

ISAIAH

Chapter 7

Isaiah Sent to King Ahaz

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. 3 And the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub 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 smoldering 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 conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,” 7 thus says the Lord GOD: “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 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 are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.”

7:1–12:6 The second section of Isaiah’s prophecies, climaxing in the songs of praise found in ch. 12. (CSB)

7:1 *days of Ahaz.* 735–715 BC. Cf 2Ki 16; 2Ch 28. (TLSB)

Jotham. 750–735 BC. Cf 2Ki 15:32–38; 2Ch 27. Israelites listed the father’s or grandfather’s name to help distinguish persons because many people might share the same name (consider our practice of using a family name or surname). (TLSB)

The invasion of Rezin and Pekah (probably in 735/734 B.C.) is known as the Syro-Ephraimite War. Aram (Syria) and Israel were trying unsuccessfully to persuade Ahaz to join a coalition against Assyria, which had strong designs on lands to the west. Isaiah was trying to keep Ahaz from forming a counter-alliance with Assyria (see 2Ki 16:5–18; 2Ch 28:16–21). (CSB)

Pekah. Ruled 752–732 B.C. (see 2Ki 15:27–31). (CSB)

742–732 BC. Cf 2Ki 15:25–31. (TLSB)

Jerusalem to wage war ... could not yet mount an attack. They fought against Judah and besieged Jerusalem, but they could not break the city’s defenses. (TLSB)

To understand the prophet, one must first of all carefully ponder the historical situation. Jotham was godly; Ahaz, his son, was the most ungodly of all. Under Jotham Isaiah was silent for a while, under Ahaz he began to prophesy again. The latter established many kinds of idolatry and did it with a show of piety, because on every side he was pressed by the worst kind of evils, which he wished to counteract. Let him serve as an example for all people in the world so that they may see what faith in God can accomplish and, on the contrary, how works avail nothing

before Him if any one trusts in them. Ahaz certainly did not worship trees but rather a divinity, only he did not do so with the right kind of worship. Idolatry consists in believing someone else rather than God alone. The Christian religion consists in believing in the mercy and goodness of God for Christ's sake. This religion is pure and sincere; everything else is idolatry, even though it uses the name of the true God as a cover. (Luther)

After King Uzziah died of leprosy (2 Chron 26:21), his son Jotham became king of Judah and ruled for 16 years. Jotham had conquered the Ammonites and "grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the Lord his God" (2 Chron 27:6). But that was the crest of Judah's glory. Near the end of Jotham's reign, two kings to the north, Rezin and Pekah, began a campaign against Judah. (PBC)

When Jotham died, Ahaz became king. But the son of Jotham was not like his father or his grandfather. Ahaz made idols for worshipping the Baals, offered sacrifices and burned incense "under every spreading tree" (2 Chron 28:4), offered his sons as sacrifices. He made a copy of an altar he saw in Damascus and set it up in the temple. Later he closed the temple and "set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem" (2 Chron 28:24). He became one of the worst, most godless kings of Judah. (PBC)

The campaign of Rezin and Pekah, which began in Jotham's reign, continued during the early reign of Ahaz, and it achieved some success. Rezin recovered Elath, a port on the Red Sea, while Pekah inflicted casualties on the army of Ahaz. In one day Pekah's forces killed 120,000 Jewish soldiers and took 200,000 captives along with a great deal of plunder. The captives and plunder were eventually returned, but all this happened "because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers" (2 Chron 28:6). In the midst of this crisis, Ahaz had sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, asking for his help against Pekah and Rezin. (PBC)

Second Kings chapter 16 and 2 Chronicles chapter 28 record the Syrian-Ephraimite war and the reign of Ahaz. We do not know exactly when the events recorded here took place; it is very difficult to connect the events of the Syrian-Ephraimite war into any sure chronological order. We do know that it was early in the reign of Ahaz and that Ahaz and his people were filled with fear because of the joint campaign of Pekah and Rezin. (PBC)

7:2 house of David. A reference to Ahaz, who belonged to David's dynasty (see 2Sa 7:8–11). (CSB)

Ephraim. Another name for Israel, the northern kingdom. (CSB)

hearts ... shook. Ahaz had been defeated by Aram and Israel earlier (2Ch 28:5–8). (CSB)

An extraordinary comparison. Where there is no faith, there is no counsel. Now every form of divine worship that Ahaz had dared to set up beyond the Word of God broke down. No one is more scared in trouble than the top hypocrites. In peace they are unyielding and harder than flint; in distress they are shaken like trees at every breeze. But John the Baptist was not like that. The leaves of the trees are exposed to the gusts of wind, for there is no wall surrounding them to ward off the winds. So is the heart that is destitute of the Word of God and wide open to all calamities. Then works try to come to one's assistance instead of the Word, but these provide no protection. But God's wisdom does. Prov. 1:33 says: "He who listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of evil." Likewise (Prov. 28:1): "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." And in Ps. 112:6 we read: "The righteous will be remembered

forever.” Let us do the works that God has commanded, but let us not rely on them, but rather on the Word alone, that we may cling to it, letting go of works and all other things. (Luther)

his people. The fearful citizens of Judah and Jerusalem. (TLSB)

7:3 meet Ahaz. Likely while the king was inspecting the city’s water supply, needed for the siege. (TLSB)

Shear-Jashub. Isaiah gave each of his sons symbolic names (see 8:1, 3, 18). (CSB)

Lit, “a remnant shall return,” Isaiah’s older son was a living proclamation of Israel’s survival. (TLSB)

Their two names are in themselves significant. Isaiah means “God helps”; “Shear-jashub” “a remnant is converted.” The latter name points particularly to the judgment by which Judah should dwindle away to a small remnant. (Luther)

It is uncertain whether *שָׁרַיִשׁ* *יָשׁוּב* is one word or two. Yet it seems to be one and predictive. This is a frequent practice among the Hebrews. Thus it was with the names David, Solomon, Jesus, Peter, etc. So also this name is predictive and signifies the forsaken remnant; the son bore the image of the people, of whom a remnant has always been preserved, for whose sake the king together with the rest of the ungodly experience the mercy of God. The sun rises for the sake of the good, and yet the ungodly also enjoy its light. But so great was the ungodliness at that time that only Isaiah and his son appeared to have survived of the godly, as if God were saying: “I would gladly give you many fellows, but they have all been estranged from Me; only one is left from the bottomless pit of ungodliness, and that one is despised by all. The rest of the people, even of those who believe, do not dare to address Me even in muffled tones.” (Luther)

at the end of the conduit – Jerusalem hung on the side of a mountain and suffered from water shortage, and therefore a water supply was piped into the city in ducts that they closed up in the time of Hezekiah. Perhaps Ahaz was about to make some repairs there. (Luther)

Upper Pool. Location unknown. Ahaz was probably inspecting the city’s water supply. (CSB)

Washers Field. Clothes were cleaned by trampling on them in cold water and using a kind of soap (soda) or bleach (see Mal 3:2; Mk 9:3). (CSB)

A place where clothing was washed and bleached. (TLSB)

They washed the clothes in the pool and then bleached and dried them in a neighboring field. The highway that went by the field was the main highway that led through the west gate and towards Joppa on the Mediterranean Sea. There king Ahaz was presumably making plans for the fortification of the conduit so that the city would not be cut off from its water-supply during the siege. (Stoekhardt)

7:4 be careful...be quiet...do not fear...do not let your heart be faint – These four commands should have set the king’s heart at ease. Think what those words would mean to any believer faced with difficulties. They were the words of God and not just the pious wish of an optimistic prophet. (PBC)

two smoldering stubs. Damascus (Aram's capital; see v. 8) was crushed by Tiglath-Pileser III in 732 B.C., and Israel was soundly defeated the same year. (CSB)

The army of the two-nation coalition (Syria [aka Aram] and Israel) is as insignificant as stumps of wood smoldering just before they burn out. (TLSB)

A remarkable personification set against the personification above, where the smug and the presumptuous who do not consider the power of the Word hiding in the small nation of Judah are described. God certainly speaks far more contemptuously of them than the enemies themselves do against us. He does not call them burning firebrands, but stumps of firebrands, that is, the leftovers of coals. They are coals no longer burning but extinguished, although they still smoke a little and are such as little boys play with to the present day. Who would here be afraid when God considers such great kings to be so worthless, if only one would believe it? They are indeed wrathful and raging, but they cannot accomplish what they wish. This is certainly a splendid promise of the kindness and protection of God even for the most ungodly king and idolater, that for him the wrath of those enemies should be minimized and the will of God to protect should be magnified, so that it is a shame that it fell on so unbelieving a heart. To him nevertheless, so that he could and should believe the more quickly and firmly, the prophet recounts the plan and attempt of these two kings. (Luther)

7:5 *devised evil against you* – The two hostile kings have concluded their evil plans against Judah. They wanted to terrify and invade it. (Stoeckhardt)

The prophet indicated that God knew the plans of Tezin and Pekah, the son of Remalish. Pekah was not even mentioned by name here, indicating again that the king of Israel was no to worry Ahaz. (PBC)

7:6 *son of*. Hbr and Semitic expression, which can mean the epitome, sum, or result of something. (TLSB)

Tabeel. An Aramaic name sometimes associated with the “land of Tob” east of the Jordan River (see Jdg 11:3). (CSB)

No known person. May simply mean “a good for nothing,” a puppet king for Judah's enemies. (TLSB)

He was an unknown man from the scum of the people. (Stoeckhardt)

7:7 *it shall not stand* – Now he discloses in what way they are smoldering firebrands, but it is without doubt a detailed and rich promise. Not any one of them will be head of Judah, but the house of David will. They will have to be satisfied with their own realm. Their own bounds have been set for all people. God is the one who transfers kingdoms, etc. (Luther)

These words are like bolts of lightning thrown from heave toward Pekah and Rezin. The resulting thunder would be the ruin of both kings. For Ahaz, these words flashed the light of God's promise of protection for the house of David. (PBC)

7:8 What the two enemies plan “shall not come to pass” (v 7). They cannot destroy Jerusalem, according to the will of the King of kings. (TLSB)

Within sixty-five years. By c. 670 B.C. Esarhaddon (and, shortly after him, Ashurbanipal) king of Assyria settled foreign colonists in Israel. Their intermarriage with the few Israelites who had not been deported resulted in the “Samaritans” (see 2Ki 17:24–34 and note on 2Ki 17:29) and marked the end of Ephraim as a separate nation. (CSB)

Specific prophecy of destruction and exile. (TLSB)

shattered. Even the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom who did not go into exile under the Assyrians would not recover as a separate people. Foreigners became part of their population after the fall of Samaria (2Ki 17:24) and again during the reign of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (681–669 BC), six decades after Isaiah began his ministry. (TLSB)

7:9 *son of Remaliah.* † Pekah was a usurper and hardly worthy to challenge Ahaz, a son of David. Aram (v. 8) and Israel (v. 9) had human heads. Judah had a divine head; God was with them (8:8, 10). (CSB)

not firm in faith ... not firm at all. The use of the same Hebrew verb emphasizes the seriousness of the Lord’s warning. (CSB)

Different form of same Hbr verb is used to describe faith and results of faith. As long as believers remain steadfast in faith, they can be confident that they will be established in the land. They have solid ground under their feet (Ps 46:2). (TLSB)

This indicates that the king showed signs of disbelief. Therefore he adds a threat to the promise. The king turns up his nose, sends the prophet away, and measures the matter according to the appearance of the flesh, namely, that the two kings are stronger than he, that many thousands of people will be lost, that cities will be lost, etc., as if he were saying: “You call them stumps of firebrands who are forest fires; you are talking contrary to reason and experience and truth.” It was exactly as if some one were to say now: “Do not fear the Turks, etc.” Therefore the king opposed reality. But the prophet insists that the Word of God is much more powerful than all the kings on earth, for He can also do what He says. The Word of God indeed proclaims things hidden and not manifest, and they are grasped only by faith. In other books and arts you must study and put all things to the test so that you may understand and grasp what is presented. Here it is enough to hear and to believe. Therefore the ancients explained this passage thus: If you do not believe, you do not understand. Certainly a good thought. But the prophet set given works against the Amen, that is, the truth against hypocrisy. He means to say: You will not prevail, and whatever you may have planned otherwise will not endure, it will not continue, it will not succeed. Therefore he condemns every religion, all endeavors, all plans of the king, unless he believes God, not only such things as belong to the external and physical man, but also such as pertain to the spiritual man and the ecclesiastic. Hence faith alone makes certain and has a solid foundation. But the promise becomes useless unless faith is added. Then this passage is also explained Hebraically in this way: If you do not believe, you will not be truthful. For those who believe God make and reckon Him to be true, which is giving glow to God, as Rom. 4:20 says, and they themselves also become truthful through faith. On the contrary, to the unbelieving all things become deceptive, unreliable, and unsure. With this conclusion the prophet said his final farewell to the king. This must be taught everywhere, because he who believes nothing accomplishes nothing. But whatever the godly man does will always prosper (Ps. 1:3). (Luther)

7:1–9 The Lord sends Isaiah to confront King Ahaz and to call him to firmly trust the Lord. No matter what circumstances confront you, turn to the Lord in trust and in prayer. The enemy may rob you of all good, but he cannot rob you of faith and the kingdom of heaven, which Christ won

for you. • “The Word they still shall let remain Nor any thanks have for it; He’s by our side upon the plain With His good gifts and Spirit. And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife, Though these all be gone, Our vict’ry has been won; The Kingdom ours remaineth.” Amen. (LSB 656:4) (TLSB)

The Sign of Immanuel

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: 11 “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” 12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” 13 And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that 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 He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. 17 The LORD will bring upon you and 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 In that day the LORD 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, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures. 20 In that day the Lord will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the 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 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 will eat curds and honey. 23 In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns. 24 With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briars 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 briars and thorns, but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

7:10 again the Lord spoke to Ahaz – Upon receiving the prophet’s message king Ahaz had nothing to say. He remained silent. And this silence did not indicate consensus but dissensus, unbelief. He rejected this word from God and hardened his heart against divine grace. He had already placed his trust in another helper. He had already begun negotiations with the king Assyria. And Assyria, the world power, was mightier than Syria and Ephraim. However, the Lord did not allow Himself to be put down so easily. He continued to talk to Ahaz. (Stoeckhardt)

We can see the significance of this silence by contrasting it with Hezekiah, who years later faced the much more serious threat of the invading armies of Assyria. Hezekiah went into the temple and sent his advisors to Isaiah. Then when Hezekiah received a written threat from Sennacherib, he took the Assyrian’s letter into the temple, spread it before the Lord, and prayed (2 Kings 19). God then sent Isaiah to Hezekiah with the promise of deliverance. (PBC)

7:11 a sign. God was willing to strengthen the faith of Ahaz through a sign (see Ex 3:12). (CSB)

Ahaz is to name a sign so that God might tangibly confirm what He has spoken and move Ahaz to believe. The Lord occasionally grants such help to weak consciences (Jdg 6:17-21). (TLSB)

Here God is acting in a very one-sided manner to gain the trust of Ahaz. Even though Ahaz has anything but worthy of God’s love, God continues to reach out to him. The used of both of the words “Lord” and “God” send a very powerful message because the Israelites knew “Lord” to be

covenant keeper (God had kept all of his promises and will always be faithful) and “God” to be the God of creation who is all powerful (nothing is out of his range of ability). (Luther)

Behold the great and overflowing goodness of God and His sublime patience. For even though disdained in His promise and threat, He still does not stop inciting to faith, as if to say: If you do not want to believe promises and threats, at least believe the signs and choose whatever you wish. Ahaz, in turn, rejects also the sign with the worst blasphemy and ingratitude. God offers a sign; this man cites Scripture. (Luther)

Lord your God – Though Ahaz doubted, the Lord is still God. Doubts do not remove His deity! (TL SB)

deep...high – This invitation includes the other, to turn his heart away from all that is not of God and is unable to help, and to give himself to the living God, who has heaven, earth, and hell in His power. (Stoeckhardt)

No limits were put on Ahaz’s request; God would do anything. (TL SB)

7:12 *I will not put the Lord to the test* – Ahaz responds in false piety, trying to avoid a blatant statement of disbelief, but God is not fooled. (TL SB)

Always the ungodly become more hardened. Now, those are wrong who say that signs avail nothing for faith. God is almost always accustomed to add a sign to the Word, just as here, too, he would have added one, provided that the king would have accepted it. Paul also approves the use of signs in 2 Cor. 12:12. (Luther)

The most frightening thing about his attitude, however, was the hypocrisy in pretending he did not want to put God to the test. “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” This, of course, stands written in the Law: Deut 6:16. Ahaz would have out God to the test had he on his own asked God for a sign, had he, without any word from God, asked for God to demonstrate His miraculous power. But to venture upon something at God’s command and promise, to trust in, rely upon God’s Word, this is not tempting God but is having trust in God, this is true faith. (Stoeckhardt)

7:13 *house of David*. Ahaz was in the Davidic line. The following words apply to the whole nation. (TL SB)

Ahaz pretends religion, as if from fear of God he did not wish to ask for a sign. Such is the nature of hypocrites, who display religiosity where it is not proper; on the other hand, where they should fear, they are most proud and stubborn, as Ps. 36:1 and Ps. 53:5 say. Both are extremely offensive to God and deceptive to the people. (Luther)

To put God to the test is indeed evil when it is done without a word of God. He who is commanded to put God to the test and does not do so is sinning. God is not being tempted when He Himself orders it. It is not tempting God to believe in Christ, to love the neighbor, because God has commanded these things. However, he who desires to serve God short of His commandment is tempting Him, since he does not know whether it will please Him. Thus Ahaz multiplied the religions of the heathen in Judah, he tempted God and yet did not think he was tempting Him. He thought so, however, when he was ordered to do so. There are many such people, above all the false prophets. (Luther)

will you weary my God also – To weary men is certainly evil. But if anyone has sinned against God, who will pray for him? The prophet, however, declares the people guilty of both. He who sins against his neighbor sins against God; but this is the great and unforgivable sin, when someone resists God’s Word and work. Other sins are easily recognized and have a form, but this one, with which one dashes against God, is not recognized and is therefore unforgivable, and this is because men are offensive to God. (Luther)

Isaiah has turned the reference to God from “your” God (v 11) to “my” God. Ahaz is faithless, but Isaiah believes. (TLSB)

7:14 *sign.... virgin ... son ... Immanuel.*† A figurative way of predicting that within nine months it will be so evident that God is with his people that she will name her son Immanuel, which means “God is with us.” By the time he reaches the age of discretion (“knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right,” v. 16) the enemy will have given up the design of conquest and will have been laid waste by the Assyrian empire (vv. 16–17). The Hebrew word *‘almah* occurs six times in the OT and in each case refers to a young woman of marriageable age who is still in the state of virginity (Ge 24:43; Ex 2:8; Ps 68:25; Pr 30:19; SS 1:3; 6:8). Mt 1:23 understood the woman mentioned here to be a type (a foreshadowing) of the Virgin Mary. (CSB)

Immanuel.† The name “God is with us” was meant to convince Ahaz that God could rescue him from his enemies. See Nu 14:9; 2Ch 13:12; Ps 46:7. “Immanuel” is used again in 8:8, 10, and it may be another name for Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (8:3). If so, the boy’s names had complementary significance (see note on 8:3). Jesus was the final fulfillment of this prophecy, for he was “God with us” in the fullest sense (Mt 1:23; cf. Isa 9:6–7). See Hos 11:1; Mt 2:15 for another example of God’s direction of Israel’s history in such a way as to let the event foreshadow what he would do in the life of his incarnate Son. (CSB)

Luther: “He foretells two signs: The one is hidden, the other open. The latter he explains in chapter 8[:3] in a way not much different from Hosea, chapter 1. But Isaiah includes both signs. The first one does not apply to Ahaz, because he did not live to see it, but the second does. But since he now resists the Word of God and refuses a sign, how can his faith be strengthened? Therefore the prophet speaks of a sign to come, against which they will dash, just as the sign of Jonah was given to the Jews (cf. Matt. 12:39), and those who refuse to believe will perish. Nevertheless, it is a sign of lifting up and building up and strengthening for those who believe (Matt. 12:39; 16:4). And this is the summary of this chapter until the end, because he says that this prediction is already in the process of fulfillment in these unbelievers” (AE 16:84). (TLSB)

the Lord himself will give you a sign – That is to say, “Since you refuse to ask a sign of God, He Himself will provide one of His own will.” These things are said by a wrathful prophet. And he foretells two signs: The one is hidden, the other open. The latter he explains in chapter 8 in a way not much different from Hosea, chapter 1. But Isaiah includes both signs. The first one does not apply to Ahaz, because he did not live to see it, but the second does. But since he now resists the Word of God and refuses a sign, how can his faith be strengthened? Therefore the prophet speaks of a sign to come, against which they will dash, just as the sign of Jonah was given to the Jews (cf. Matt. 12:39), and those who refuse to believe will perish. Nevertheless, it is a sign of lifting up and building up and strengthening for those who believe (Matt. 12:39; 16:4). (Luther)

the virgin – And this is the summary of this chapter until the end, because he says that this prediction is already in the process of fulfillment in these unbelievers. *הַמְּאֲרָמָה*, a young woman capable of giving birth, for an old woman can be a virgin too, but she is not called *הַמְּאֲרָמָה*. (Luther)

Hbr *‘almah* can clearly mean “virgin maiden” and is closely related to the Hbr *bethulah*, which also normally means “virgin.” The LXX properly translated it with the Gk *parthenos*, “virgin.” As Luther notes, there are two signs. On the one hand, the Lord was promising Ahaz that in short order—during the nine months and weaning process of a typical childbirth—He would deliver Judah from the two kings (v 16) threatening them. In fact, their subjects would be fully swept away by exile. On the other hand, the Lord promised something remarkably different from a typical pregnancy, a miracle that would have shocked Ahaz’s unbelieving heart: a virgin would conceive (v 14)! The Lord has eternal salvation in view, not simply Judah’s temporal deliverance. The NT reveals the meaning of the Immanuel sign. The Son of God would be born of the Virgin Mary by the work of the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus: “Jesus Christ, who was announced by the prophets, who from the fruit of David’s body was Emmanuel, [is] ‘the messenger of great counsel of the Father’ ... He whom God promised David that He would raise up from the fruit of his belly ... an eternal King, is the same who was born of the Virgin, herself of the lineage of David” (ANF 1:441, 453). Athanasius: “But what does [this passage] mean, if not that God has come in the Flesh?” (NPNF 2 4:577). (TLSB)

shall conceive...bear a son – In Hebrew it is “has conceived,” and that is the indication of a miracle; it is as if the prophet were already seeing it. Again, since he says that it is God’s sign, it is necessary that that conception and birth be in a different manner than is commonly and naturally the ease, for it would not be a sign if one Who today is a virgin would become pregnant after a half year. Therefore she has to be both a virgin and with child. Matthew 1:21 f. clearly explains this. (Luther)

call his name Immanuel – This describes what kind of person it will be. This is not a proper name. He is indeed the Son of a virgin, and yet He is “God with us,” therefore God and man. (Luther)

Lit, “God with us.” This name reflects both salvation and judgment. On the one hand, God with us (8:10) promises protection against foreign attack. On the other hand, Assyria “will sweep on into Judah” like a flood (8:8). Thus “Immanuel” functions as Law or Gospel, depending on the king’s response. In ch 7, the house of David (e.g., Ahaz) did not accept the Lord’s offer of a sign; but later this house of David—embodied in the Davidic descendant Joseph of Nazareth—accepts the sign about the Child. In Mt 18:20 and 28:20, the promise of Immanuel will be repeated. Born of a virgin, the incarnate Son of God is truly Immanuel, “God with us.” (TLSB)

7:15 curds and honey. Curds (a kind of yogurt) and honey meant a return to the simple diet of those who lived off the land. The Assyrian invasion would devastate the countryside and make farming impossible. (See vv. 22–25 for the significance of the expression.) (CSB)

The land would recover slowly from the ravages of soldiers quartered among them. Instead of living on the products of agriculture such as grain and meat, the survivors of the invasion would sustain themselves with food derived from a pastoral way of life: cheese from flocks and honey gathered from trees in the woods (vv 21–25). Still, this is the beginning of the restoration of normal life. (TLSB)

This is a description of His childhood and humanity. As He is said to be born as a true human being, so He will be reared in a true human fashion. (Luther)

when he knows ... refuse wrong ... choose good. Suggests the age of moral determination and responsibility under the law—most likely 12 or 13 years of age. Thus, “when” this boy is 12 or 13 (722/721 B.C.), he will be eating curds and honey instead of agricultural products—due to

the devastation of Israel by Assyria. Some believe that this expression involves a shorter period of time, identical to that in v. 16 and 8:4. (CSB)

Thus He will grow up like other boys until He arrives at the judgment of reason. (Luther)

7:16 *land whose two kings.* “Before” the boy is 12 or 13 years old, Aram and Israel will be plundered. This happened in 732 B.C., when the boy was about two years old. (CSB)

No exact age is given, only a mark of maturation within childhood. Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) and Syria (Aram) will be destroyed by the Assyrians before a child could mature. (TLSB)

This wording emphasizes development of the will. As children mature, they are governed less and less by raw instinct. The prophet does not mean that infants and small children are sinless or not accountable for their sins, as some interpreters wrongly assume. Sin corrupts all stages of human development, and a person is always accountable before God. (TLSB)

That is to say, you, ungodly man, do not believe anything. But they will be there because of this unbelief, so that those enemies of yours will perish, but nonetheless you too will follow not long afterwards. But this will happen before the Boy has learned to name butter and honey. This is said for the purpose of making the prophecy dark and as an obstacle for the Jews, who to this day do not understand this passage and say that Immanuel is Hezekiah. But this sign was given for the sake of the remnant, that the kingdom of Judah should not be destroyed until Christ would come. It is, however, a hidden sign for the sake of the ungodly. (Luther)

will be deserted – Assyrians will decimate these countries.

The land of the two kings, who now terrify and threaten Jerusalem, therefore, Syria and Ephraim, will be abandoned and left devastated. The fulfillment of this prediction began when the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser invaded Syria and Israel. He made Syria an Assyrian province and led into captivity a considerable portion of the inhabitants of Syria and Israel, namely, the inhabitants of north and east Galilee, on the other side of the Euphrates. This occurred perhaps one to two years after this encounter between Ahaz and Isaiah. (Stoekhardt)

7:17 The coming war with Assyria would be the worst since Israel split into two kingdoms. (TLSB)

the Lord will bring upon you – He says: Because the unbeliever rejects the present sign, he is unworthy also of the future sign. The Assyrians and Egyptians did not wage war against Judah at the same time, but each in turn. And this for the reason that they, having fallen away from God, trusted in men, as will be shown later. (Luther)

such days – Some take this as applying to the removal to Babylon. But the prophecy must be understood in accordance with the matter at hand, for when these things were said here, the Babylonian kingdom did not yet exist. Therefore the prophet attributes to the Assyrians what their successors, the Chaldeans, did, and what belongs to a part is said of the whole. The prophet calls all human dregs Assyrians, namely, Medes, Parthians, Chaldeans, etc., and says in short: You will not live in peace until that sign of offense will come. (Luther)

Ephraim departed from Judah. Almost two centuries earlier (see 1Ki 12:19–20). (CSB)

king of Assyria. Ahaz's appeal to Assyria would bring temporary relief (2Ki 16:8–9), but eventually Assyria would attack Judah (see 8:7–8; 36:1). (CSB)

This statement is directly connected to the preceding without a conjunction. So what we are reading here is the second part of the final clause for which v. 16a serves as protasis. The construction is as follows: Before the boy will reject the evil and choose good, the land of the two hostile kings will be abandoned, but the Lord will also cause the king of Assyria to fall upon the land of Judah. Therefore. Also what is written in v. 17 and what follows precedes Emmanuel's childhood. What v. 17 threatens king Ahaz and his house and people is this: black days will come upon the king of Judah, upon the house of David, upon the kingdom and people of Judah, the likes of which have not since that unfortunate even, the apostasy of Ephraim, been experienced by the ten tribes of Israel. The king of Assyria, to whom Ahaz had appealed for help against Syria and Israel, who made an end to these two hostile kingdoms, will then also fall upon Judah. The king of Assyria appears here, as often, as representative of the heathen world empire. (Stoeckhardt)

As Isaiah outlines later in the chapter, Ahaz would get more than he bargained for from Assyria. For his failure to trust in the Lord, Ahaz was judged. He never heard the sweet promise of the Messiah that Isaiah spoke. Those promises sailed over his head without leaving a wake. What was left was "a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah." That time of poverty and foreign domination would continue through the time of the coming of the virgin's child, Immanuel. (PBC)

7:18, 20, 23 *In that day.* Their difficulties will be a foretaste of the "day of the LORD." See note on 2:11, 17, 20. (CSB)

7:18 *the Lord will whistle* – That is He will permeate the spirit, He will arouse the hearts. (Luther)

Summoned by God, the executors of His judgment will descend on Israel like infesting swarms of flies and bees. The land would become the battleground of the Assyrians and the Egyptians, both determined to annex it to their empires. (TLSB)

streams of Egypt. Streams that fed the Nile at the farthest reaches of Egypt. (TLSB)

bee. See Ex 23:28 and note. (*hornet.* The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) renders it "wasp," but the translators may have been guessing. In any event, the Lord promises to send some agent to disable or frighten the peoples of Canaan so that they will not be able to resist Israel's invasion. But probably the word involves concrete imagery and the focus of the statement is on the effects—therefore we are not to look for some historical agent to which the word metaphorically refers (cf. Isa 7:18). (CSB)

In addition to Assyria, Egypt is mentioned. In the later history of Judah Egypt did not play a significant role. The Egyptians were the first heathen nation to have oppressed the descendants of Abraham. Next to Assyria, the world empire, Egypt counts as representative of the heathen world which was to execute judgment upon unbelieving obdurate Israel. (Stoeckhardt)

7:19 *clefts of the rocks.* It will be impossible to escape from the invaders. (CSB)

These are pure figures of speech. He mentions the places where those insects prefer to live. The pleasant pastures near the ravines mean riches; the clefts of the rocks, fortified citadels; the

thornbushes, the common people; the water holes, hidden treasures. They will spare none. Here wealth, worth, escape, and hiding will be of no help. (Luther)

7:20 *razor...hired beyond the River* – By automatic identification he is thinking of the Euphrates, which is the river nearest to Judea and the largest. (Luther)

Assyria, the nation Ahaz foolishly hired to ease the pressure from Syria and Israel, is now described as a razor. It will denude the land from one end to the other. (TLSB)

head...hair...will be sweep away. The forcible shaving of the beard was considered a great insult (2Sa 10:4–5). In times of mourning, a man would shave his own head and beard (see 15:2; see also note on 3:17). (CSB)

Here is a new picture. He calls the Assyrians a razor. David says in Ps. 52:2: “Your tongue is like a sharp razor, you worker of treachery.” Scripture calls the most destructive men a sharp razor. Among the Jews it was a disgrace to have the hair and beard shaved, as 2 Sam. 10:4 shows. But to shave the head is to drain the realm of nobles and princes, for the head denotes the realm, and the hairs are the aristocracy of the kingdom. Nobility, power, accomplishment, and whatever is of the best quality is to be taken away. Concerning the hired razor see below, chapter 10 [10:5 ff.] and in connection with Hezekiah, chapter 39 [39:4 ff.]. Read how God gives a reward to those through whom He punishes His own people. So also schoolmasters are paid to whip the boys. (Luther)

hair of the feet – That is, he means the common people, and the beard is the priestly realm. The beard of Aaron is honored in Ps. 133:2. The mouth is the instrument for teaching, and around it grows the beard, that is, the priesthood. All, he says, will go into captivity, the highest and the lowest. Both earthly and spiritual kingdoms will be made bald, and the feet too, as was done by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. (Luther)

7:21 *will keep alive a young cow and two sheep* – This is a picture of the desolation after the captivity, when there will be a lack of tillers of the soil. By reason of poverty they will be able to accomplish nothing, and then they will live on milk and honey, they will simply be rustics and without any government. (Luther)

7:22 *and honey* – There will be honey, since countless swarms of bees have alighted in the waster country. Thus Judah of the last times, having escaped the previous judgments, will feed on butter and honey. Now we know what is meant by butter and honey. They are the food of a land laid waste. (Stoekhardt)

7:23 As in v 22, the people survive on minimal resources, as the crops have been destroyed. (TLSB)

briers and thorns. The destruction of the vineyards and the farmlands would fulfill 5:5–6. (CSB)

Even the vineyards, where originally precious vines grew, will be given over to thorns and thistles. So those who remain in the land will not go there with idea of making the land productive again. They are afraid of thorns and thistles. They are honestly afraid that they may not be able to bring the weeds and undergrowth under control. (Stockhardt)

7:24 *man will come there* – In fields once well tended there will *bman will come theree* briers and thorns, afterwards wolves and snakes, and robbers will hide there, so that it is not safe to walk through it unarmed. (Luther)

To hunt wild animals where once a productive vineyard grew. (TLSB)

7:25 Reiterates the prophecy of 5:5–7. (TLSB)

as for all the hills – Scripture often calls attention to the fertility of the Judean hills. Judea was hilly, and there were many vineyards there. Where there is no head in the kingdom, there dangers cannot but be present. These are threats against unbelievers. Germany, too, will owe God a razor. God will hire the Turk. These things are surely written for our sakes. Like sins bring like punishments. (Luther)

This great prophecy, Is 7, involves not only the Jewish people but has significance for all time, for all men. Christ, the virgin's Son Emmanuel, is the Sign of signs, the Wonder of the ages. God is manifest in the flesh, in human flesh. He has taken upon Himself all our infirmities and weaknesses, and not just sin. He humbled Himself so deeply in order to extricate lost, condemned mankind from its deep corruption. This is a sign of salvation. Indeed, for all who rightly perceive it! This Christ Emmanuel, however, is also a Sign of judgment, a svor of death unto death, for all who do not believe, whose eyes the god of this world has blinded. (Stoekhardt)

7:10–25 The Lord promises deliverance from Assyria, but has the greatest deliverance in view—the blessing of a true, eternal King (cf 9:6–7). The virgin birth of Jesus is one of God's greatest miracles and gifts to humanity. Christ reigns now in patience, calling those who doubt to repentance. Our King shall soon appear to exile the stubborn and to dwell with those He has chosen by grace through faith. • “O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!” Amen. (LSB 361:4) (TLSB)