

The Prediction of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ Isaiah 7

Isaiah 7:1-16 - *“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 sixty-five 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.””*

¹⁰ 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.”

Background Notes

The year was about 734 BC, and Ahaz was king over Judah. Although King Ahaz was in the line of David, he was not one of the good kings of Judah. In fact, he’s known in the Bible for the horrible sin of sacrificing his son to the pagan god Molech, and for erecting a pagan altar in the courts of God’s Temple in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 7 is the account of how Rezin, king of Syria, along with Pekah, the king of northern Israel (also known as Ephraim), ganged up against Ahaz in an attempt to force Judah to enter into an alliance with Syria and Israel against the Assyrian Empire, the superpower of that day. They even planned to install a puppet king in Judah. (By the way, don't confuse Syria, one of the powers attacking Judah at this point, and Assyria, the superpower empire of the day.)

Ahaz planned to appeal to Assyria for help against this coalition of forces that was coming against him. At this point, Isaiah and his son, Shear-Jashub, met Ahaz at *"the end of the aqueduct at the end of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field"* (v3). Ahaz was probably making an inspection of the aqueduct, to check how well Jerusalem's water supply would be protected in the case of attack.

Isaiah told Ahaz not to fear the coalition of Syria and the northern kingdom (Ephraim), because they would fall to Assyria. Within 65 years, the northern kingdom of Israel would no longer exist. I love the Lord's sarcastic description of these two proud kings coming against Judah (v4): *"Do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands..."*¹

These prophecies all came true, just as the Lord predicted through Isaiah. Syria, with its capital city of Damascus, fell to the Assyrians in 732 BC. Ephraim, or the northern kingdom of Israel with its capital at Samaria, fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. And by 669 BC, 65 years later, the Assyrians had so populated the northern kingdom of Israel with foreigners that its people were no longer fully Jewish because of intermarriage. This, in fact, was the beginning and origin of the Samaritan people.

Isaiah told King Ahaz to ask for a sign from the Lord to prove that all this was going to come to pass. But Ahaz would not ask for a sign. He piously and hypocritically said that he would never test the Lord by asking for a sign. *"But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!'"* (v12). So Isaiah said that the Lord would give Ahaz a sign anyway.

Doctrinal Points

1. Isaiah predicted the birth of a son as a sign for Ahaz.

In verse 14 Isaiah said to King Ahaz, *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."* There are three views as to the fulfillment of this prophecy:

a. The "Historical" view. This view says that the sign would be a child who was born in that day - either the son of Ahaz (who would become good King Hezekiah), or the son of Isaiah, whose birth is described in Isaiah 8. There are several problems with this view. The biggest problem is that Matthew quoted this prophecy, referring it to the birth of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:21-23).

b. The "Messianic" view. A second view of the fulfillment of the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy is the exclusively Messianic view. This view says that the prophecy refers **only** to Jesus Christ. The problem with this view is this: How could

the birth of Christ - more than 700 years later – be a sign to King Ahaz? And it's hard to see how it would be a sign to Ahaz when verses 15-16 say that before the boy is of an age to discern between good and evil, the threat of Syria and Ephraim to Ahaz and the kingdom of Judah will be gone.

c. The “Typical” view. The third view (and I think it's the best view) is the “*typical*” view – that is, the birth of a child in Ahaz's day was a “*type*” that pictured the birth of Jesus Christ. In this view, the child who was born as a sign in the days of Ahaz was probably Isaiah's son (see Isaiah 8). The baby's mother was Isaiah's wife, but as they were not yet married when the prophecy was made, she was still a virgin. The Hebrew word translated “*virgin*” here refers to a chaste, unmarried maiden, thus a virgin. The Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, uses the Greek word for “*virgin*” in verse 14.

In the “*typical*” view, the mother and the son are a prophetic *type* of the virgin mother, Mary, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in this third view, there was an historical fulfillment at the time of Ahaz, and a future fulfillment at the time of Christ. Isaiah predicted the birth of a son as a sign for Ahaz.

2. Isaiah predicted the hard times of Judah at the hands of the Assyrians.

Isaiah 7:17-25 - “*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.*”

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.”*

These verses describe the extremely hard times that the kingdom of Judah would suffer in the coming days at the hands of the Assyrian armies. Although Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, it never completely conquered Judah because of the miracle of God's deliverance of Jerusalem during the reign of King Hezekiah. Read about that great miracle in Isaiah 37, as well as 2 Kings 19 and 2 Chronicles 32.

However, even though the Assyrian Empire never completely conquered Judah, yet the Assyrians gave the Jews very hard times by conquering and ravaging many of the Judean cities, and forcing Judah to pay tribute. By the way, “Sennacherib’s Prism” and the “Lachish Reliefs” are archaeological finds that clearly document the biblical records.

Verses 18-19 predicted that Egyptian soldiers, pictured here as flies, and Assyrian soldiers, pictured here as bees, would swarm all over Judah. Assyria would be God’s “razor” of discipline for Judah (v20).

At first the phrase “abundance of milk” (v22) and the phrase “curds and honey” sound like times of plenty, but just the opposite is in view. The reason for the abundance of milk is that during these hard times, there would not be many young calves and goats to nurse and consume the milk. And the “curds and honey” were not the same thing as the “milk and honey” of the Promised Land. “Curds and honey” described the food of nomadic people, and it meant that there would no longer be the regular harvesting of crops. The land would become desolate, overgrown with briars and thorns, and good only for hunting (v23-25). All of this prophecy came true, as history has shown. Isaiah predicted the hard times of Judah at the times of the Assyrians.

Practical Application

Let the *Lord* choose the sign!

Suppose the Lord were to say to you what He said to Ahaz: “*Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above*” (v11). What sign would you ask for? A million dollars? A longer life? A shooting star?

Some Christians are always seeking some kind of sign, as reassurance that they are on the “right path.” In fact they often “set out fleeces,” just as Gideon did. However, the teaching of the Bible is that we should **not** constantly be asking for signs or looking for signs. As believers, we are to walk by **faith** - not by “**signs**”! (See 2 Corinthians 5:7.)

Wanting a sign is not evidence of a strong faith - it’s evidence of a weak faith! Gideon’s faith was **weak** when he asked the Lord to give him signs. He didn’t believe what the Lord had clearly told him unless he had a sign! The Lord may sometimes give us confirming signs **of His own choosing** to encourage us in our walk of faith. It may be answered prayer. It may be the encouragement of other believers. It may be an event in your life where it’s obvious that God has spoken a confirming word.

So let’s not **seek** signs. As the Lord chose to give a sign in Isaiah’s day, so God may choose to give you a confirming sign in your walk of faith. But - **let the Lord choose the sign!**