

SUMMARY OF ISAIAH 7

Ahaz is being attacked (vv. 1-2).

The threat is against Ahaz and the house of David directly, as the enemies plan to remove him from the throne (v. 6).

The Lord decrees that it will not happen (vv. 7-9).

Ahaz is challenged to trust God (vv. 9-11).

Ahaz refuses to trust God, cloaking his faithlessness in a guise of piety (v. 12).

The Lord expresses his disgust and declares that he will give a sign (vv. 13-14a).

The sign is that a virgin will conceive and give birth to a child who will be named Immanuel, God with us, but before that child learns how to choose the good and reject the evil, the land will be destroyed by Assyria (vv. 14-17).

The land will be laid waste and the people will not be living in it, but will be in exile (vv 18-25). In this darkness, Immanuel will be born.

This passage is a one of judgment upon Ahaz for his refusal to trust the Lord. What God had already decreed—the destruction of Aram and Israel—would occur. But because of Ahaz's sin (and really, of all of the people of Israel, as recorded already in chapters 1-6), the "relief" would be very short-lived and the people would go into exile.

The glimmer of hope is faint and not developed. A child is born. This child's name means "God with us." This is a very good sign. But how is it a good sign when the land is overrun? That is not explained. How is "God with us" in this scenario? Surely God is not with Israel in their judgment (in a way that they desire). Thus Immanuel speaks to a hope that is born in the midst of the judgment. He is the "holy seed" in the destroyed land of chapter 6. He is the royal descendant born in a time of great darkness who proves that the house of David would not be destroyed and that God's promises to David would be fulfilled.

ISAIAH 7: IMMANUEL

I. JUDAH IS THREATENED BY TWO KINGS (VV. 1-2)

Rezin=Aram/Syria; Pekah=Israel/Ephraim (northern kingdom)

Ahaz=king of Judah, from 735-715. This event occurs in 735.

II. ISAIAH ASKS AHAZ TO TRUST GOD (VV. 3-11)

Direct exhortation: don't be afraid; don't lose heart

Prophecy: two kings are already on their way down (vv. 4, 8)

Warning: if you don't trust, you will fall (v. 9)

Grace: ask for a confirming sign (v. 11)

III. AHAZ REFUSES TO TRUST GOD (V. 12)

Ahaz: one of the wickedest kings of Judah. He built high places in every city, closed the temple of Jerusalem, built a copy of an Aramean altar to replace Solomon's altar, offered sacrifices to gods of Damascus, sacrificed his own sons in the fire (2 Kings 16; 2 Chron 28).

Ahaz's refusal to ask for a sign is false piety. Isaiah knows it, and Ahaz's character confirms it.

IV. ISAIAH RESPONDS WITH A PROPHECY OF EXILE (VV. 13-25)

This is primarily a message of judgment, with but one ray of hope (v. 14).

The hope, "Immanuel," is not given to Ahaz, but to the house of David ("you all" in verse 14).

SOME ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

Issue: Is the sign of verse 14 what God would have given if Ahaz had believed? Or is it altered in response to his judgment? In other words, does the sign repeat the previous prophecy or does it add something new?

Debated issue: does the Hebrew word *almah* in verse 14 mean “virgin” or “young woman”?

Debated issue: Was Immanuel born in Ahaz’s lifetime?

Questions to ponder: Is the child born in exilic conditions the holy seed of 6:13? Is the child named “God with us” the same child named “Mighty God” (9:6)? Is the child prophesied to the house of David in the midst of a threat against the survival of that house the one who will “reign on David’s throne” (9:7) and be a “shoot from the stump of Jesse” (11:1) upon whom God’s Spirit will rest (11:2) and who will rule with perfect righteousness (11:3-5)? Is Immanuel the rightful owner of the land (8:8)? What is Matthew’s understanding?

DIFFICULTIES WITH 8TH CENTURY BIRTH OF IMMANUEL

1. Once fulfilled, always fulfilled
2. No child born in Ahaz’s day
3. Birth of extraordinary child in chapters 9 and 11 is not unrelated
4. The essence of the prophecy is judgment; deliverance is distant
5. A virgin will conceive