

## **“God With Us”**

### **Isaiah 7:1-25**

Sunday, August 7th, 2022

An old shoe cobbler dreamed one Christmas Eve that Jesus would visit him the next day. The dream was so real that he was convinced it would come true. So the next morning he cut holly greens and decorated his little cobbler shop for Jesus to visit.

The hours passed; Jesus didn't come. But an old man knocked on the door. He came inside to warm up against the winter cold. As the cobbler talked with the man, he noticed the holes in the old man's shoes, so he reached up on the shelf and got him a new pair of shoes. He made sure they fit and that his socks were dry and sent him on his way.

Still the cobbler waited. But Jesus didn't come. An old woman came, though. A woman who hadn't had a decent meal in two days. He prepared some food for her to eat. He gave her a nourishing meal and sent her on her way.

Then he sat down again to wait for Jesus. But Jesus still didn't come. The cobbler heard a little boy crying out in front of his shop. He went out and talked with the boy, and discovered that the boy had been separated from his parents and didn't know how to get home. So he put on his coat, took the boy by the hand and led him home.

When the cobbler came back to his little shoe shop it was almost dark and the streets were emptied of people. And in a moment of despair he lifted his voice to heaven and said, "Oh Lord Jesus, why didn't you come?"

And in a moment of silence he seemed to hear a voice saying, "Oh shoe cobbler, lift up your heart. I kept my word. Three times I knocked at your friendly door. Three times my shadow fell across your floor. I was the man with the bruised feet. I was the woman you gave to eat; I was the boy on the homeless street."

Jesus *had* come. The cobbler just didn't realize it.

That Christmas story is as appropriate for August as it is for December.

Today, we come to **Isaiah Chapter 7** in our continuing sermon study of the Old Testament book so named. In this series, titled *The Holy One of Israel*, I'm taking one chapter a week as we work through what many consider to be the most significant book in the Old Testament.

With Chapter 6 (which we covered last Sunday) we saw Isaiah's experience with the holy God reaching out to save a sinner. With today's text - Chapter 7, *will we see the same gracious salvation operating on a national basis - in this case, Judah?*

### **Isaiah 7:1-9:**

“Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to *make* war against it, but could not prevail against it. **2** And it was told to the house of David, saying, ‘Syria’s forces are deployed in Ephraim.’ So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.

**3** Then the Lord said to Isaiah, ‘Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller’s Field, **4** and say to him: ‘Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. **5** Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, **6** ‘Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel’— **7** thus says the Lord God: “It shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass.”

**8** - For the head of Syria *is* Damascus, and the head of Damascus *is* Rezin. Within 65 years Ephraim will be broken, *so that it will not be* a people.

**9** - The head of Ephraim *is* Samaria, and the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah’s son. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” ”

Chapter 7 can be divided into three sections:

- **MP 1 - A promise to King Ahaz (v. 1-9);**
- **MP 2 - A sign to the House of Judah (10-17);**
- **MP 3 - A warning to Judah (18-25).**

Verses 1 and 2 provide the setting for what takes place throughout this chapter. It took place “in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to *make* war against it, but could not prevail against it. **2** And it was told to the house of David, saying, ‘Syria’s forces are deployed in Ephraim (Israel).’ So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.”

It will be helpful for us to understand the kind of person King Ahaz was. Turn with me to **2 Chronicles 26:1-4**: “Ahaz *was* 20 years old when he became king, and he reigned 16 years in Jerusalem; and he did not do *what was* right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David *had done*. **2** For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. **3** He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. **4** And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.” And to think his blood ancestor was King David! Ahaz was a self-oriented, stubborn man!

It was during his rein according to **Isaiah 7:1** that the kings of Syria (Rezin) and the northern kingdom Israel (Pekah) sought to defeat Judah (Ahaz). It was their hope to add to their alliance to defend themselves against Assyria, the dominant power in the region. Syria and Israel rose up against Judah’s capital city, Jerusalem, but they could

not overcome it. The weakened forces of Syria and Israel could not keep Assyria from moving into Israel's borders.

The remainder of the first point - verses 3-9 - contain **a promise to King Ahaz** (MP 1). Verse 3 shows God sending the prophet Isaiah, along with his son Shear-Jashub (She-ar Jay Shub) to Ahaz who was inspecting the water system of Jerusalem (a weakness since the water supply was not protected). Interestingly, Shear-Jashub's name means "a remnant will return." That is both an assurance as well as a threat. An assurance in that no matter what Judah's enemies can dream up, they will never be able to fully annihilate Judah. And a threat in that only a remnant would prevail.

Isaiah encouraged Ahaz not to be afraid of the armies of Syria and Israel because they would not prevail over Judah. They were merely "two smoking firebrands" (firewood). Isaiah's message encourages Ahaz to trust in God. Further, Ahaz is called on to believe God's promise of protection (**Isaiah 7:9** - "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established." This verse is saying, "If you don't believe, you will fall, while my word will stand."

More importantly, God's reputation was on the line. His promise to David in **2 Samuel Chapter 7** hovers over **Isaiah Chapter 7**. This is **2 Samuel 7:16** (God is speaking to David), "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." God has declared in his covenant with David, that David will never lack a descendant of his on the throne in Judah. This is not because Judah was so clean and faithful, but despite Judah's filth and faithfulness, Jesus Christ, the Messiah picture in this promise is the fulfillment of God's promise to David and his house.

Verses 10-17 reveal **a sign to the House of Judah (MP 2)**:

"Moreover the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, **11** "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above."

**12** But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!"

**13** Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? **14** Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. **15** Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. **16** 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. **17** The Lord will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house—days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah."

God invites Ahaz to choose for himself a sign from God, a sign of His word on verses 7-9 is true. Ahaz' response in verse 12 is brash arrogance and veiled piety - "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" Ahaz has some nerve telling Almighty God "No." Ahaz was

depending on his treaty with Assyria that they would come through on protecting Judah's interests before the God of heaven would come through in His perfect timing.

Isaiah challenges Ahaz' arrogance with his words in verse 13, "*Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?" Verse 11 was a sign *offered*; verse 14 becomes a sign *imposed* ("Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel".)

Verse 15 shows the conditions in which Emmanuel would live. "Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good." This not the food of the angels - Dale Davis notes, "Curds and honey are *not* the food of paradise; people who eat yogurt and cottage cheese are *not* having the time of their lives." (Davis, 30)

Verses 14 & 15 of **Isaiah Chapter 7** are often before our thoughts at Christmas time. We understand from Matthew who Emmanuel is ultimately - "...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**) This is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; the Son of Man.

Even so, verse 16 seems to be imminent, much sooner than Matthew's day. Perhaps the prophecy has a partial fulfillment in the birth of Isaiah's son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz at the beginning of **Isaiah Chapter 8**, while the definitive fulfillment waits for the birth of Jesus Christ, who secures God's throne forever.

### **MP-3. Verses 18-25 are a warning to Judah.**

**18** And it shall come to pass in that day  
That the Lord will whistle for the fly  
That *is* in the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt,  
And for the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria.

**19** They will come, and all of them will rest  
In the desolate valleys and in the clefts of the rocks,  
And on all thorns and in all pastures.

**20** In the same day the Lord will shave with a hired razor,  
With those from beyond the River, with the king of Assyria,  
The head and the hair of the legs,  
And will also remove the beard.

**21** It shall be in that day  
That a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep;

**22** So it shall be, from the abundance of milk they give,  
That he will eat curds; for curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the land.

**23** It shall happen in that day,  
*That* wherever there could be a thousand vines  
*Worth* a thousand *shekels* of silver,  
It will be for briers and thorns.

**24** With arrows and bows *men* will come there,  
Because all the land will become briers and thorns.

**25** And to any hill which could be dug with the hoe,  
You will not go there for fear of briers and thorns;  
But it will become a range for oxen  
And a place for sheep to roam.

This last section of **Isaiah Chapter 7** includes 4 brief oracles which describe with vivid detail the devastation that the Assyrian invaders would bring on the land.

- **Verses 18 & 19 - the fly and the bee.** Here the Assyrian “bee” represents a much more ominous threat, for after all, bees sting. The fly and the bee symbolize armies, which come and take over every nook and cranny in the land.
- **Verse 20 - Shaved and shamed.** The picture of someone being shaved bald represents a land being stripped of its resources and robbed of its glory. Prisoners and slaves were shaved as a mark of humiliation.
- **Verses 21-22 - A cow and two sheep.** That minimal existence is in comparison to the flocks that once existed, but are no longer needed. There will be no competition for pasture and the few livestock that are left will be more than sufficient for the basic needs of those who survive. Only a remnant will remain.
- **Verses 23-25 - Briers and thorns.** Vineyards which once commanded the highest prices will lie ruined. The once carefully cultivated fields will be left to a hunter with bow and arrow, who will have to force his way through the dense thickets that have sprung up.

**Applications:** (Thanks to John L. Mackay in his commentary)

**1** - The major matter in this prophecy is the **question of faith**. *Would Ahaz and Judah put their faith in God's promise or Assyria's power?* Proper faith is an **active reliance** on the one true God who has revealed Himself in Scripture and in His Son, Jesus Christ. The only way forward for the covenant people of God in any age is to cling to the promises and commitments He has made. Why not look in the concordance at the back of your Bible or even Google “God's promises” and you'll find several come up. Read them, study them, memorize them.

**2** - “God with us” reminds us that God does not save from a distance, but He draws close to His covenant people so that His presence with them in and

through the child to be born in this miraculous fashion will be evident. Jesus' presence with His people is not confined to His days on earth. He is present in our body life even now.

3 - Life always gets complicated and hard when the Church makes alliances with the world, or adopts the tactics of the world to advance the cause of Christ. Ahaz' ravaged land, stripped of its former glory serves as an illustration of a church which by abandoning its spiritual resources has brought disaster on itself.

- **MP 1 - A promise to King Ahaz (v. 1-9);**
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When Corrie ten Boom was a little girl, her father tucked her into bed at night. He talked and prayed with her, then laid his big hand on her little face. Later, when Corrie was imprisoned in a brutal concentration camp, she would ask God to tuck her in and lay His hand on her face.

"That would bring me peace, and I would be able to sleep," Corrie wrote in her book, *Each New Day*.