

Isaiah – Chapter 7

Isaiah 7:13-16 - Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. "He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. "For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

REVIEW

Last week we stood in the temple with Isaiah and saw the Holy One of Israel seated on His lofty throne. Seraphim cried "Holy, Holy, Holy," the thresholds trembled, and smoke filled the house. Isaiah pronounced woe upon himself because he was a man of unclean lips living among a people of unclean lips. A burning coal from the altar touched his mouth, his iniquity was taken away, and his sin was forgiven. Then the Lord asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Isaiah answered, "Here am I. Send me!" The commission was hard: the people would keep listening but not perceive, keep looking but not understand, until the land lay utterly desolate. Yet even then a tenth portion would remain, a stump with the holy seed in it.

Chapters 1–6 have formed one continuous movement in the covenant lawsuit that opened in chapter 1. Heaven and earth were called as witnesses. The vineyard produced only wild grapes. Six woes named the poison in the nation. Chapter 6 took us behind the message to the man, showing why Isaiah could proclaim judgment with cleansed lips and divine authority. Now the book shifts. We enter the larger section often called The Book of Immanuel, chapters 7–12.

The lawsuit moves from general indictment to a specific historical crisis involving the house of David itself. Yet the three threads we have been tracing remain visible: the Messianic Hope that breaks through even in darkness, the Motif of the City that contrasts present shame with future glory, and the Holy One of Israel whose holiness demands judgment while His faithfulness preserves a remnant and points to the coming King.

HISTORICAL BACKSTORY

We leap forward to the years 735–732 BC, during the reign of King Ahaz. Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he did not do right in the sight of the Lord as his father David had done. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even made his son pass through the fire according to the abominations of the nations.

At this moment two neighboring kingdoms formed an alliance against Judah. Rezin king of Aram (Syria) and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel (the northern kingdom, often called Ephraim) joined forces. Their plan was to march against Jerusalem, depose Ahaz, and set up a puppet king, the son of Tabeel, who would join their anti-Assyrian coalition.

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The news reached the house of David: “Aram has camped in Ephraim.” The heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind. Fear gripped the royal court. Instead of turning to the Lord, Ahaz looked to Assyria for help. Into this panic God sent Isaiah with his young son Shear-jashub, whose name means “a remnant shall return.” The stage was set for one of the most important signs in the entire Bible.

THE BOOK OF IMMANUEL

1. The Triplite Messianic Structure

The "Book of Immanuel" is anchored by three major prophetic markers that identify this Child. Each marker progressively reveals more about His nature and the salvation He brings.

- The Miraculous Birth (Isaiah 7:14): The focus is on the *origin* of the Child. He is born of a virgin as a sign to the House of David.
- The Divine Nature (Isaiah 9:6-7): The focus shifts to the *character* of the Child. He is given titles that can only apply to Deity: *'ēl gib-bôr* (Mighty God) and *'ă-bî-'ad* (Eternal Father).
- The Righteous Reign (Isaiah 11:1-5): The focus settles on the *authority* of the Child. He is the "Branch" (*nē-šer*) out of the stem of Jesse, empowered by the sevenfold Spirit of YHWH to rule in absolute justice.

2. Immanuel as the Land's True Owner

In the middle of this section, Isaiah 8:8 provides a crucial link. As the Assyrian invasion is described as a flood reaching up to the neck, the text addresses the land itself:

"...and the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel."

By calling the land of Judah "Your land," the prophet identifies Immanuel not as a temporary figure or a secondary sign, but as the rightful Davidic King and Sovereign of the nation. This reinforces the argument that Immanuel is the focal point of the entire six-chapter block.

3. Literary and Thematic Unity

The section is framed by the contrast between human kings (Ahaz) and the Divine King (Immanuel).

- Failure vs. Fidelity: King Ahaz represents the failure of the human Davidic line. He refuses to trust YHWH and seeks an alliance with Assyria. In contrast, the "Book of Immanuel" presents the Messiah as the one who perfectly trusts God and establishes a kingdom that "will have no end" (Isaiah 9:7).
- Judgment vs. Hope: Chapters 7, 8, and 10 detail the coming judgment via Assyria (the "razor" and the "club"). However, Chapters 9, 11, and 12 provide the "Book's" resolution: the judgment is not the end, because the "Remnant" will return to the "Mighty God" (*'ēl gib-bôr*), which is the exact title given to the Child in 9:6.

4. Linguistic Focus: The Stem of Jesse

The "Book of Immanuel" clarifies the Child's lineage in Chapter 11. While the physical Davidic dynasty looked like a felled tree (due to the failures of kings like Ahaz), Isaiah prophesies a *nē-šer* (Branch/Shoot) growing from the roots.

This "Branch" is the same Immanuel promised in Chapter 7. The unity is sealed in Chapter 12 with a hymn of praise, where the speaker acknowledges that God has become "my salvation" (*yā-šū- 'ā-tī*), a play on the name of the Prophet (Isaiah/Yeshayahu) and a precursor to the name Jesus (Yeshua), who is the ultimate fulfillment of the Immanuel promise.

Summary of the Name

The name Immanuel (עִמָּנוּאֵל) serves as the "motto" for this entire section. It is a declaration that despite the faithlessness of the current king and the looming threat of world empires, God's presence and His covenantal commitment to the House of David remain fixed in the person of the Messiah.

EXPOSITION

Section 1: The Lord's Assurance to a Trembling King (verses 1–9)

Isaiah 7:1-2 sets the scene exactly as history records it. The two kings came up to wage war against Jerusalem but could not prevail against it. Yet the threat felt overwhelming.

The Lord told Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field." This was the same location where, years later, the Assyrian Rabshakeh would stand and mock Hezekiah. God meets fear at the very place where fear would later be tested again.

The message was direct: "Take care and be calm, do not fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands." God called the two powerful kings mere smoldering stubs. Their threat would not stand.

Then came the heart of the assurance: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass." The Lord even named the plot: they planned to break Judah in pieces and set up the son of Tabeel. But God declared, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.'"

The warning to Ahaz was solemn: "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last." The Hebrew plays on the word for "believe" and "be established." Faith in the Lord's word was the only thing that would establish the house of David in this crisis. Ahaz faced a choice between trusting the visible armies or the invisible King.

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Section 2: The Sign of Immanuel (verses 10–16)

Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, hiding behind false piety: “I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD.” The Lord answered anyway, and uses the opportunity to give the final hope, so as to bring immediate hope to the house of David.

Isaiah 7:14 – “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

The Hebrew word for “virgin” is ‘almah (עַלְמָה), a young woman of marriageable age. In every clear context in the Old Testament, it refers to one who has not known a man. The sign is given to the house of David (plural “you”), not to Ahaz alone. The Lord “Himself” gives the sign.

Verses 15-16 add the timing: “He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.”

Grammatically the text presents one continuous sign. The son whose birth is announced in verse 14 is the same boy whose early childhood is described in verses 15–16. The temporal marker “before the boy knows...” ties the defeat of the two kings directly to the child’s very early years.

This leads to a theological question that has been debated for years. Is there a near and far fulfillment of this prophecy? Are these two different prophecies one about the Messiah and about the provision of the Lord for Judah?

Verses 14-15 are without a question a prophecy about the Messiah. The language of the sign itself carries great weight. The definite article with “the virgin,” the exalted name Immanuel (“God with us”), and the fact that the Lord Himself gives the sign to the house of David lift the prophecy beyond any ordinary royal birth. The New Testament, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, settles the ultimate meaning. Matthew 1:22-23 tells us this is the virgin birth of Jesus the Messiah: “Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’” This is a prophecy about the incarnation of the Messiah, the promised one.

The statement about eating curds and honey is a statement of poverty. The common food of the people was what was available, wild honey and milk products from goats or sheep. This is not the choice food of the palace (verse 21-22).

Verse 16 is about the temporary problem of Israel and Syria. In the context of the promises Messiah, God gives a short-term pledge that the original audience would gain hope from the promise as well as its fulfillment.

Contextually, “the boy” relates back to the son. Some try to place this as a different boy. The most popular conclusion is the Isaiah is referring to his own child. But the

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most probable understanding is that this is not a statement of the boys age but about the time it takes for a child to understand the difference between good and evil. The prophecy then is “in a very short time, the time it takes a child to grow into adolescence, your enemies will be defeated.”

History records that it happened exactly as stated. Within a few years both Aram and Israel fell to Assyria. Damascus fell in 732 BC; Israel’s territory was decimated the same year and Samaria fell in 722 BC.

The sign therefore has one interpretation told in the context of two horizons. The near horizon gave Ahaz and the house of David a visible pledge in their moment of crisis: the threatening kings would soon be gone. The far horizon points to the greater reality when God Himself would be with us in the person of His Son.

Section 3: The Coming Assyrian Flood (verses 17–25) Because Ahaz refused to trust the Lord and instead hired Assyria, the very “help” he sought would become a scourge.

Isaiah 7:17-25 – “The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father’s house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria.”

The Lord would whistle for the fly from the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee from the land of Assyria. They would come and settle everywhere. The once-productive land would be reduced to briars and thorns. A man would keep a heifer and two sheep, and the land that once produced a thousand vines would yield only briars and thorns.

This is exactly what history records. Assyria first crushed Aram and Israel, then turned its attention to Judah. Under Sennacherib the Assyrian army swept through the land, leaving desolation. Only Jerusalem itself was spared by the direct intervention of the Lord in Hezekiah’s day. The prophecy stands as a permanent warning: when the house of David looks to the nations instead of to the Holy One of Israel, the very powers they trust become instruments of judgment.

Tying the Threads Together

Chapter 7 pulls the three threads tight once more.

The Messianic Hope shines in the sign of Immanuel. Even in the darkest hour of the Davidic house, God points to the Child who is God with us. The near pledge assured the trembling king that God’s word would come to pass; the greater fulfillment shows that God Himself has entered our history to save.

The Motif of the City continues its contrast. Zion is under siege, her king trembling. Yet the promise embedded in Immanuel guarantees that the city of David will one day be the city of the great King. Present fear cannot cancel future glory.

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The Holy One of Israel stands at the center. His holiness will not overlook Ahaz's unbelief, and the Assyrian flood is the consequence. Yet the same holiness guarantees the sign: God will be with us. He has not abandoned the house of David.

Ahaz chose fear and foreign alliances. The Lord offered faith and a sign that reached all the way to the Messiah. The same choice stands before every generation. Will we trust the visible threats or the invisible King who has given us the ultimate sign of Immanuel?