

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 7

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 7

Theme: "Help from God Rejected,
Judgement Assured"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 7:14 (KJV) "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

INTRODUCTION

Hypocrisy is a terrible sin in the eyes of the world and God. No one likes a hypocrite. They are pests that engender hurts and pains in the lives of others. They pretend to be what they are not! Thus, it is ten times worse when hypocrites are found in the church; especially so if they are pastors who are leading the flock of Christ. They bring shame to the Name of Christ by their pseudo-spirituality. They who pretend to be godly are worse than the sinners they condemn.

They hurt everyone who has the misfortune to meet them. They play with other's emotions and loyalty and their families would bear the brunt of their deception. Very soon, they would pass on their manner of deceitful life to their children who will become like them, for like parents like children!

Unless the LORD is merciful to intervene in their lives by snatching them out of the jaws of the hypocritical quicksand, they will be doomed to repeat their parents' masquerade.

This period of Isaiah's ministry was difficult, to say the least. He was sent by God to rebuke the king of Judah, Ahaz. His father Jotham and his grandfather Uzziah were good kings. However, Ahaz was not. Judah was facing a war with the northern kingdom, Israel that precipitated this encounter of Isaiah with Ahaz. The result of this encounter was one of the greatest revelations on the first coming of Christ, the world has ever known. This great revelation also came under many attacks by many of God's enemies.

It is in this historical and theological context that we shall, with God's help, endeavour to study this very significant chapter.

OUTLINE

1. Victory in Trial Assured (vv.1-9);
2. A Sign Rejected (vv. 10-16);
3. An unusual "day" shall come (vv. 17-25);

COMMENTARY

Victory in Trial Assured — 7:1-9

Immediately after the call of Isaiah, the LORD had a task for him to do. It was both forth-telling and foretelling. The stage was set. Rezin, the king of Syria and Pekah, the king of Israel, joined forces to attack Ahaz,

the king of Judah in the South. They attacked Jerusalem but could not prevail against God's city (cf. 2Kings 16:5). The exact reason for this inability is not mentioned. It was definitely not because Jerusalem was militarily strong. The best explanation would be that The LORD's timing was not to have Judah destroyed at this juncture.

The house of David is used to describe Ahaz and Judah. This points to the noble and godly start Judah had and also, the sad spiritual state Judah later found herself in. It was not just the nation, but the house of David, which the LORD had entrusted the prophecy of an everlasting kingdom with! The kingdom of David was in jeopardy of being destroyed! The house of David was shaking like leaves blowing in the wind. The reason for their fear was the confederacy Israel made with the Syrians, their northern neighbour. Two bigger and stronger nations against Judah was truly a cause for fear. Ahaz and the Jews were very frightened.

Under these dire circumstances, the LORD sent Isaiah to bring a word of hope and comfort to Ahaz. Isaiah went with his son named She'ar-ja'shub (i.e. "a remnant will return"). They will meet Ahaz at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field. Ahaz had to protect the water supply to the city and therefore, this was probably one of the safest places in the city for the king.

The message from the LORD was precise and full of hope. Ahaz was told not to be afraid. Take heed i.e.

watch and be quiet i.e. be still. Both these verbs are in the imperatives. The force of the injunction to Ahaz was to stop looking at the military might of his enemies but to look to the LORD. Judah was a spiritual nation. This was a spiritual warfare. Ahaz need not fear or faint in his heart before "the two tails of these smoking firebrands." They might appear as powerful like a firebrand. A firebrand is a metal poker used for branding. It is usually heated to bright orange for full potential usage. However, the LORD described them as "the tail" meaning to say that their power is waning and they are absolutely nothing in the sight of the LORD. The tail of the firebrand is where the heat is dying and when smoke begins to appear! They might have been formidable against other Gentile nations but Judah was God's nation!

Isaiah divulges the reason for their attack of Ahaz. Syria, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah have taken counsel against Ahaz. Ephraim is the largest tribe in the northern kingdom Israel and sometimes, it is used as a metonymy for the nation of Israel. Notice that Isaiah deliberately did not even want to mention the name of Pekah! This revelation to Ahaz is to show him that the LORD knows the secret counsel of their confederacy. Nothing can be hid from the LORD. He is in absolute control. Isaiah told Ahaz that they said in verse 7:6, "Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, *even* the son of Tabeal." They wanted Ahaz dead and replaced. They wanted a king in Judah

who would be their puppet. Apparently this son of Tabeal was such a person. His identity is not made known to us.

Isaiah said that the Lord GOD's (i.e. Jehovah) reaction was that "it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." Isaiah used the name of God as "adonay" which highlights a master-slave relationship as well the name Jehovah which highlights a covenantal relationship. The protection of God over Judah is emphasized here. Furthermore, the strength of the prohibition against these enemies of Ahaz is the same as the Ten Commandments in its force! In other words, they will not succeed and Judah's destruction will never happen!

The basis for this confidence from Isaiah was that Syria and Israel would be destroyed in 65 years' time. Jarchi explained it this way, "the prophecy of Amos was two years before Uzziah was smitten with the leprosy, according to Amos 1:1. Uzziah was a leper twenty five years, lo, twenty seven. Jotham reigned sixteen years, Ahaz sixteen, and Hezekiah six; as it is said, "in the sixth year of Hezekiah (that is, the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel) Samaria was taken", 2Ki 18:10 lo, sixty five years." If these two nations who have ganged up against Judah were to be destroyed in 65 years' time, why should Judah who will continue to exist be afraid of these two nations?

Of course, faith was expected of Judah at this very moment. She must believe and in the light of that belief, do what is right presently. That was exactly what Isaiah said, "If ye will not

believe, surely ye shall not be established (v. 9b)."

A Sign Rejected — 7:10-16

To help Ahaz believe in what the LORD said, the LORD asked Isaiah to tell Ahaz to ask for a sign from the LORD to affirm this prophecy! This was a usual practice of the LORD whenever He called His servant to fulltime ministry and when God's people are faced with a life and death situation. Therefore, giving Ahaz a miraculous sign was to assist him, being the king of God's people, in the faith that he might believe in God and not be afraid of his enemies.

Ahaz was commanded to ask for a sign from the LORD his God. The title of God means an emphasis of His almighty power and of course, the covenantal Name means the basis is the covenantal promise that the LORD has with Judah. Ahaz must ask! It could be either a heavenly sign or an earthly sign. It was his choice!

The reply of Ahaz sounds very spiritual and right. He used two strong prohibitions which were similar to the Ten Commandments. Since the LORD said "ask thee a sign" in the imperative and Ahaz's reply was a negative in the imperative, it was a direct confrontation against the LORD rather than a spiritual reply from Ahaz. Ahaz was faithless! He was totally not interested in what the LORD has to say to him. He would not believe in what the LORD just said! For Ahaz to add that he would not want to tempt the LORD when the LORD already commanded him to ask for a sign to strengthen his faith was pseudo-spirituality. If the

LORD had not offered the sign to Ahaz and he demanded one, then it would be to tempt the LORD. However, when the sign was imperatively offered to him, turning God's offer down was insult at its height from Ahaz.

The LORD used the imperative to rebuke Ahaz. Hear now! O house of David! Ahaz might not be interested but the house of David needed the sign! When the king and leader of God's people is derelict in his duty to protect God's people, God has to intervene to save His people. God did! Is it a small matter to weary or tire men by their rebellion and sin that God's people would dare to weary Isaiah's God as well? This was a rhetorical question asked by Isaiah. Note the distinction used by Isaiah in addressing God as "my" and not "our." Ahaz and the Jews might reject the LORD but the LORD's promise and prophecy will still stand! His sovereign will for the salvation of mankind will be fulfilled for it depends on His faithfulness and not man's. Therefore, the sign was given anyway to those who would believe.

Isaiah 7:14 (KJV) "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The LORD Himself shall give you (plural) a sign! The sign was given to the Jews even if the king did not wish to have one. The king was to take the place of God in the defence of God's people when Israel, in the days of Samuel, asked for a monarchy to replace theocracy. The king had currently failed the LORD and God's people. The Lord intervened for the

Jews' protection. This was a prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ. Those who argue that since the Hebrew word for virgin "almah" could be translated as both virgin and maid, it is not necessary to translate it as virgin as the KJV did. For example, the New Revised Standard Version (a version of the WCC) translates Isaiah 7:14 as, "Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel." They argue that it is the naming of the son Immanuel that is the sign rather than the virgin birth! The word for sign is a miraculous sign. The birth of a son by an already pregnant woman cannot constitute a sign!

Inspired Scripture determines the meaning of almah! **Matthew 1:22-23** (KJV) says, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **23** Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." The Greek word for virgin is "parthenos" which means only virgin and nothing else! This seals the argument once and for all for all true believers.

This reference to the future virgin birth of Christ was significant to all who heard with faith! Not only will Judah not be destroyed or defeated by this present alliance of Israel and Syria but that the LORD's plan for man's salvation will surely come to pass. The faithlessness of Ahaz will not prevent it from happening. The miraculous sign was that a virgin will conceive. This is

impossibility and yet it will happen according to God's timing. This virgin will bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel which means "God with us." The incarnate God-man Christ Jesus will walk amongst man. This is the climax of God's salvation plan since the time of the first gospel preached by God Himself in Genesis 3:15. This is the blessed hope for all mankind. All of the OT's sacrificial system of worship and salvation of all mankind in the past hinges on this event. The entire ministry of the Holy Spirit hinges on this event.

The infant Jesus will grow as butter i.e. curdled milk and honey, shall he eat. This was the normal food for growing children in Israel. This speaks of the physical growth of Christ. It supports the doctrine of the birth of Christ and how he will grow from infancy to adulthood. This in no way compromises His deity as he was always fully God and fully man throughout His life on earth. He will grow to adulthood as this phrase, "that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good" implies. Even before Christ grew to maturity, both the nations of Israel in the north and Judah in the south will lose their sovereignty. This happened when Christ was born during the reign of the Caesars in the Roman Empire.

**An unusual "day" shall come —
7:17-25**

The prophecy ends in verse 16. This is seen by the use of the second person pronoun. The days ahead will be calamities unseen before in the history of the divided kingdom. It is

said that Ephraim departed from Judah because Judah was the two tribes that could trace their roots to the original united Israel before her division. The reason is that the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were located in Judah! This change will involve the soon coming new superpower, the Assyrians.

The first (vv. 18-20) is described in verse 18 to 20. This is signified by the phrase "And it shall come to pass in that day (cf. Verses 21 and 23)." The LORD "shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria." What it means is that the LORD will signal that these enemies will come and dominate this region including Israel and Judah. They will be commanded by the LORD whom Ahaz now despised. Ahaz is being rebuked by the LORD here for his arrogance and pseudo-spirituality. The bee and the fly are pictures of their armies when they come and conquer!

What will they do? The Assyrians will come and shall "rest" i.e. come upon because that is what flies and bees do when they fly and rest on places. These places include the desolate valleys and in the holes of the rocks and upon all thorns and all bushes. This simply means that these innumerable armies will cover every inch of land, even these places that are not inhabited by anyone. They will be like swarms of flies and bees landing anywhere and everywhere they like. Nothing on earth will be able to stop them on that day. They are an unstoppable horde.

The Assyrians will dominate and shave all the hair of their enemies. This is a picture of total and complete destruction and humiliation. Shaving the hair on their head means that they will spoil their enemies at will, from top down, including the kings. Shaving the hair of their feet means that they will be shaved clean. The humiliation will be total and even the lowest in the nation will be destroyed. Shaving their beard means shame. They will be utterly humiliated as the beard is a symbol of their unique identity as people of God. They were not allowed to cut corners on their beard (cf. Lev. 19:27).

The second (vv. 21-22) is that “a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep.” The word for nourish means “to make to live.” This means that a man will survive only on a young cow and two sheep. This is a description of great poverty. One young cow alone cannot provide enough milk for the family, not to mention to have extra for sale in the market to make some money. Two sheep are left and once eaten and used for offerings the man would be left with nothing. A shepherd must have many sheep to survive and for reproduction. The moment he kills one, the other is useless as one cannot reproduce on its own. Great poverty will afflict Israel and Judah on that day.

The population will be scarce in the land of Israel and Judah. Even with only one young cow and two sheep, it was considered an abundance of food for the family to consume. This points to a dearth in population as in the remnant that stays. Many will die or be

exiled into foreign lands. The Assyrians are known to take their captured slaves and relocate them to other foreign cities in order that they might marry people from other lands so that they will lose their individual identities and nationalities. In this way they will remain loyal to the Assyrian kings.

The third (vv. 23-25) is that “every place shall be where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briers and thorns.” This means that the land, that could produce a thousand vines and copious amount of silver coins of all denominations, has become places for briers i.e. thorns and thistles. The land flowing with milk and honey continues flow with milk and honey if there were people to till the ground, plants and harvest. If there were no people around to till and to plant, thorns and thistles would invade and destroy the land. This again points to the remnant that will be in the vast empty land of Israel and Judah. Do not look to or trust in these earthly possessions. They have no value other than what man give to it. When there is no one to buy it or fight with you for it, it will be worthless. Ask Noah and his family when they came out of the ark for they own the world as a family of eight! Property prices were non-existent. Everything was free for the taking!

To continue on with the description of the devastation, Isaiah described the land, which was once regarded as fertile, to be full of thorns and thistles. Shepherd fields had turned into wild jungle for hunters to

hunt. The thorns and thistles had overwhelmed the land flowing with milk and honey, simply because there was no one to cultivate and care for it. On hills that were once fertile and could be dug with the mattock i.e. the spade, would now be beyond digging because of their fear of the thorns and thistles. Only the oxen and the lesser cattle i.e. sheep and goats could roam in these regions. Farmers could not use them anymore. These animals would roam in the wilds to survive.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The difficult ministry -- The first task assigned to Isaiah was to confront the king. It must have been the most difficult task. The king possesses absolute power and he can kill anyone at will for he is above the law. Isaiah went and the message was not an easy message to proclaim. It started as a message of hope to a wicked king.

It ended with a strong rebuke because the king was arrogant and rebuffed the LORD who offered him a sign to strengthen his faith. His pseudo-spirituality was for show and an insult to God. Ahaz turned his back on true spirituality and engaged in idolatry which resulted in judgement and condemnation from the LORD. It was to a king such as Ahaz that Isaiah was sent to rebuke! Strength and courage is needed in ministerial life even today!

Fear is a strong weapon used by Satan – It is impossible not to be afraid. We are a fearful people. We need to overcome our fear and not

allow fear to cripple us into not serving the LORD. Fear has been used successfully to threaten all kinds of men into submission. Kings and princes have been cowed into submission to other powers when their weakness is discovered and extorted.

The only way to solve this problem is to fear God. Then nothing else on earth can frighten or threaten us into sinning against God. Jesus taught this in **Matthew 10:28** (KJV) “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

The prophetic hope – All prophecies are given by the LORD as hope for His children. Basically, prophecies can be defined as the sovereign acts of our heavenly Father, that are revealed to help His children live a holy life right now.

How have the prophecies of God in the Bible helped you in your Christian walk? AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 7:1-9

TUESDAY: Isaiah 7:1-16;

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 7:1-25;

THURSDAY: Isaiah 7:1-25;

FRIDAY: Isaiah 7:1-25.

Discussion Questions

1. Is there something that you are most afraid of? What can comfort you the most and help you overcome this fear?

2. Do you dare to confront someone more senior than you? Is there anyone you would not confront? What is the mark of a faithful prophet and good pastor?

3. "Our future is secured in Christ therefore we should not fear anything on earth." Is this a true statement? Explain your answer.

4. "I believe that Christ is born of the virgin Mary but Isaiah 7:14 is a type of Christ rather than a prophecy of Christ's birth." Can you accept this interpretation of Isaiah 7:14?

5. How would you interpret John 16:7 in the light of the first coming of Christ?

6. "A seminary professor with a ThD teaches that it is more exact to describe Isaiah 7:14 as the virgin

conception rather than the virgin birth of Christ.” Is this statement acceptable to you?

7. How do you view prophecies in the Bible? If you were asked to explain what is the purpose of prophecies, what would your reply be?

9. What is the difference between a prophecy and eschatology? How many kinds of prophecies are there in the Bible? Can you list them all?

8. Are you a modern day prophet of God? Do you know of a Bible school that calls itself a school of prophets? Is this a biblically accepted way to describe a Bible school or is it arrogance?

10. Will dire circumstances be able to turn hearts back to the LORD? If not why then does God continue to repeatedly use this method? Were you converted to Christ because of a dire circumstance in your life?

11. Should obedient and holy believers go through difficulties in life such as

being persecuted by the enemies of God? If they should go through them, how should they respond in a way that is God-honouring?

12. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
