

ISAIAH 7 | *Ahaz's Shaky, Breaky Heart*

Ahaz's Shaky, Breaky Heart

1 In the days of Ahaz¹ the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah² the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it but could not yet mount an attack against it.³ 2 When the house of David⁴ was told, Syria is in league with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.⁵

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

3 And Yahweh said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub [A Remnant Shall Return] your son,⁶ at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.⁷ 4 And say to him,

Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint⁸ because of these two smouldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you saying, 6 Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us split it open for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel⁹ as king in the midst of it [destroy the Davidic monarchy].

¹ Uzziah, Ahaz's grandfather, died in 739 bc, and Syria and Israel attacked Judah in 734 bc. So there is exactly five years between Is 6 and Is 7. We don't learn much about Isaiah's activity during Jotham's reign. Isaiah definitely was a young man when he received the vision of Is 6.

² With the help of Gileadites, Pekah murdered Pekahiah at Samaria (2 Ki 15:21ff). He then seized the throne and ruled Israel from 737-732 bc. Pekah adopted an anti-Assyrian policy and allied himself with Rezin of Syria. Together they brought pressure on Jotham of Judah, probably to join them (2 Ki 15:37). Isaiah counsel Jotham to remain neutral (D. J. Wiseman, "Pekah," *NBD*, 892). **2 Ki 15:37** 37 In those days Yahweh began to send Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. **2 Ki 16:5** 5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to wage war on Jerusalem, and they besieged Ahaz but could not conquer him.

³ Their aim was to form an anti-Assyrian front, but in fact they drove Ahaz into alliance with Assyria. In 732 bc, Tiglath-pileser III captured Damascus, killed Rezin, and invaded northern Israel (A. R. Millard, "Rezin," *NBD*, 1019). Hoshea, son of Elah, conspired against Pekah and slew him, also in 732 bc (D. J. Wiseman, "Pekah," *NBD*, 892). **2 Ki 16:9** 9 The king of Assyria marched up against Damascus and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir, and he killed Rezin.

⁴ See *Davidic Covenant*.

⁵ Ahaz fails to practice the faith-rest drill and panics instead. See *Phase Two Faith*.

⁶ **Is 8:18** 18 Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are signs and portents in Israel from Yahweh of hosts.

⁷ **Is 36:2** 2 The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.

⁸ **Ex 14:13** 13 Moses said to the people [Israel], Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of Yahweh that he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.

⁹ It is unknown who the son of Tabeel was.

7 Thus says Lord Yahweh (יהוה), It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. 8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years [669 bc] Ephraim will be shattered from being a people. 9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you (pl.) [the house of David] are not firm in faith (נאמן), you (pl.) will not be established (נאמן).¹⁰

Sign of Messiah's Virgin Birth

10 Again Yahweh spoke to Ahaz, 11 Ask a sign (אֵימֹתַי) of Yahweh your [pl.] God. Let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. 12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put Yahweh to the test (נסה).¹¹ 13 And he [Isaiah] said,

Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you [pl.] to weary men, that you [pl.] weary¹² my [no longer “your”] God also? 14 Therefore Yahweh himself will give you (pl.) [the house of David] a sign. Behold, the virgin (עַלְמָה)¹³ shall conceive and bear a son (בֵּן) [Messiah]¹⁴ and shall call his name Immanuel [“God with Us”].¹⁵ 15 He shall eat curds and honey [like the remnant of Israel (v. 22)] when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.¹⁶ 16 For before the boy (הַבֶּן) [Isaiah's son Shear-jashub] knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.¹⁷ 17 Yahweh will bring upon you, upon your people, and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!¹⁸

¹⁰ “If you will not believe, you surely shall not last” (NASB). “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all” (NRSV). **2 Ch 20:20** Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in Yahweh your God, and you will be established. Believe his prophets, and you will succeed.

¹¹ Usually this would be a good answer, but here it is a very bad answer. God wants Ahaz to ask for a sign so that his faith may be strengthened. It is not a bait and switch. Ahaz is already testing God.

¹² **Is 43:24** 24 You have burdened me with your sins. You have wearied me with your iniquities.

¹³ An unmarried woman of marriageable age, always a virgin in Jewish society.

¹⁴ Is the child Jesus, a child of Isaiah's day, or both? Is the child of Isaiah's day a type of Messiah? If the birth isn't a virgin one, what's the sign?

¹⁵ **Mt 1:22-23** 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us). **Is 9:6** 6 To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

¹⁶ This phrase, repeated twice by Yahweh, indicates there is an age of accountability for every person. See *Age of Accountability*.

¹⁷ This aspect of the sign concentrates on the speed with which Assyria will conquer Syria and Israel.

¹⁸ This is very, very bad news. Assyria is a much worse opponent than a Syria-Israel coalition.

Four In That Days

18 In that day Yahweh will whistle¹⁹ for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19 And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, in the clefts of the rocks, on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures.

20 In that day Yahweh will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the [Euphrates] River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also.

21 In that day a man [of the remnant of Israel] will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, 22 and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land [the remnant] will eat curds and honey [like the Messianic son (v. 15)].

23 In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. 24 With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briers and thorns. 25 And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not come there for fear of briers and thorns, but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread [economic devastation in Judah].

¹⁹ **Is 5:26** 26 He will raise a signal for nations far away, and whistle for them from the ends of the earth. And behold, quickly, speedily they come!

Commentary

1. Introduction.

- a. Is our heart shaking because of what we are seeing in the new? Are you fearful?
- b. Speak with those with you and express some things you are concerned/fearful/worried about at the moment. What news of doom and gloom is shaking your heart?
- c. Personally, right now, I feel very concerned and borderline fearful. The reasons are the whole Covid thing; the erosion of tradition liberties, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, the incompetence of U.S. political leaders, the rise of China, the rise of militant Islam, the downfall of the West and what that will mean for people around the world, the economic and societal cost of New Zealand's Covid response and further lockdowns, the mandate within the DoD that I must take a vaccine rushed through the approval process.
- d. As believers, how should we respond? How do we deal with our current and future fears? Thankfully, Isaiah 7-9 can give us some answers.
- e. The main point is this: If we keep our eyes on God and his covenant promises, we have nothing to fear.

2. Isaiah at a Glance.

- a. Is 1-5 is an introduction of the anthology which is our *Isaiah*. It has no time indicators. By contrast, Is 6 and Is 7-12 are very specific regarding time.
- b. Is 7 happens five years after Is 6. Syria and Israel are invading Judah. Uzziah, Ahaz's grandfather, died in 739 bc, and Syria and Israel came against Judah in 734 bc.
- c. Pekah of Israel.
 - (1) With the help of Gileadites, he murdered Pekahiah at Samaria (2 Ki 15:21ff). He then seized the throne and reigned from 737-732 bc. He became king in the 52nd year of Uzziah of Judah (v. 27), and in his 2nd year Jotham succeeded Uzziah (v. 32).
 - (2) He adopted an anti-Assyrian policy and allied himself to Rezin of Syria. Together they brought pressure on Jotham of Judah, probably to join them (v. 37). Isaiah advised Jotham and his successor Ahaz to remain neutral. Pekah attacked and unsuccessfully besieged Jerusalem (2 Ki 16:5; Is 7:1), while the Syrians took Elath. Pekah killed many Judeans and took many prisoners from Jericho back to Samaria (2 Ch 28:7-8). These were later released on the intercession of the prophet Oded (vv. 8-15).
 - (3) Ahaz then appealed to Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, who was campaigning in Syria. In 732 bc the Assyrians captured Damascus and invaded Israel. A list of the places invaded, including Galilee, is given in 2 Ki 15:25-29.
 - (4) Archaeology confirms this history: Tiglath-pileser's Annals, excavations at Hazor, and a wine jar inscribed *lpqh*, "belonging to Pekah."
 - (5) Following the swift Assyrian invasion of more than half of Israel, Hoshea conspired against Pekah and slew him. Since Tiglath-pileser claims in his Annals to have replaced Pekah (*Paqaha*) by Hoshea (*'Ausi*), it is clear this act was approved by the Assyrians.²⁰

²⁰ D. J. Wiseman, "Pekah," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 892.

d. Rezin of Syria.

- (1) Rezin allied with Pekah of Samaria against Ahaz of Judah (2 Ki 15:37; 16:5). Their aim was probably to form an anti-Assyrian front, but they ended up driving Ahaz into alliance with Assyria (Is 7:1, 8; 8:6). Tiglath-pileser III listed Rezin as tributary about 738 bc, but he captured Damascus and killed Rezin in 732 bc (2 Ki 16:9).²¹

e. Ahaz of Judah (2 Ki 16:2; 2 Ch 28).

- (1) Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to rule, and he ruled 16 years (2 Ki 16:2; 2 Ch 28:1). This was from about 732-715 bc. The name Ahaz is an abbreviated form of Jehoahaz. This is confirmed by an inscription of Tiglath-pileser III.
- (2) He did not do what was right in the eyes of Yahweh (2 Ki 16:2; 2 Ch 28:1) but walked in the ways of the kings of Israel (2 Ch 28:2). He:
 - (a) Made metal images for the Baals (2 Ch 28:2).
 - (b) Burned his sons (the seed of David, Hezekiah's brothers?) as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, just as the Canaanites did (2 Ki 16:3; 2 Ch 28:3).
 - (c) Worshipped idols on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree (2 Ki 16:4; 2 Ch 28:4).
 - (d) Made Judah act sinfully (2 Ch 28:19).
- (3) Yahweh humbled Judah as a result (2 Ch 28:19). Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel besieged him but could not conquer him (2 Ki 16:5).
 - (a) Rezin recovered Elath, and the Edomites came to live there (2 Ki 16:6). Rezin also took many captive Judahites to Damascus (2 Ch 25:5).
 - (b) Pekah struck him and killed 120,000 Judahites in one day (2 Ch 25:6), and Zichri of Ephraim killed his son and top officials (2 Ch 25:7). Israel took captive 200,000 Judahites (2 Ch 28:8). After Oded and four chiefs of Ephraim confronted Israel, however, these captives were returned (2 Ch 28:9-15).
 - (c) In addition to all this, the Edomites invaded and defeated Judah (2 Ch 28:17). and the Philistines raided Judah, took villages, and settled in them (2 Ch 28:18).
- (4) Ahaz then sent to Tiglath-Pileser for help (2 Ki 16:7; 2 Ch 28:16).
 - (a) Isaiah encouraged Ahaz to put his trust in Yahweh (Is 7:1-12), but Ahaz refused.
 - (b) He took from from the temple to give tribute to Tiglath-Pileser, but it did not help him in the end (2 Ki 16:8; 2 Ch 28:20).
 - (c) Tiglath-Pileser marched against Damascus, took it, carried its people captive to Kir, and killed Rezin (2 Ki 16:9). Tiglath-Pileser then came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him (2 Ch 28:20).
 - (d) The price of Assyrian aid, besides being a heavy drain on the government's coffers, was a century of vassalage for Judah.
- (5) In his distress Ahaz became more unfaithful to Yahweh (2 Ch 28:22).
 - (a) He went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser and saw the new Assyrian altar there. He sent to Uriah the priest a detailed model and ordered Uriah to build the altar before he returned from Damascus (2 Ki 16:11). When Ahaz returned,

²¹ A. R. Millard, "[Rezin](#)," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1019.

he moved the Solomonic bronze altar from its normal place to the north side of his altar (2 Ki 16:14) and replaced it with new Assyrian altar. He began using the Assyrian altar for burnt, grain, drink, and peace offerings (2 Ki 16:13). He sacrificed to the Assyrian gods who had defeated him (2 Ch 28:23). He commanded Uriah to use the “great altar” for all offerings. The old bronze altar would be for Ahaz to inquire by (2 Ki 16:15).

- (b) He cut in pieces the vessels of the temple (2 Ch 28:24).
- (c) He took down the sea from off the bronze oxen and put it on a stone pedestal (2 Ki 16:17).
- (d) He extended the covered way around his own house to go around the temple, because of the king of Assyria (2 Ki 16:18).
- (e) He shut up the doors of the temple (2 Ch 28:24).
- (f) He made altars in every corner of Jerusalem (2 Ch 28:24).
- (g) He made high places to other gods in every city of Judah (2 Ch 28:25).
- (6) Judah’s decline in the late 8th century bc is due largely to Ahaz’s lack of faith (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:175). According to the rabbis:
 - (a) Ahaz persisted in his wickedness despite all the trials and would not repent (Sanh. 103a, Meg. 11a).
 - (b) He closed the schools and houses of worship so that no instruction should be possible, and the Shekinah should abandon the land. It was for this reason that Isaiah had to teach in secret (Yer. Sanh. x. 28b; Gen. R. xlii.).
 - (c) Ahaz always humbly submitted to Isaiah’s rebukes—his only redeeming feature (Sanh. 104a).
 - (d) Abi saved the life of her son Hezekiah, whom Ahaz had designed as an offering to Moloch. By anointing him with the blood of the salamander, she enabled him to pass through the fire of Moloch unscathed (Sanh. 63b).
- (7) Archaeology.
 - (a) The Seal of King Ahaz, <https://watchjerusalem.co.il/987-the-seal-of-king-ahaz>
 - (b) Did King Ahaz Smoke Dope?, <https://watchjerusalem.co.il/962-ancient-israelite-cannabis-altar-points-to-king-ahazs-worship>

3. Ahaz’s Shaky Heart (Is 7:1-2).

- a. **Is 7:1-2** 1 In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it but could not yet mount an attack against it. 2 When the house of David was told, Syria is in league with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.
- b. Ahaz, the current representative of the house of David, is failing his faith test.
 - (1) The use of the phrase “house of David” instead of “Ahaz” is highly significant.
 - (2) Ahaz is a son of David and should be believing wholeheartedly in the Davidic covenant. See *Davidic Covenant*.
 - (3) If Ahaz were a believer, this crisis would be an opportunity for phase two faith. But Ahaz is likely not a believer. So when the crisis comes, he cannot exercise phase two faith. One must exercise phase one faith before one may exercise phase two faith. Unbelievers, in other words, have no one to place trust in when crisis comes. See *Phase Two Faith*.

- (4) What's the state of our heart? With crises arising daily—climate change, Covid, Afghanistan, China—is our heart shaking as the tress of the forest shake? How should we be responding to these crises?

4. Don't Sweat the Small Stuff (Is 7:3-6).

- a. **Is 7:3-6** 3 And Yahweh said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub [“A Remnant Shall Return”] your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. 4 And say to him, Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smouldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you saying, 6 Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us split it open for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it [destroy the Davidic monarchy].
- b. A comparison of Ahaz and Hezekiah is intended as a case study in faith.
- (1) The “upper pool” was a collection point for water from the Gihon Spring in Jerusalem. Ahaz likely was going there to inspect Jerusalem's water supply in anticipation of the coming siege by Syria and Israel. Until Hezekiah's tunnel was completed, Jerusalem had no completely dependable source of water within its walls, so this would have been a matter of considerable concern (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 198-99).
 - (2) Hezekiah, Ahaz's son, would be confronted with a faith test in the same spot.
 - (a) **Is 36:2** 2 The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.
 - (b) Is 7-39 is united around the theme of trust—trust in the nations or trust in God.
 - (3) Ahaz failed the crisis test; Hezekiah passed it! Will we be like Ahaz or Hezekiah? What would it look like for us to pass the crisis test confronting us today?
 - (a) **Heb 11:6** 6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
- c. In v. 4, we get a wonderful description of phase two faith. Phase two faith says this “Be careful. Be quiet. Do not fear. Don't let your heart be faint because of the crisis. Remember my promises. Live the faith-rest life.”
- (1) **Is 26:3-4** 3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts (בְּטוּחַ) in you. 4 Trust (בְּטַח) in Yahweh forever, for Yah Yahweh is an everlasting rock.
 - (2) **Is 30:15** 15 For thus said Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, In returning (שׁוּבָה) and rest (נְחִיחַ) you shall be saved. In quietness (שְׁקֵט) and in trust (בְּטָחָה) shall be your strength. But you were unwilling....
 - (3) **Is 50:10** 10 Who among you fears Yahweh and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust (בְּטַח) in the name of Yahweh and rely on his God.
 - (4) **Ps 20:7** 7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of Yahweh our God.

- (5) **Ps 22:4-5** 4 In you our fathers trusted. They trusted, and you delivered them. 5 To you they cried and were rescued. In you they trusted and were not put to shame.
- (6) **Ps 28:7** 7 Yahweh is my strength and my shield. In him my heart trusts, and I am helped. My heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.
- (7) **Ps 31:14-15** 14 I trust in you, Yahweh. I say, You are my God. 15 My times are in your hand. Rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!
- (8) **Ps 56:3-4** 3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. 4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust. I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?
- (9) **Ps 112:6-8** 6 For the righteous will never be moved. He will be remembered forever. 7 He is not afraid of bad news. His heart is firm, trusting in Yahweh. 8 His heart is steady. He will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.
- (10) **Mt 8:26** 26 And [Jesus] said to [the disciples], Why are you afraid, little-faiths (ὀλιγόπιστοι)? Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.
- (11) **Jn 14:1** 1 Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.
- (12) **Ro 1:17** 17 For in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith into faith (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν), as it is written, The righteous shall live by faith.

Ahaz versus Hezekiah

Ahaz	Hezekiah
Threatened by Syria and Israel	Threatened by Assyria
Faces terrible odds	Faces terrible odds
Challenged by Isaiah at the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field (Is 7:3)	Challenged by the Rabshakeh at the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field (Is 36:2)
Trusts in human might and power	Trusts in God, though not completely

5. Shattering of Syria and Israel (Is 7:7-9).

- a. **Is 7:7-9** 7 Thus says Lord Yahweh (יהוה אלהינו), It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. 8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years [669 bc] Ephraim will be shattered from being a people. 9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you (pl.) [the house of David] are not firm in faith (יָמַן), you (pl.) will not be established (יָמַן).
- b. Isaiah gave this prophecy in 734 bc, so 65 years later was 669. When Assyria conquered Israel in 722, many Israelites were deported by Assyria (2 Ki 17:24). This was only 12 years later. However, in 669 many foreigners were transferred to Samaria by Ashurbanipal (Ezr 4:10) (J. A. Martin, *BKC*, 1:1047). It is to this resettlement that Isaiah's prophecy refers.
 - (1) **Ezr 4:2** 2 ...They approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we

have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here.

- (2) **Ezr 4:10** 10 ... The rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River
- c. This could have been Ahaz's shining moment, but he lacks faith.
 - (1) "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last" (NASB).
 - (2) "If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all" (NRSV).
 - (3) "Unless Ahaz comes to the point where he can believe in God's sovereignty to the extent of entrusting himself and his nation to God, he is doomed to live in the shaky, panicky condition he now experiences (v. 2). He need not enter into the terribly risky covenant with Assyria, if he will but take firm hold of the covenant which God offers. Assyria will not offer the security Ahaz wishes. Only through trusting in the present and ultimate veracity of God is any real security possible" (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:202).
 - (4) Is 7 is a fulfillment of Is 6. Ahaz rejects Isaiah's message, and his heart is hardened.
- d. Now can be our our shining moment, if we are firm in faith. If we are not firm now, we are not firm at all. Crises reveal how firm our faith really is. The firmness of our faith determines whether we are a firm person, a firm Christian. In New Zealand, where life is relatively good, we are not used to real crises of faith, like military invasion or economic devastation. It is imperative for us to strengthen our faith now, so that as the crises become more acute, closer to home, we may face them from a position of strength.
- e. One key to faith is the content of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenants. Here, Ahaz has clearly lost faith in the Davidic covenant. If we lose faith in God's covenant promises—the covenant promisees associated with these three covenants—we will not be firm in faith. We will not be firm at all.

6. Sign of Messiah's Virgin Birth (Is 7:10-17).

- a. **Is 7:10-17** 10 Again Yahweh spoke to Ahaz, 11 Ask a sign (אִתָּךְ) of Yahweh your [pl.] God. Let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. 12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put Yahweh to the test (נִסֶּה). 13 And he [Isaiah] said, Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you [pl.] to weary men, that you [pl.] weary my [no longer "your"] God also? 14 Therefore Yahweh himself will give you (pl.) [the house of David] a sign. Behold, the virgin (עַלְמָה) shall conceive and bear a son (בֵּן) [Messiah] and shall call his name Immanuel ["God with Us"]. 15 He shall eat curds and honey [like the remnant of Israel (v. 22)] when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the boy (הַנְּעָר) [Isaiah's son Shear-jashub] knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. 17 Yahweh will bring upon you, upon your people, and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!
- b. Normally one shouldn't test God (Dt 6:16), but this is different. God orders the house of David (v. 11), through its current representative, Ahaz, to test him. Usually Ahaz's answer would be very good, but here Ahaz's answer is very bad. God wants Ahaz to

perform a sign for Ahaz in order that his faith may be strengthened. So Ahaz is testing God by not testing God! Very likely, Ahaz has already made up his mind to trust in Tiglath-pileser III rather than Yahweh. Some commentators believe this exchange is a watershed moment in the history of Judah: “Your God” (v. 11) switches to “my God” (v. 13). Perhaps it was at this point the Babylonian captivity was inevitable.

- c. God gives Ahaz a sign he doesn’t ask for—the virgin conception of the Messiah. The plural “yous” show the whole house of David is being addressed. This sign has everything to do with the Davidic covenant, which Ahaz has rejected. Don’t forget, he burned his own son, sons of David, as an offering offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom.
- (1) **2 Ki 16:3** 3 ...But [Ahaz] walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom Yahweh drove out before the people of Israel.
 - (2) **2 Ch 28:3** 3 ...And [Ahaz] made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh drove out before the people of Israel.
 - (3) The valley of Hinnom was associated in Jeremiah’s time with the worship of Molech. Josiah defiled this shrine, and put an end to the sacrifices offered there. Later the valley seems to have been used for burning the corpses of criminals and animals, and refuse. The name came to be used as a synonym for hell, the Hebrew phrase *gê* (“valley of”) *hinnōm* becoming *geenna* in Greek. Jewish tradition at one time held that the mouth of hell was in the valley.²²
- d. Who’s the “son” in v. 14?
- (1) An *נְעֻמָּה* is “an unmarried woman of marriageable age” (J. A. Martin, *BKC*, 1:1048). Some argue this prophecy has to do with one of Isaiah’s sons and nothing to do with Jesus. According to this view, the “virgin” is Isaiah’s wife. *נְעֻמָּה* should be translated “young woman.” Also, vv. 16-17 clearly refer to Ahaz’s contemporary situation. It is a stretch to say the referents in vv. 13-15 and vv. 16-17 are different.
 - (2) However:
 - (a) *נְעֻמָּה* is never used of a married woman in the Old Testament.
 - (b) The LXX translates this word *parthénos*, “virgin.”
 - (c) How would Isaiah’s wife, not a virgin, conceiving and giving birth to a son be a sign? Young married women give birth to sons all the time. For the birth to be a sign, it must be a virgin birth. Otherwise it wouldn’t be a sign.
 - (d) Isaiah’s second son’s name is “Maher-shalal-hash-baz,” not “Immanuel” (Is 8:3).
 - (e) The following chapters, the book of Immanuel (Is 8-12), clearly refer to the future Messianic king.
 - 1) **Is 9:6** 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 - (f) Matthew asserts Jesus is the referent of Is 7:14.

²² D. F. Payne, “Hinnom, Valley Of,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 475.

- 1) **Mt 1:22-23** 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).
- (3) Given the failure of the house of David, it will take a virgin conception for the Davidic covenant to be fulfilled. There will have to be a God-man within the house of David.
 - (a) **2 Sa 7:11-29** 11 Yahweh declares to you [David] that Yahweh will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, 15 but my loyal love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.
 - (4) Only a virgin birth can make this possible. Joseph's genealogy includes Ahaz; Mary's does not.
 - (a) **Mt 1:8-16** 8 ...Joram the father of Uzziah, 9 and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh... 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Messiah.
 - (b) **Lk 3:23-31** 23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph... 31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David....
- e. The phrase "when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good," repeated twice by Yahweh, indicates there is an age of accountability for every person. This age is when a person reaches the age of God-consciousness when he or she is responsible to personally trust in Jesus for salvation. The age differs for each person.
- f. Returning to Isaiah's day (v. 16), Isaiah gives Ahaz a sign about Syria and Israel. In other words, the "boy" in v. 16 is a different person from the "son" of v. 14. Vv. 14-15 concern the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant through a virgin-born son of David. Vv. 15-16 concern the preservation of the Davidic line in Ahaz's day.
- g. The immediate sign relates to the speed with which Assyria will eliminate the threat posed on Judah by Syria and Israel. Ahaz is worried about Syria and Israel, but the real threat is Assyria!
 - (1) It's like a mouse who called on a cat to squash the two rats.
 - (2) Historically, Rezin and Pekah both died in 732 bc, two year after this prophecy. Rezin was the last king of Aram, and Pekah was the next-to-last king of Israel. Thus, Shear-jashub was two years away from his age of accountability.
 - (3) In the crisis (invasion by Syria and Israel), Ahaz turns to a human solution (alliance with Assyria), not a divine solution (neutrality under God). But the human solution would become a far greater crisis than the original crisis.
 - (a) "From Ahaz's point of view Syria and Ephraim constitute a major threat, but from God's point of view they are negligible and need not occupy the king's time. It is not always easy to gain the divine perspective. Yet, unless we seek

it, we are always in danger of paying too much attention to the passing and paying too little attention to the significant” (Oswalt, *NICOT*, 196).

- (4) In crisis X, we may turn to God or human solution Y. If we turn to human solution Y, we will likely find it becoming its own crisis Y. Crisis Y often will bring us more consequences than crisis X.
- (5) When we turn to human solutions, it often backfires. When we fail to see long-range issues and only see the short-range, we pay for our short-sightedness. Human beings are not good at foreseeing the long-range consequences of their “great ideas.” Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society in the 1960s, the United States’s military occupation of Afghanistan from 2001-2021, and the LGBTQ push to change the definition of marriage or make gender transitioning normal for teenagers are good examples. Well-intentioned, self-anointed elites often impose their great ideas upon society, only to discover they create a much bigger mess.

7. First In That Day: Military Occupation (Is 7:18-19).

- a. **Is 7:18-19** 18 In that day Yahweh will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19 And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, in the clefts of the rocks, on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures.
- b. Four “in that days” follow, summarising what will happen when Assyria invades.
 - (1) The phrase “in that day” does not always refer to the end times. Often it refers to a short-term day of judgment that prefigures the ultimate, long-term day of judgment.



- c. The first “in that day” indicates Judah will be filled with Egyptian and Assyrian soldiers. This will happen again and again in the years to follow.
 - (1) **Is 5:26** 26 He will raise a signal for nations far away, and whistle for them from the ends of the earth. And behold, quickly, speedily they come!
 - (2) This also seems to foreshadow Da 11, where the kings of the north and south struggle over “the beautiful land.”

8. Second In that Day: National Shame (Is 7:20).

- a. **Is 7:20** 20 In that day Yahweh will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the [Euphrates] River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also.

- b. The second “in that day” indicates Judah will be put to shame by the king of Assyria.
 - (1) **2 Sa 10:4–5** 4 So Hanun took David’s servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away. 5 When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return.

9. Third In that Day: Provision for the Remnant (Is 7:21-22).

- a. **Is 7:21-22** 21 In that day a man [of the remnant of Israel] will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, 22 and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land [the remnant] will eat curds and honey [like the Messianic son (v. 15)].
- b. The third “in that day” indicates sufficient provision for the Jewish remnant.

10. Fourth in that Day: Economic Devastation (Is 7:23-25).

- a. **Is 7:23-25** 23 In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. 24 With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briers and thorns. 25 And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not come there for fear of briers and thorns, but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.
- b. The fourth “in that day” indicates the breakdown of the Judean economy.