

Prophecy Regarding God's Swift Judgment by the Assyrians

Scripture: Isaiah 7:17-25; 8:1-10

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I. Historical Background & Biblical Context

Israel had many evil kings. One of the worst was Ahaz, ruler of Judah. Four generations removed, King Ahaz dived head first into idolatry. He made his children pass through the fire, built groves for worship of false gods and saw no problem in taking God's treasures out of the Temple to make room for an altar to a Damascus god (2 Chron. 28:1-6). He also replaced the brazen altar made for sacrifices to God with an idol image (2 Kings 16:1-18). Yet, even in his sinfulness, God encouraged Ahaz to ask for help. God has not changed. He is still asking, encouraging and even pleading with us to ask for help. The oracle given to King Ahaz has caused so many discussions and different views. However, a very powerful message is intertwined, a message that challenges our faith. Is our faith in God strong enough to see us through everyday crises? Are we secure in our faith? If not, perhaps, we do not fully understand the Word of the Lord or the confirming signs He gives.

When we open our Bibles to Isaiah 7:17, we see that Israel was facing dire consequences. The king of Assyria was named as the source of the coming destruction of northern Israel which was fulfilled in 722 BC. King Ahaz had allied himself with two local kings to increase his odds of survival. At this point the prophet Isaiah approached Ahaz and encouraged him with a word from the Lord. He spoke truth to the young king to help him thrive in his role in leading God's people. Unfortunately, the king didn't heed the wisdom of the Lord and led God's people astray. These words of Isaiah were spoken many years before Jesus was born.

II. Prophecy Regarding God's Swift Judgment by the Assyrians

A. Isaiah 7:17-25

1. vv. 17-20.

“The day that Ephraim departed from Judah” refers to the division of the kingdom of the northern and southern tribes. In Verse 17, Isaiah stated that the King of Assyria will bring upon Judah such days as have not been since the division of the kingdom some 200 years previous. In Verse 18, the fly symbolized Egypt, and the bee symbolized Assyria that God would call to punish Judah for its sin (2 Chron. 12:1-4). Like flies and bees, these two great powers would settle in the land of Judah to control Judah for their own purpose.

The idea of Ahaz trying to hire Assyria to protect Judah was mocked by the Lord who said that He would hire the king of Assyria to shave Judah. God proclaimed (2 Samuel 10:4-5) by depending on himself rather than on God, Ahaz had unleashed a whirlwind which will not be contented to devour his troublesome neighbors. Led by the God he had disdained, the whirlwind will come sweeping over King Ahaz and his nation. If Ahaz understood and believed what the Lord prophesied, it should have terrified him. The Assyrians were well-known for their sheer cruelty, especially over nations they conquered. They delighted in torture and humiliation. Within two years after Isaiah's prophecy to Ahaz, Syria fell to Assyria (732 BC), and Pekah no longer ruled Israel. Within another ten years, Israel (Ephraim) had also fallen to Assyria.

2. vv. 21-22.

Assyria's soldiers took most people whom they defeated to another country and left only a few people behind. Each person only had one cow, two goats or two sheep. God said that even in the midst of trouble, Israel will have what it needed to survive (the two cows and the sheep) and that there would still be good found. The cow and few sheep would be the only food source left behind; giving

them milk, from which they could make yogurt or cheese. The people would be hungry and ready for God because they would believe in Him.

3. **vv. 23-25.**

Describing Israel in this verse, the Lord proclaimed that where the people looked for fruit, there would be thorns. There would be no agriculture. Where there had been valuable vineyards, there would then be briars and thorns, and people would survive on what nature provided.

Because the land will be so harsh and no fruit found, the people will come to the vineyards with arrows and bows to hunt instead of farming. Farmland would only be suitable for grazing animals. Instead of gardens and farms, the country will be wild land. Instead of people, animals will inhabit the land, and very few people will live there.

B. Isaiah 8:1-10

4. **vv. 1-4.**

Isaiah's wife bore a son, and the Lord instructed Isaiah to name his son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. Isaiah was commanded by the Lord to take a great scroll and write on it the symbolic name of his son Mahershalalhashbaz meaning "Speed the spoil; Hasten the prey". His name symbolized the swift and successful Assyrian conquest of Damascus (Syria) and Samaria (Israel). The son was to be the living word of prophecy, bearing the message as the words inscribed upon the large scroll. The Lord testified that before the child could speak his first words, Syria and Israel would be conquered. This was a prophecy of the impending doom of the two enemy nations, Syria and Israel whom Judah feared. The Lord declared that He would call two men, Uriah and Zechariah, to serve as witnesses (Deut. 15:15).

5. **vv. 6-10.**

The Lord charged that the people of Judah rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah (Verse 6). Because the people of Israel rejected or rebelled against the house of David, God would bring in judgment, the River Euphrates. This river represented the king of Assyria and his armies who will flood the land, including Judah. The Assyrian invasion would wipe out the northern kingdom and nearly drown the southern kingdom (Is. 36-37). Judah would survive the Assyrian invasion but suffer much destruction (2 Kings 18:13). Nothing could stop the Assyrian army because even if they did not know it, God was using them. “Your land, O Immanuel” refers to the “Immanuel” prophecy in Isaiah 7:14.

The land the Assyrians would invade did not really belong to Judah or to King Ahaz. It belonged to the Lord God, to the coming Messiah (Immanuel: God with us). The invading nations were told that their alliances would not stand against Judah because God was with us. God would save Judah from the nations that opposed it. This would happen while Isaiah’s son was still a child. In sarcasm, God told the people to make alliances and take counsel or prepare, but no matter how much the people prepared for the invasion, no preparation would protect them. All counseling would be for nothing. Their plans and words and ideas could not stand. God’s will’s is going to be done in spite of all the plans and preparations mankind might make.

III. Conclusion

Christians must remember God’s prophesy when life is challenging them. God stands by us even in crises and His prophecy is unwavering even when we doubt.