

Topic: ***Chaos & Terror will overtake the wicked officials on Judgement Day***

**Scripture: Isaiah 7: 1-17**

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## **I. Biblical Focus/Introduction**

The next two chapters contain a sequence of signs based on the names of three children: Shear-Jashub (7:1-9), Immanuel (7:10-17), and Maher-shalhas-baz (8:1-4). It seems natural to assume that, as in the case of another eighth century prophet (Hosea 1:2-9), all three were sons of Isaiah, although the text only makes this plain in the case of the first and third. However, that may be, it is the meaning of the names as prophetic signs that is important, not who they were. The message was addressed to the rulers of Judah, particularly King Ahaz (736-725 B.C.), during what is called the Syro-Ephraimite (Syrian-Ephraim) crisis and makes three points. 1. There is hope, even in the present of crisis. (A remnant will return). 2. This hope will be fulfilled sooner than you expected. (God is with us). 3. Syrian and Ephraim will be conquered (quick to plunder). The text makes the additional point that the prophet was not believed, continuing from the prophecies in Chapter 6, and comes to us as a plea for faith in God, a theme familiar to us already from the "faithful city" poem in Chapter 1. One that will occur again in Isaiah writings more than once.

"In the days of Ahaz" refers to the years 736-725 B.C., that is to say, years immediately following Uzziah's death (6:1). Jotham and Ahaz had acted as regents since 756, when Uzziah was smitten with Leprosy (2Chron 26:16-21), until his death in 736, when Ahaz became the sole ruler as described in 2 King 16, and introduces the relevant political background. According to his own account, written on clay tablets and stone monuments, Tiglath Pileser III (744-727 B.C.), already invaded Syria in 736 to stop an uprising. In 735, Rezin, king of Syria and Pekah (son of Remaliah), king of Ephraim (Northern kingdom of Israel) tried to involve Jerusalem under King Ahaz in a similar anti-Syrian revolt. Judging by the list of states mentioned by Tiglath-Pileser in his account, Ahaz was the only one that did not join the coalition. Judah is

isolated and threaten by Syria and Ephriam to the north and Edom to the south (2 Kings 16:6). Probably Philistia and other neighboring states joined in Rezin's campaign to force Judah into joining them (9:2), but Ahaz, spurred on no doubt by that sense of superiority and national pride from which the Zion traditions – in the Psalms and the book of Isiah.

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## **II. Chaos and Terror will overtake the wicked Officials.**

### **1. Verse 1 -9.**

The present incident took place in 733, during the siege of Jerusalem by the Syrian-Ephraim allies (v. 1). They hope to replace the obstinate King Ahaz with a puppet king name Ben Tabeel, whose name suggest that he was Syrian. Verse 2 describes the terror of the citizens of Jerusalem, including the king, in terms of threes shaking in the wind. The statement “House of David” simply means the king, to highlight the fact that the underlying theme of these chapters is the survival of David's lineage, from which was come our savior.

In this situation the Lord sent the prophet with his sons to confront King Ahaz. The scene is set somewhere near the conduit, or man-made water channel. There were presumably several conduits running from the “upper pool” and this is the one that ran in the direction of the Launderer's Field, and open space for drying and bleaching laundry, probably on the outskirts of the city. This is the place where Hezekiah addressed the Assyrians during the siege of Jerusalem in 701 (Isiaih 36:-1-3). In the present context the detail suggest that Ahaz was anxiously inspecting the city's water supply in preparation for a siege when he should have been turning to God for help.

The name Shearjashub clearly incorporates part of the prophet's word to the king: Shear means remnant and can refer to the survivor of some catastrophe event as well as to a surviving son or heir. In prophetic language Jashub means will, return, or repent. Verses 4-9 contain the words of Isaiah's prophecy beginning and ending with a call to faith. A later verse explains the connection with Shearjashub. (Isaiah 30:15).

The angry assault of the two kings is no more to be feared than the tail-end of a smoldering torch. They can easily be handled as the Assyrian host are about to demonstrate. They are human powers, stripped of their international status, which questions the Syrian-Ephraim alliance. It is no more than two mere mortals, Rezin and the son of Remaliah (Pekah).

## 2. Versus 10-17.

Again, the spoke to Ahaz, because the first sign had no effect. No indication is given of the time and place of the “Immanuel” sign, although the recurrence of the “House of David”, referring to King Ahaz probably shows that the two signs come from the same context. Before the king’s delegation to Assyria left. Immanuel means God is with us and implies there is no need to join forces with Assyria or Syrian-Ephraim allegiance because God is on our side. He is stronger than any human power. But there is more to this passage.

“Ask a sign” gives continuity with the preceding passage implying, “if you don’t believe me, then ask me to prove it.” The word sign is used of all kinds of proof of God’s power, from a rainbow (Genesis 9:12,17) and plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7:3, Numbers 14:22). Isaiah’s oddly named sons are described collectively as signs and portents in Isaiah 8:18. The Immanuel sign may be unusually significant personal name borne by a son of Isaiah.

Whether or not Ahaz is going to be given a something spectacular by way of a sign. Nothing is impossible for God’s prophets; they can bring back the dead from Sheol (Elijah in 1 Kings 17:17-24), and they can make the sun go backwards in the sky (Isaiah 38:7-8). Ahaz response in verse 12 implies that the sign was going to be something miraculous; with sham piety he argues that it is wrong to put God to a test. Of course, the real reason he does want a sign is because he did not want to listen to Isaiah’s advice.

Verse 13, in which the prophet angrily criticizes the king, informs us that Ahaz has been “wearing men” either in general or on the oppression of the poor by the rich, or a mere specific comment on his handling of the current crisis. Either way, his rejection of the advice of God’s prophet is tantamount to blasphemy, treating God in the same high-handed manner as he (Ahaz) treats

his subjects. Unlike the other two signs, we are surely led to expect a sign consisting of something more than the significant name of a child. Maybe in the original form of the prophecy “Immanuel” was the sum of the message “God is with us, who can threaten us?” But the Text as it now stands, both with build up in verse 14 and the development in verses 15-17, must be something more.

I always look to Gods word to tastes sweet as honey, and to the unbelievers to be bitter to the taste. For us looking at the text, we immediately see the connection to the birth of Jesus (Son of David), and his mother Mary. An interpretation that laid emphasis on the miraculous nature of the sign that maintain both that the prophet was able to correctly predict the conception and birth of a male child, and that the young mother would be a virgin. The Gospels (Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:26-27) provides a biblical basis for the doctrine of the virgin birth. Isaiah 7:14 became on the many verses from Isaiah applied to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Thus, reminds us of the continually remind us of the timeless dimension of Testament prophecy. It is not regarded as exclusively concerned with what happen in 733-732 B.C. or what Isaiah said. Our interpretation of the text is more open-ended and theologically richer than that.

Nonetheless, if we apply the prophecy to the people, place, and time of the text, it would have a different meaning. Thus, what we have here is a prophecy of judgement, not hope. The verse describes a sense of false security in Judah, inspired by the total collapse of the Syrian Ephraim allegiance; a time when mothers will be calling their children “Immanuel” to celebrate their escape. Within a generation, before the children were properly grown up, they would have eating curds and honey, that is to say they produce of uncultivated land, deprived of the vineyards, orchards, cornfields and cattle they had come accustomed to enjoying. Finally, total disaster would come upon them in the form of a cataclysmic Assyrian invasion. It would be a disaster comparable only to the break-up of the kingdom of Solomon (1 Kings 12) in two separate kingdoms, Judah to the south and Ephraim (or Israel) in the north.