

## What's Your Plan?

Matt 1:18-23; Galatians 4:4, Is 7

Ahaz: 2 Kings 16, ungodly king, son of Jotham, godly father, and father of Hezekiah, one of the greatest kings of Judah. Ahaz was committed to evil, and methodically began to remove every visible sign of God from Judah. Culture wars are not new. Very early in his reign, Ahaz was attacked by the northern kingdom and also by Syria. He was able to turn back the attack with the loss of some minor towns.

Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel then made preparation for real sustained attack. But Ahaz had a plan. Tiglath Pileser III, one of the greatest commanders in world history, was beginning his expansion, looking for allies. Before he was finished he had taken over the Arabian Peninsula, north to the Black Sea including Turkey, east to the Caspian Sea, south to almost all of Egypt, modern day Syria, Jordan, down to Kuwait, Iraq, part of Iran.

God, knowing of plan of Ahaz, sends a prophet to encourage him. Don't worry about Syria and Israel; their kings will be dead in a couple of years. They have no tomorrow. And to encourage, Ahaz could ask of God any sign he wanted – no limit. Ahaz response is, "I would not ask of God a sign." Actually it was not humility, it was pride. The real core of this story is "Why?."

Ahaz had removed all reminders of God that he could; he did not have room in his life for a reminder of the promise of God and certainly not His presence. In response God said, "I will send you a sign. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and shall call his name Immanuel, which means, "God with us."" He then warned Ahaz that if Assyria came to help, they would overflow the whole nation. The name Immanuel appears in Is. 8:8, and God makes it clear that the future would not be determined by Tiglath Pileser III, but by the child that would be called Immanuel.

Ahaz did not listen, and sent the commander of Assyria word: if you attack Syria and/or Israel, we will not come to their help. His plan works; Syria is occupied by Tiglath. Ahaz follows up with gifts of gold from the temple. He is a man with a plan that seems to be working.

1. Immanuel says if God is with us, He has a plan. Is 8:10 says, "Devise a plan but it will be thwarted; state a proposal, but it will not stand, for God is with us."
2. Immanuel says If God is with us, it is with purpose.
3. Immanuel is a sign of the future. The present problem, no matter what, is not the future.
4. Immanuel is a sign of hope. A child would be born.

Skip 600 years. Galatians 4:4 addresses "the fullness of time." God works in His time. Men still missed the sign, except for a few – some shepherds, eastern mystics, Anna, Simeon and perhaps a few others we do not know. It did not look like things had changed, but Immanuel had come.

As many as received Him to them He gave power to become the sons of God.