation of water and food. **7:19, 21-22**

This will be a time when Israel will pray, give us today our daily bread.

Judgment Form #2 - Dehumanization of the people. **7:20**

Notice the time emphasis “in that day” (**7:18, 20, 21, 23**).

Ahaz trusted in Assyria and Assyria would completely humiliate the Jewish people. Israel is going to completely trust the Antichrist and he will completely humiliate her. There is nothing more humiliating than to see Jews with their beards and heads shaved. What Adolph Hitler literally did to the Jews from 1939-1945 is what the Antichrist is going to do worldwide for 3½ years.

Judgment Form #3 - Desolation of the land. **7:23**

Famine and pestilence would sweep through the land and places that once flourished would come to nothing but briars and thorns.

Judgment Form #4 - Depopulation of the people. **7:24**

Many will come with their bows and arrows to destroy Israel.

Why would God let these terrible things happen? Because Israel has refused to turn to Him for help. The problem with Ahaz is the problem of the nation today. She would rather depend on herself and her political maneuverings than on God. But how about us? We are surrounded by many threats ourselves. On whom will you depend? Do you depend on a politician? Do you depend upon yourself? Do you depend upon God? God wants His people depending on Him.