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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Isaiah 7.

(2015)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Isaiah 7.

Topics.

- The king of Israel and Syria come up to war against the king of Jerusalem.
- Two smouldering stumps of firebrands the king of Syria and king of Israel.
- It will come to pass in sixty-five years Ephraim will not be a people.
- Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.
- The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel.
- The LORD will bring upon you and your father's house the king of Assyria.
- In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly of Egypt, and the bee of Assyria.
- In that day the LORD will shave the head, the hair and the beard.
- In that day everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22). The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

The King of Israel and Syria come up to War against the King of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 7:1-2 ----- ¹In 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. ²When 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.

Ahaz: was the king of the two tribes of Judah (also called the house of David).

Ephraim: was another name for the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria.

Rezin: was the king of Syria (the king of Damascus) Damascus was the capital city of Syria.

Pekah: (son of Remaliah) was the king of the ten tribes of Israel (the king of Samaria) Samaria was the metropolis of Ephraim (Israel).

King Rezin of Syria was in allegiance with king Pekah of Israel together they planned to go up against king Ahaz of Judah at Jerusalem. When Ahaz of Judah heard that Syria was in league with Ephraim, he and the people of Judah were struck with such fear that their terror is described as trees of a forest shaking in a stormy wind.

Two smouldering Stumps of Firebrands the King of Syria and King of Israel.

Isaiah 7:3-6 ----- ³And 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 (the fuller's field in KJV). ⁴And 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. ⁵Because 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,'"

The LORD said: carries the idea that the inspired prophet was hearing an articulate voice in his mind.

The two smouldering stumps of firebrands were: -

1. Rezin the king of Damascus the capital city of Syria.
2. Pekah (the son of Remaliah) the king of Ephraim (Israel).

King Ahaz and the people of Judah had good reason to be terrified, they were only two tribes whereas Ephraim was ten tribes plus they were in league with the powerful armies of Syria. The LORD tells the prophet Isaiah and his son (Shear-jashub) to tell Ahaz and the people of Judah not to be afraid or faint hearted because of Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel.

Two smouldering stumps of firebrands: (v4) the armies of the powerful king of Syria and of Ephraim struck fear and terror into the heart of king Ahaz and the people of Judah, but Isaiah tells them that these two kings are as the tails of smoking firebrands already burnt out before God and therefore instead of being fearful they should be strong in faith, trust in the LORD, and set their heart and mind to making God their friend and not their enemy.

The upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field: (v3) (the fuller's field in KJV) Isaiah was in the city of Jerusalem and to go out to meet king Ahaz at the end of the channel of the upper pool on a main public path, or road (called the highway) that led to the field called the Washer's Field the place where Ahaz was most likely superintending the works for defence and cutting off of the water supply from the enemy.

The conduit refers to a channel of water from a pool used as a reservoir for the purpose of supplying of water to the city or to different areas outside of the city for the supply of water to the people and the fields. It is likely that Ahaz was there to stop the water flowing to keep it from the enemy which Hezekiah after Ahaz reign did as the following verses show: -

- After these things (the good things Hezekiah did throughout all Judah) (2 Chron. 31:20-21) and these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself. ²And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, ³he planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. ⁴A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the brook that flowed through the land, saying, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" (2 Chron. 32:1-4).

The upper pool lies in the basin forming the head of the valley of Hinnom or Gihon, about seven hundred yards west of Jerusalem. The sides of this pool are built of hewn stones laid in cement, with steps at the corners by which people were able to descend into it. Today this reservoir lies in ruin and there is no visible means, by which water is now brought into it, but it is probable that it was filled in the rainy seasons by the waters which flowed from the higher ground round about.

From this upper pool a part of the water was conveyed into the city of Jerusalem to a lower pool lying within the walls of the city. The area surrounding the channel is referred to as the washers' field because the water channel ran alongside a main highway and the water was commonly used for washing cloth prior to drying and bleaching it.

Shear-ashub the son of Isaiah: the name Shear-ashub comes from the Hebrew word (*Sh^e'ar Yashuwb*) it literally means, a remnant will return (Isaiah 7:3) which means that even the name of Isaiah son carried within it a sign of the promise of Israel's deliverance which they did at the end of their seventy year captivity in Babylon.

It will Come to Pass in Sixty-Five Years Ephraim will Not be a People.

Isaiah 7:7-9 ----- ⁷thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. ⁸For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. (Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken to pieces so that it will no longer be 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."

In verse seven Isaiah was speaking of both Syria and Ephraim, yet in verse eight he only mentions Ephraim. This perhaps is because God's primary focus throughout Scripture is upon His dealings and judgments with His people and not

secular nations. Though it is certainly true that many secular nations are mentioned, they are only mentioned in relationship to Israel. This is because the Bible only records history as it affects the nation of Israel and God's people.

The sense is: -

- Do not be alarmed by the two hostile kings of Syria and Ephraim they will not enlarge their kingdom, by taking Judea and making Jerusalem their capital.
- The evil plans and purposes that these kings contemplate will not be accomplished.
- The centre of power of the kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim will remain where they are now their dominion will not be enlarged by the conquest of Judah and Jerusalem.
- Damascus will continue to be the capital of Syria and its king will be confined within his present limits.

Within sixty-five years: (v8) there has been much difficulty experienced in this prophecy concerning the sixty-five years and in fixing the exact historic event which fulfilled the words, "Ephraim will be broken to pieces so that it will no longer be a people." This is partly due to the fact that during the sixty-five years there were various wars between the kingdom of Ephraim and the different kings of various nations including kings of Assyria. But throughout these wars the Israelites remained in Samaria, and maintained their religious practices and their own forms of a civil government and community until they were finally carried away in the time of King Shalmaneser of Assyria.

- The king of Assyria (Shalmaneser) (v3) brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. (2 Kings 17:24)

King Shalmaneser took the people of Judah captive and set up foreign colonies in their land. Most scholars who have a far better knowledge of Old Testament history than I do have calculated that from the time of this prophecy to the time King Shalmaneser took away the remains of the people in Samaria, and put an end to the kingdom, and put new colonists in their place was around sixty-five years.

Until this occurred, the land would naturally still be regarded as being in the possession of Ephraim since their hope to again rise to the mighty state it once had was not fully extinguished. But when its inhabitants were taken to a distant land to dwell amongst strangers and foreigners were brought into their land and took possession of it and all religious and social organization of Ephraim was dissolved it could confidently and rightly be said that, "Ephraim was broken to pieces and are no longer a people," (v8). This event, of placing the foreigners in the cities of Samaria, occurred just sixty-five years after it had been predicted by Isaiah.

Since this prophecy was not going to be completely fulfilled for sixty five years, some may wonder how it would comfort Ahaz and give the house of David (the people of Judah) any sense of security from the two hostile kings of Syria and Ephraim. Perhaps the following three points will help answer this question: -

1. The prophecy gave assurance that Jerusalem would not be conquered or reduced to submission before these dreaded enemies.
2. The purpose of the prophecy was to inspire confidence in God, and to lead Ahaz and the people of Judah to trust and look directly to the LORD and not at the might of their enemies.
3. This prediction of the prophecy that God would destroy these two hostile kings was in accordance with the many others that occur in the book of Isaiah in that all the enemies of the people of God would be ultimately defeated, and that God, as the head of the united nation of Israel would defend and deliver his people (providing they remained faithful).

Though the event was sixty-five years off, the prophecy of Isaiah should have been enough to assure the people of Judah that God would ultimately destroy the enemies of His people so they should have trusted and relied on Him now. This would be one of the reasons the LORD would have said to king Ahaz of Judah, "If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all," (v9) meaning they will need to be patient in faith for the next sixty-five years for this word of the LORD to be completely fulfilled.

Likewise Christians today are called to be firm in their faith until that glorious day when their Lord, King and Saviour returns in glory to raise those sleeping in Christ and gather the faithful to himself.

It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass: (v7) means that the king of Syria and the king of Ephraim will not attack Judah.

- The head (the capital city) of Syria was Damascus and the king was Rezin.
- The head (the capital city) of Ephraim was Samaria and the king was Pekah.

In the previous verse the people of Judah were told not to fear or be faint hearted (v4) and then told if they are not firm in their faith they will not be firm at all. This means if they cannot trust God's word now they will never trust it and will therefore always be in fear, because their faith will be always lacking and they will be surrounded by far greater nations more powerful than themselves.

The LORD told the prophet Isaiah; his son Shear-jashub; king Ahaz and the people of Judah not to be afraid of Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel, because in sixty-five years' time Ephraim will be so broken that they will not even be considered a people. This means that the threat of Ephraim's and Syria's invasion against Judah would always be a possibility for the next sixty-five years.' This is another reason the LORD would have said to Judah, "If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all." (i.e., because the threat, is, not going away anytime soon).

These words shine a brilliant spotlight upon the stunning wonder and amazing detail of Bible prophecy. This is exactly what happened, Assyria invaded the land of Samaria, slaughtered the people and laid the land waste and took the survivors captive.

- The people of Israel (Ephraim in the land of Samaria) walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, ²³until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day. ²⁴And the king of Assyria (Shalmaneser) (v3) brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. (2 Kings 17:22-24)

NOTE.

the following shines a brilliant spotlight upon the reality of how far Israel has fallen from the LORD their God who had called them to be His chosen people; in the early years of Israel's history God said: -

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age. (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye (Deut. 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deut. 14:2).

There is no other nation on earth that God has said such things to. They were to be a holy nation, the head and not the tail of all nations. No other nation or religion can claim such miracles and wonders or history as they can and now we see them not

only divided, but joining their armies with the armies of secular nations to go to war against each other. How grieved God must have been when watching His people acting in such a fleshy and worldly manner.

Ask a Sign of the LORD your God; let it Be Deep as Sheol or High as Heaven.

Isaiah 7:10-13 ----- ¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹"Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹²But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." ¹³And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"

Ask of the LORD your God for a sign: (v10) God offers king Ahaz of Judah a most gracious gift, this is the God who, brought ten miraculous plagues upon Egypt to deliver His people, parted the Red Sea and the River Jordan and stopped the sun for a day etc., now in this moment Ahaz could have asked God for anything, but he refused, why? Many might wonder. The simple answer is because Ahaz was a most corrupt king who had turned to pagan god's and most likely did not believe Isaiah was a prophet of God and therefore responded to his offer from a spirit of unbelief and contempt and not from faith.

I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test: (v13) the king almost quotes the formula of the Law: "You shalt not put the LORD your God to the test," (Deut. 6:16). Though Ahaz refusal to put God to the test appears as a show of respect for the command of God, "You shalt not test the LORD your God" and a professed reverence for God the spirit that lay beneath it was self-will and a total lack of faith in God and His world. The following notes show that Ahaz had already made up his mind to align himself with the king of Assyria and put his trust in their mighty armies which he would have known that Isaiah would have strongly spoken against.

It is also most likely that the older members of the royal family were encouraging the king in his Assyrian alignment and his hypocritical answer. The following verses show that Ahaz was in the process of entering into a negotiation with the king of Assyria to come to his aid and defend him: -

- So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me." ⁸Ahaz also took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king's house and sent a present to the king of Assyria. (2 Kings 16:7-8).

To use the silver and gold from the House of the LORD as presents for a pagan king shines a brilliant spotlight upon the total lack of respect king Ahaz had for the God of Israel and that he would rather trust in the might of the Assyrian than in the God of Israel.

To test God: carries the idea of doing a thing that will provoke His displeasure, or assume a thing He has not spoken and seek after it or to put God in a position to prove Himself. In the case of Ahaz there would have been no testing of God, since God had given him the right to ask for a sign. To ask for a sign of God, when it was offered, could not be counted as a sin of testing God; but, to refuse to ask for such a gift when God freely offers it shows great stubbornness and ingratitude.

Ahaz scorn: Ahaz refusal to ask for a sign was not one of faith, but of bitter scorn. It is most likely Ahaz regarded God as one of the numerous gods that the surrounding nations worshipped and perhaps not as powerful as the Assyrian gods. This was certainly the view of the surrounding idolaters as the following verses show: -

- As my (the king of Assyria) hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, ¹¹shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?" (Isaiah 10:10-11).

On behalf of the king of Assyria the Rabshakeh said to Judah: -

- Beware lest Hezekiah mislead you by saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? ¹⁹Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? ²⁰Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my (Assyria) hand?" (Isaiah 36:18-20).

NOTE: these verses also show that though Ahaz king of Judah sought the help of Assyria God eventually turned Assyria against the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the people of Judah, however though Assyria laid much of Judah waste they were not able to take the city of Jerusalem, but Babylon did some years later.

It was proper and right for Ahaz to ask for a sign, there was no testing of God, because God had given him the right to ask. Ahaz' true reason for declining was his resolve not to do God's will, but to negotiate with Assyria, and persevere in his idolatry spoken of in the following verses: -

- Ahaz king of Judah reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem and did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, as his father David had done, ³but he 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 the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. ⁴And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree. (2 Kings 16:1-4).

Ahaz refusal proceeded not from the strength of his faith, but from his contempt of God, and total distrust and disregard of His word and inward resolution to take another course; as is recorded in the history of Ahaz, (2 Chronicles 18). The underlying and secret thoughts of his mind would have been saying something like this: "I will not wait and rely upon God until I am destroyed, but will seek help from Assyria and their powerful armies." His statement, "I will not test God," was not an expression of faith, but of rebellion against Isaiah, against God and against His word.

NOTE: in verse two the people in focus are the house of David, king Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem and in verse seven the focus is king Ahaz and the house of David (i.e., the people of Judah) which means that though Isaiah is directly speaking to king Ahaz and he is the primary focus Isaiah's prophetic words are not limited to king Ahaz only, but embrace his royal family, the princess, priests, officers, counsellors and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the people of Judah (because they were of the same mind).

It is interesting to notice that after Ahaz rejection of asking for a sign Isaiah's language changes from "the Lord your God," to, "my God" (v13). (The God whose servant, prophet and messenger I am).

Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? (v13) the word weary comes from the Hebrew word (*la'ah*) it literally means to tire; to be or make disgusted; to grieve; to loathe and cause one to faint. These words are in the context of Isaiah having spoken a prophecy that predicted that the hostile kings of Syria and of Ephraim would not attack Jerusalem and the people of Judah, but Ahaz did not believe him. It is in the sense of unbelief that Ahaz was wearying men (specifically Isaiah).

God perhaps understanding that Ahaz had no outward sign to testify that Isaiah was a prophet of God offers to give him a sign that would prove Isaiah was a true prophet of God and what he had spoken would come to pass, but instead of Ahaz accepting this gracious offer he publically rejected it and by doing so rejected God.

The sin is therefore now no longer only against men (i.e., Isaiah) but now also openly against God. Isaiah's language therefore changes from, "the LORD your God," to "My God," and his manner changes from mildness to bold reproof, because the Kings rejection was not only a direct affront to Isaiah, but also to the honour of God. It is in this context that the house of David wearied God, by their continual unbelief and their rejection of God's prophets and heeding the words they spoke.

The Virgin shall Conceive and Bear a Son, and Call His Name Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14-16 ----- ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

Virgin: comes from the Hebrew word (*‘almah*) it literally means a lass, a damsel and a maid and carries the idea of her being veiled or private. When a careful study is done through the Scriptures it becomes very clear that when the Hebrew word *almah* is used it is almost always used in the strictest meaning of the word virgin (i.e., a woman that has not been with a man). For further information concerning this, see the title: “Virgin Birth and Promised Seed of Abraham and David,” in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Immanuel: comes from the Hebrew word (*‘Immanuw’el*) it literally means with us is God. The letters: *‘el*, carries the idea of strength and mighty it can be used of any deity, such as a god, idol a mighty one and especially of the Almighty.

The Lord himself will give you a sign the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel can be seen as an echo of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in the following two ways: -

1. Jesus was born of a virgin and by a miracle of God Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. This child was to be a sign that the authority and power of the rebellious and unfaithful chosen people of God would be taken from them, which is exactly what happened to the religious leaders of Jesus generation the chief priests, the Pharisees, scribes and the Levitical priesthood whose authority and power was abolished by the death and resurrection of the Virgin's child the Lord Jesus Christ and his Gospel of grace. This is because from the days of Christ's resurrection no man or woman needs a human priest or priesthood to be united to God and saved to eternal life. Jesus is the only High Priest anyone needs today to be saved to eternal life.

But since there are certain things in this prophecy that do not fit Jesus and he was born over seven hundred years after the death of Ahaz and the promise is made to Ahaz as a sign Isaiah's prophecy must have a child born in his time that acts as a sign to king Ahaz which of course it does.

The primary message is for Ahaz king of Judah and the House of David. The sign was so that Ahaz would know that the hostile kings of Syria and Ephraim would not come up against Jerusalem and Judah. Isaiah had told Ahaz that these two kings would not come against Jerusalem and the people of Judah. Ahaz did not believe him so Isaiah told him to ask for a sign and the LORD would give it to him to testify that what Isaiah had spoken was true, but Ahaz refused to ask for a sign. Then Isaiah said, “Since you refuse to ask for a sign the LORD himself will give you a sign,” and then told him, “The virgin shall conceive and bear a son named Immanuel.”

This sign was twofold, firstly a sign of comfort and secondly a sign of judgment.

1. The sign was firstly to testify that the plans of the hostile kings of Syria and Ephraim to invade Jerusalem would not stand (i.e., would not come to pass). This is because the armies of Assyria would destroy the two kings before they could come against Jerusalem and Judah.
2. The sign was also one of judgment, because of the people's unbelief and wickedness. Some years later the fierce armies of Assyria after many campaigns against Judah eventually laid their land waste and took the people into captivity. However Assyria was unable to take the city of Jerusalem, but king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon did some years later.

So this son named Immanuel was to firstly be a sign of comfort for the people of Jerusalem and Judah and secondly a sign of judgment.

The LORD shall bring upon you the king of Assyria: (v17) although God would deliver Ahaz at this time, He would remember his wickedness and bring against his future sons and successors and the people of Jerusalem and Judah a far more dreadful enemy than Syria and Ephraim which was Assyria

The following verses show that the Assyrian judgment began during Ahaz's reign: -

- The LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had made Judah act sinfully and had been very unfaithful to the LORD. ²⁰So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. ²¹For Ahaz took a portion from the house of the LORD and the house of the king and of the princes, and gave tribute to the king of Assyria, but it did not help him. (2 Chron. 28:29-27)

This was but the precursor of the great Assyrian invasions under Sargon and Sennacherib kings of the Assyrian Empire, throughout these kings wars the Israelites remained in Samaria, and maintained their religious practices and their own forms of a civil government and community until they were finally carried away in the time of king Shalmaneser whose powerful armies not only laid the land of Judah and Israel waste and took the people captive, but also set up new colonies in their land.

- Shalmaneser the king of Assyria (v3) brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. (2 Kings 17:24).

Overview of the child named Immanuel: the LORD told Ahaz king of Judah to ask for a sign, but he refused and because of this refusal Isaiah told him, "The Lord himself will give the house of David a sign, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14).

Then told Ahaz, "Before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land of the king of Syria and of Ephraim will be deserted (Isaiah 7:16) (Assyria took the people of Ephraim captive).

Since there is no actual child born of a virgin and named Immanuel that could visibly act as a sign to Ahaz, and Isaiah links this chapter to the following chapter which talks of a prophetess giving birth to a child named Maher-shalal-hashbaz it is most likely that Maher-shalal-hashbaz is the literal child born to act as a sign to Ahaz of impending doom while the child Immanuel in contrast to Maher-shalal-hashbaz is prophetic of a future child to be born that inspires hope, especially since it is not until the Angel of the LORD in the New Testament comes to Joseph in a dream and says to him: -

- That which is conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit, she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matt. 1:19-23).

That we read of a literal child being born of a virgin. Matthew goes on to say that all of this took place to fulfil what the LORD had spoken by the prophet (referring to Isaiah) who said, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (Matt. 1:19-23) (Isaiah 7:14).

It appears that the child named Immanuel mentioned in this chapter is prophetic of Israel's coming Messiah and Saviour to give hope to the nation during the horrific disasters and wars that are about to come upon them, whereas Maher-shalal-hashbaz is the literal sign child born to the House of David that God's judgment is coming.

Supporting this idea is the fact that within the meaning of the name Maher-shalal-hashbaz there is not even a hint of comfort for Israel, but only utter waste and destruction.

Should this be so the expressions, "Before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good," (Isaiah 7:16) and "Before the boy knows how to cry my father or my mother," (Isaiah 8:4) would simply be seen as different ways of saying the same thing, which is that the hostile kings of Syria and Ephraim will be carried away before the king of Assyria within a very short period of time. (Isaiah 7:14-16).

The LORD will Bring upon You and Your father's House the King of Assyria.

Isaiah 7:17 ----- ¹⁷The LORD will bring upon you (Ahaz) 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."

Your father's house: (v17) though Ahaz is often referred to as David's son and David as his father in many Scriptures the following verses show that he was not a literal son, but a son in the sense that he was of David's bloodline (i.e., a descendant).

- Jesse the father of David the king and David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, ⁷and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, ⁸and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, ⁹and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah (Matt. 1:6-9).

Days that have not come: this expression, refers to times of calamity that have not yet been equalled in Israel's history from the day that Ephraim (the ten tribes) revolted from David's house, and set up another kingdom in the land of Samaria while the tribe of Benjamin and Judah remained at Jerusalem.

- When all Israel saw that the king (Rehoboam) did not listen to them, the people answered the king, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David." So Israel went to their tents. ¹⁷But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah. (1 Kings 12:17-17).

This was a great time of great adversity, great affliction and great calamity in the history of the united nation of Israel, because the end result of it was that Israel became two nations which was something they were never called to be. However as terrible as this period of time was and the horrific wars that followed the looming invasion of Assyria upon the land of Israel and Judah will be far worse.

In Isaiah chapter ten the LORD is recorded as saying, "Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!" (Isaiah 10:5) based upon these words of God it would be right and proper to refer to the kings of Assyria as Israel's plague and calamity and as the rod of God's anger.

Isaiah after having assured Ahaz that his kingdom would be free from the invasion that then threatened him and his kingdom then proceeds to state to him that he and his kingdom would be later endangered from another source. As a consequence of the continued and increasing wickedness of Ahaz God brought the Assyria armies against him year after year with stronger forces and with wiser and more determined counsels and besieged the city bringing increasing calamities and distress upon the kingdom of Ahaz. The history of Israel and Assyria shines a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God uses nations to accomplish His purposes and bring about His judgments.

The Lord shall bring upon you (Ahaz) and your father's house: (v17) the following verse shows that in the reign of Ahaz son Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded the land of Judah and destroyed all their cities except the city of Jerusalem though they did come up to it.

- In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. (2 Kings 18:13). (But did not take Jerusalem)

The following verse shows that King Shalmaneser of Assyria took the people of Samaria captive and set up foreign colonies in their land.

- Shalmaneser the king of Assyria (v3) brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. (2 Kings 17:24).

The following verse shows that King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and destroyed it and carried the people of Judah away captive for seventy years.

- Thus says the LORD of hosts: Because you (all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem) (v2), have not obeyed my words, ⁹behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, --- NOW GO TO VERSE ELEVEN --- ¹¹This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jer. 25:8-11).
- Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. (2 Kings 25:8-9).
- The people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away. (2 Kings 25:11).
- The king of Babylon smote them (principal men of Judah), and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land. (2 Kings 25:21).

These Assyrian and Babylonian invasions are the greater days of affliction and adversity that will come upon Ahaz and his people than those that they have experienced since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah (v17).

Even the king of Assyria; meaning that those days of trouble should come by the king of Assyria as they did.

A brief overview: of the Scriptures covered so far In the days of Ahaz king of Judah, the king of Syria and the king of Israel went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not mount an attack. The LORD told the king of Judah that the hostile kings of Syria and of Ephraim will not succeed in their plans to conquer Judah and Jerusalem, because within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken to pieces so that it will no longer be a people.

Then the LORD told Ahaz king of Judah to ask for a sign, but he refused and because of this refusal Isaiah told Ahaz that the LORD will give him a sign, "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." After this Isaiah told Ahaz, "Before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land of the king of Syria and of Ephraim will be deserted, because the LORD will bring the king of Assyria upon Ahaz's people (referring to Judah) and upon his father's house (referring to Ephraim) (Isaiah 7:17).

History shows that Assyria did lay the land of Ephraim waste and did lay much of the land of Judah waste, but could not take the city of Jerusalem, however Babylon did some years later. The remainder of this chapter is focused on Assyria laying the land of Judah and of Ephraim waste.

In that Day the LORD will Whistle for the Fly of Egypt, and the Bee of Assyria.

Isaiah 7:18-19 ----- ¹⁸In 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. ¹⁹And 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.

The fly refers to the armies of Egypt and the bee refers to the armies of Assyria. The clefts of the rocks and the thornbushes and all the pastures refer to the ten tribes of Ephraim and the two tribes of Judah and the land that they dwelt in. Ahaz is about to reap the bitter fruit of his trusting in the king of Assyria, rather than trusting in the LORD their GOD.

In that Day the LORD will Shave the Head, the Hair and the Beard.

Isaiah 7:20 ----- ²⁰In 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.

In that day: (v20) can embrace a single day, a season of time, a period of time or an age of time. In that day is an expression used many times through the book of Isaiah, sometimes it does refer to a single day, but mostly embraces a particular event that may take a number of days or even years to come to its final completion. In this context it embraces the many Assyrian kings and their armies invading Israel and Judah and wiping clean their land of God's rebellious, unbelieving and corrupt people.

Shave with a razor: (v20) a razor is used as an instrument to cut off and leave the face perfectly clean of any trace of hair it symbolises God using the Assyrian armies as a sharp instrument in His hand to wipe the land of Israel and much of Judah utterly clean of His disobedient, stubborn and defiant people.

That is hired: is an allusion to the custom of hiring soldiers or employing mercenary armies in this context it can refer to the following two things: -

1. To king Ahaz of Judah hiring Assyria to come to his aid against the two hostile kings of Syria and of Ephraim and paying the king of Assyria with large sums of silver and gold taken from the king's palace and the House of the LORD spoken of in the following verses: -
 - Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me." ⁸Ahaz also took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king's house and sent a present to the king of Assyria. (2 Kings 16:7-8).
2. To God hiring successive Assyrians kings and their armies as His instruments, to achieve His plans and purposes and paying them with the plunder and spoil of the nation He gave them victory over. God stirred up the Assyrian nations and used their armies to bring about His judgment upon the wicked and rebellious people of Ephraim (the ten tribes of Israel) and upon those dwelling in the land of Judah (they never took the city of Jerusalem, but later Babylon did).
 - In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. (2 Kings 18:13).
 - Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff (of wickedness) in their hands is my fury! ⁶Against a godless nation (Ephraim in the land of Samaria) (v9) I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. (Isaiah 10:5-6).
 - Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel. ¹⁰The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. ¹¹Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. (2 Chron. 33:9-11).

Beyond the River: (v20) (i.e., on the other side of the river) refers to the river Euphrates beyond which the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Babylonians lived.

- What do you gain by going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates? (Jer. 2:18).

The hair of the head: (v20) refers to the highest part of the body, and as such symbolises the most honoured such as those of the highest standing in the state.

The hair of the feet: (v20) refers to the lowest part of the body and as such symbolises the common people and those of the lowest standing in the state.

The beard: (v20) was highly esteemed and regarded as a distinguished ornament. Victor's would shave the beard of their enemies (especially the kings and commanders of armies) to humble them. To have the beard shaved by an enemy was considered highly insulting among the Jews.

Even today it is still considered an insult among Eastern nations to have an enemy shave the beard. Since the beard was held in such high esteem it can be seen as a symbol of those who are held in honour amongst Jewish society such as the king, the high-priest, the Levitical priests, the princes and those belonging to the royal house.

- Hanun (king of Assyria) 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 away⁵ When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed (2 Samuel 10:4) (1 Chron. 19:4).
- I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. (Isaiah 50:6).

Summary of verse twenty: the head, the beard, the hair of the feet carries the idea of the whole body (i.e., Israel and Judah). Isaiah the prophet is telling king Ahaz that the LORD will not only use Assyria to utterly wipe clean the land of the ten tribes of Israel in Samaria (and many in the land of Judah) from their king, their priests and all their people and utterly strip them of all their riches and treasures, but will also carry out of the land of Israel and of Judea; those of the highest classes, those of the middle classes and those of the lowest classes the king, the princes, the nobles and the common people.

The rod (the kings of Assyria) of God's just judgment in scourging His rebellious and corrupt people comes upon them by their own making. This principle is not only true of the people of Israel and Judah, but of all people of all generations, each individual brings God's judgment upon themselves by their own wicked and corrupt behaviour.

In that Day Everyone who is Left in the Land will Eat Curds and Honey.

Isaiah 7:21-25 ----- ²¹In that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, ²²and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds (butter in KJV) and honey. ²³In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. ²⁴With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briers and thorns. ²⁵And 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.

Curds: (butter in KJV) comes from the Hebrew word (*hem'ah*) it literally means curdled milk or cheese or butter.

Honey: comes from the Hebrew word (*d^obash*) it literally means to be gummy and refers to honey (from its stickiness) as syrup.

The king of Assyria and his armies will lay the farmland land, the livestock, the crops, and orchards of Israel waste so that whereas flocks and herds had once been counted by hundreds or thousands they would now be counted by two ewes and a cow for a man's whole stock, because of this famine of stock rather than kill a cow for meat they will keep it for the milk it supplies. The famine will be so bad that the only food they will have is what they can make from the milk of a cow and the honey they can collect from the bees.

With bow and arrows a man will come there: (v24) the land Israel once farmed and cultivated and cattle and sheep roamed will not only become a land covered with weeds, but instead of a shepherd's staff a man will have to take bow and arrows because of the multitudes of wild animals that have made the land their home. Here is the stunning wonder of Isaiah's' prophecy, this is exactly what happened, Assyria took the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity for a number of years and then Babylon conquered Assyria and Judah and took the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the people of Judah into captivity so that the whole house of Israel was under Babylonian rule for seventy years in a foreign land. During this time there was no one to cultivate their farms, orchards and vineyards so their land became a place of thorns and thistles and a home for wild animals.

FOOTNOTE.

- Chapter eight and nine are a continuation of this prophecy of Isaiah.

End.